

Central Minnesota Audubon  
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ColdSpring, MN 56320-4700

# Green-Backed Gazette

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## NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

### Volume 46

### Summer 2024



#### President's Note, by Dan Kneip

In our recent trip to England, we quickly noticed the differences in the country roads. The roads are narrow and hemmed in by hedgerows, not by ditches or an ample right-of-way. We utilized only public transportation, so did not need to worry about which side to drive on nor what to do if we met a large bus or truck. It was interesting to note that passenger cars ceded the right-of-way to buses, sometimes backing up for a great distance until a widened area was encountered.

Here in Minnesota, we have ample rights-of-way and ditches along all our public roads. It does allow for a sense of security and ease in visibility, but it also does require an enormous amount of land area to be set aside. This large area of land alongside our roads provides a significant amount of habitat for many birds, mammals, and insects. Several state agencies have dedicated programs to enhancing roadside habitat and the importance of planting native grasses and flowers in these areas.

Another prominent issue in Minnesota land use is the placement of high voltage transmission lines that need to be built to address the growing renewable energy demands in the state. One proposal supported by Audubon Minnesota and passed by the legislature allows utility installations to run parallel to state-controlled access and interstate highways, thus utilizing the existing open areas and minimizing the need to set aside even more land.

We recently attended several meetings addressing the issue of transmission lines and birds. Audubon's position is that additional transmission lines are needed but that best practices include being aware of the effects on bird habitat as well as the dangers of collision. To find out more about this subject read [Birds and Transmission: Building the Grid Birds Need](#).

This Spring was busy for CMAS board and volunteers. We finished the revision of the CMAS bylaws and had the same approved at the Annual meeting in April. A link will be provided in the email distribution of this Newsletter with a copy of the revised bylaws.

CMAS had many birding outings during the month of May. Jim Millard led three outings at the Avon Hills Folk School and Brian Jungels led two outings at the Albany Waste Treatment Ponds. See additional information in a report by Jim in this Newsletter. Thank you to Jim and Brian as well as to Annette Schoenberger and Gary Ramacher who helped with the outings.

Our newsletter is published eight times a year. Seven editions are sent by USPS and by email. The summer edition is only sent by email to those who have provided their address either to CMAS directly or to the National Audubon Society. Providing your e-mail address helps us to have a backup form of communication for the newsletter and allows us to communicate schedules or changes in activities in a prompt and efficient manner. Please help us by providing your email to [centralmnaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:centralmnaudubon@gmail.com)



#### Calendar

##### Monday, August 12 at 8pm- Chimney Swift Count:

In the past many members enjoyed the Chimney swift sits that were sponsored by the Chimney Swift Conservation Project. Although this project is no longer active, we can still meet and enjoy the sight of the annual pre-migration community roosting. In Cold Spring, we do have a chimney in a downtown building where the swifts congregate in the evening. Meet in front of the Side Bar (15Red River Ave N., Cold Spring) to witness the event. If anyone knows of other locations that would work, please advise.

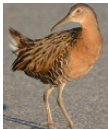
**August 20:** Flower and Garden Club invitation to visit the garden of Jana and Richard Doll, 8104 245th St, St. Augusta, MN, starting at 6:30pm. They have a beautiful garden and Richard will explain his work with purple martins. He has been part of a three year Geo-Locator study to track birds to South America and back.

He will also explain how to attract purple martins and what it takes to keep them safe from mites, predators, etc. We will also hear about the joys and pitfalls of growing wisteria. Jana has seeds to share.

##### September 18, 2024

CMAS Meeting  
7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church  
Speaker: Sabin Adams, Pheasants Forever  
Sabin will discuss the group's conservation efforts in Central Minnesota



*Welcome... to two new local members: Jean C. Johnson and Sherry Kutter. We're happy to have you join us and hope to see you at a meeting or upcoming event!*



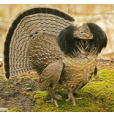
*Let's nurture nature so that we can have a better future. ~ Anonymous*

#### Central MN Audubon Society Officers

Dan Kneip, President (H) 320-761-8202  
Brian Jungels, Treasurer (H) 320-469-0876  
Linda Peck, Secretary (H) 320-685-3365  
Nicki Blake-Bradley, Newsletter (H) 320-259-5524

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Jonathan Fribley, Member At Large (H) 320-309-9446  
Jim Millard, Member At Large (H) 320-774-7051  
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Ruffed Grouse Population Update

Per the MN DNR, ruffed grouse counts are the highest since 1972. Minnesota’s ruffed grouse spring population counts are similar to last year and to other recent peaks in the 10-year population cycle of grouse — a pattern recorded for 73 years.

The Minnesota DNR and its partners use spring drumming counts to help monitor the ruffed grouse breeding population through time. What’s drumming? A male grouse looks for a 10” log on the forest floor to perch upon. He makes a tripod of his body by using his tail to brace against the log. Then he leans back and proceeds to strike his chest with his wings in a progressively more rapid beat that can be heard for a great distance.

The recent grouse population trend includes a low point in the cycle in 2021 that was not as low as previous lows, followed by the highest peak this year since 1972.

Warm temperatures and dry conditions that favor high nest success and chick survival the last few years may partly explain the quicker than expected rise to peak levels in the 10-year cycle. Snow conditions also were favorable for roosting throughout much of the core of grouse range during the winters 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, followed by an unusually warm winter during 2023-2024. Minnesota’s climate is getting warmer and wetter with more heavy, intense rainfalls occurring.

As a reminder, for hunting, drumming counts are not an accurate way to predict the birds that will be present during the fall. Nesting success and chick survival during the spring and summer are among the factors that influence the number of birds present in the fall. These numbers can be reduced by heavy rain during June when nests are hatching and chicks are young.


Thirteen cooperating organizations provide help to count grouse drumming, including federal and tribal partners. The ruffed grouse survey report can be found on the DNR web-site.

Bird vernacular: Young birds, such as eaglets, that need to stay in the nest for complete care by the parents for a period of time are technically called “nidiculous” (nye-DIK-uh-lus) while the technical term for birds that can leave the nest shortly after hatching is “nidifugous” (nye-DIFF-yuh-gus). Pre-social is another term for young that are able to leave the nest almost immediately. Many nidiculous birds hatch naked and blind.

CMAS is now registered to receive donations via GiveMN: <https://www.givemn.org/>

GiveMN  
<https://imagecdn.mightycause.com/f621d9d7-9e87-452c-b561-a13fbd7cbd53/-/crop/2048x1070/0,148/-/resize/1200x627/www.givemn.org>

To find us, type in - Central Minnesota Audubon Society



**Birding spotlight: sandhill cranes**

Standing five feet tall with nearly seven feet of wingspan, the sandhill crane is one of Minnesota’s largest bird species. They can be seen frequently in marshes and fields.

They have an echoing call that makes one think of prehistoric creatures. Mated pairs dance to maintain their bond.

Sandhill cranes typically lay two eggs. At this time of year, adult cranes are busy rearing young called colts. Cranes eat a wide variety of foods including frogs, small mammals, insects, snakes and grains. In the Fall, large numbers can be viewed preparing for migration at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge.



AVON HILLS FOLK SCHOOL [hereafter AHFS]  
May Bird Walks

Three weekends in May [4th, 11th, 25th] we had bird walks starting at 8 AM at AHFS. There we identified an average of 34 species per day; 32, 31 and 37, respectively.

Chris, who runs AHFS, was very accommodating and it was great to have a no fee class that bird aficionados could appreciate. The only downside of no fee was less commitment from students for attendance. We gave participants some guidelines as to bird ID guides, both in written (book) and electronic format routinely using Merlin to assist in pinning down birds.

There are multiple habitats within a fairly short walking path; we need more allotted time to do the walks. Students asked questions about birds and their habits; information was given including vocalizations, flight patterns, migratory habits and bird families (groups).

Identification was done both visually and by vocalization, where possible. In several instances we were only able to get one or the other; but species were not counted unless there was certainty of the species in question.

Even when the weather was wet, we had good results. As expected, we always had lots of birdsong as these were morning walks. We always had an owl on the list - Barred Owl on the first two walks (and incredibly good views in the sun on the second walk). The final walk had a Great Horned Owl calling for us, though we were unable to spot it.

I enjoy doing these introductory bird hikes; it instructs new bird enthusiasts as well as challenging me to continue to learn and grow. ~Jim

VOTE!


Elections Results

Voting on April 24th resulted in the slate being adopted as listed:

President: Dan Kneip	Vice President: Hank Schreifels
Secretary: Linda Peck	Treasurer: Brian Jungels
Member at large: Jonathan Fibley	Member at Large: Jim Millard




Did you know... Minnesota is home to nearly 1,200 native wildlife species? Unfortunately, 292 (nearly one-quarter of them) are listed as species of greatest conservation need (SGCN). The DNR Nongame Wildlife Program works to conduct research (including surveys), protect habitat and provide educational programs regarding wildlife ecology and conservation in order to prevent those SGCN species from becoming endangered.



**Door Prizes**

Door prizes at the meetings may be books, puzzles, feeders, food items, or “other”. Participation is voluntary, but winners must be present to win! Congratulations to Karen V. for winning Birding on Borrowed Time by Phoebe Snetsinger, and Annette S. for winning Attracting Birds to Your Backyard (36 ways to make your yard and garden...) by Sally Roth! Thanks to the Heneghans and Hank Schreifels for donating this month’s door prizes!



**Looking for ways to make a difference?**

Donations are welcome for our fund to assist with continuing to print the newsletter and quality speakers to the meetings. If you choose to help out, please make out a check to Central MN Audubon Society (CMAS) and send it to our President, Dan Kneip. THANK YOU SO MUCH!!

**Local Membership:** Some CMAS members may wish to only belong and support our local Chapter, without belonging to National Audubon and receiving the Audubon magazine. Local members do receive our Green-Backed Gazette. Membership cost is \$20 annual or \$15 annual if you choose to receive the newsletter electronically only (paperless). Please contact a board member if interested in this option.