

Central Minnesota Audubon
212 17th Ave. S
ColdSpring, MN 56320-4700

Green-Backed Gazette

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 47

March 2025

President's Note, by Dan Kneip



As I write these notes it seems as if Spring is in the air, soon we will be hearing Robins sing. Incessantly! Robins have often been mentioned in poems and literature and are considered a sign of Spring. Note, however, that the bird that Europeans refer to as a Robin is not the same bird as our American Robin. The European Robin is smaller with bright orange face and breast. The European Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) is in the family of the Old World Flycatchers while the American Robin is a thrush (family *Turdidae*). Europeans do have the Eurasian blackbird (*Turdus merula*) whose song is similar to our American Robin.

American Robins are often one of the first birds we see after the snow begins to melt and temperatures improve, but what about all the Robins that have been around all winter? Robins have been listed on our local Christmas Bird Count and on the Great Backyard Bird Count. Some Robins seemed to have stopped migrating.

Robins are a migratory species, and they do migrate as far as southern Texas or Florida, but some stay wherever they can find berries. If there is abundant fruit in Tennessee and Georgia, Robins will remain there and not continue to Florida. A Robin's migration destination is based on food availability. In winter, Robins change their diet from worms and insects to fruits. If there is sufficient food available, individuals, mainly males, may choose not to migrate south. According to Cornell's "All about Birds," over-wintering Robins form loose flocks that may include other fruit eating species. The flocks are nomadic and will move to wherever fruit is found and where protective habitat is available. I suspect that the reason we seem to have seen more Robins this past winter is due to the warmer temperatures and fewer storms at the beginning of the season and a good fruit crop this past summer.

CMAS has organized the March joint session, presenting Todd Burlet of Starry Skies North. He will tell us about the importance of Dark Skies and the effects of light pollution. Four local groups have joined us in sponsoring this event: Wild Ones, St Cloud Flower and Garden Club, Central MN Master Naturalists and Stearns County Horticulture Society. The doors at the Mississippi Room will open at 5:30pm on Wednesday, March 19th and each organization will have a table to display their activities. If you are interested in helping with this event; manning our CMAS table, collecting names for door prizes or directing flow of attendees, please let me know by emailing centralmnaudubon@gmail.com.

Calendar



March 19, 2025

CMAS Meeting 6:30 p.m.

Location: St. Cloud Library, Mississippi Room

Speaker: Todd Burlet - Starry Skies North

Subject: Importance of dark skies to plants and animals

**This is a joint presentation by CMAS, St. Cloud Flower and Garden Club, Central MN Master Naturalists, Wild Ones, and Stearns County Horticultural Club. Each group will have a table. The room will be open by 5:30 p.m.*



April 16, 2025

CMAS Meeting 7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church and Zoom

Speaker: • Michael Joyce, Wildlife Ecologist - NRRI - UMD (presenting via Zoom) subject Bobcats and Fishers



April 2025 – date to be determined
Woodcock Outing – Sand Prairie Wildlife Management Area

April 26th 2025 - Bluebird Expo - sponsored by the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota, Red Wing MN, see bbrp.org for details



Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge
Birdwalk: Observe a variety of migrating and local birds. Binoculars available. *Registration Required
Apr 26 - 8 -10am Blue Hill Trail/// May 31 - 8 -10 am - Mahnomen Trail

May: We will have multiple outings at Avon Hills Folk School: dates to be confirmed by Jim Millard

May 10, 2025 - Bob Russell Spring Birding Day : start at 5 or 8 am , registration fee required. Audubon members have a discount.

<https://www.csbsju.edu/outdooru/events/springbirdingday/>

May 17, 2025 - 10am to 2pm - Kids to Parks Day sponsored by Stearns County Parks. CMAS has been invited to participate and lead birding outings for kids.

*Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/centralmin-naudubonchapter/> · Watch for our upcoming webpage: <https://centralmnaudubon.org/> · Email: centralmnaudubon@gmail.com

Central MN Audubon Society Officers

Dan Kneip, President
Brian Jungels, Treasurer
Ellen Heneghan, Secretary
Nicki Blake-Bradley, Newsletter

(H) 320-761-8202
(H) 320-469-0876
(H) 320-266 1412
(H) 320-259-5524

Hank Schreifels, Vice President (H)320-250-3390
Jonathan Fribley, Member At Large (H) 320-309-9446
Jim Millard, Member At Large (H) 320-774-7051
Audubon MN Office 1-651-739-9332



*Michael Joyce was ill and couldn't attend our meeting in March, so President Dan contacted Tom Poser to see if he would be willing to switch dates and come to the meeting. Tom agreed and attended to discuss Stearns County Parks.

Tom started his presentation by noting that Stearns County has over 3,000 acres of land in 17 parks. Stearns County Parks also oversees three trails: Dairyland, Soo Line, and Wobegon. Activities in the parks can run the gamut from Archery, to swim beaches, ski trails, to maple syrup operations.

With regard to natural resources management, Tom noted that he spends a LOT of time on invasive species management. He discussed the importance of doing Best Management Practices (BMPs) consistently, every time to prevent the spread of invasives. He added that it is REALLY expensive to control invasives once they get established.

Buckthorn, Garlic Mustard, Purple Loosestrife, Thistle, Leafy Spurge, Common Tansy, Crown Vetch, Wild Parsnip, Spotted Knapweed, and Honeysuckle are all invasives that he's worked on. Control methods include mechanical (mowing, cutting, pulling, and tillage), chemical (foliar, basal bark, and stump treatment), as well as other methods such as grazing, prescribed fire and seeding. They have been using goats for grazing in Quarry Park.

Stearns County Parks did a project in Quarry Park with the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in 2024, funded by ENRTF funds and the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWRS). They were working to restore Oak Savannah. They sprayed and then mowed right away to remove invasives. Tom noted they were able to get good seed to soil contact with near immediate rain/snowfall. This is important because forbs need to be at the surface level. For vegetation establishment there, they had at least 20 native forbs in the seed mix with at least three species representing each bloom season (and 1.5% were milkweed species to benefit monarchs).

Oak decline due to oak wilt, drought, 2-lined chestnut borer, bur oak blight and other fungal attacks is a concern. A lot of decline and death is being seen in oak trees across the state. Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a significant threat to canopy cover within Stearns County Parks, as are aquatic invasive species. Tom noted Rockville County Park has a bad infestation of EAB. The eagle's nest at Eagle Park is in a big green ash tree.

Four regular staff, one natural resources technician, a director, and an operations coordinator are all the staff that Stearns County has for 3,000 acres. Tom noted his position is new. To accomplish a lot of work, they focus on partnerships. Great River Greening partners with Stearns County Parks frequently. Stearns County Parks has done work with SCSU, the DNR, and others as well. Great River Greening has removed 93 acres of buckthorn using 33 goats.

The Nature Conservancy has worked on tree seed collection at Warner Lake County Park as part of the MN Million program to reforest northern Minnesota.

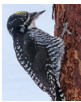
Tom finished his presentation by discussing how CMAS can be involved, including conducting birding walks, maintaining bluebird trails, offering birding kits, volunteering, or helping with Kids to Parks summer events.

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.



Door Prizes

Door prizes at the meetings may be books, puzzles, bird feeders, food items, or "other". Participation is voluntary, and you don't have to be a member, but winners must be present to win! Congratulations to our February winners: Annette Schoenberger (book: Late Harvest: Rural America Writing edited by David Pichaske); Jean Johnson (750 pc Groovy Animals Owl Puzzle); and Doris Minnerath Kneip (1000 pc Birds of Eastern/Central North America)!



We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. ~Winston Churchill

Special thanks to Nancy and Peter Fribley for a donation to CMAS! We SO appreciate your support!

Note: Our newsletter has been published eight times a year, seven editions sent by USPS and by email. The summer edition was only sent by email to those who have provided their address either to CMAS directly or to the National Audubon Society. Once the website is up and running, we will be transitioning to only doing electronic newsletters, which we anticipate to be at the end of 2025, but could possibly be sooner. We will announce the final printed version. 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 ahead of the changeover. Please help us by providing your email to centralmnaudubon@gmail.com



With beauty before me,
may I walk;

With beauty behind me,
may I walk;

With beauty above me,
may I walk;

With beauty below me,
may I walk;

With beauty all around me,
may I walk;

Wandering on a trail of beauty,
lively, I walk.

~Navajo Indian Chant



Did you know...

Physical characteristics of birds were nearing their present form as long ago as 50 million years (Eocene epoch). Glaciers are credited with starting migration patterns since they forced north and south movements as they retreated and advanced.



Looking for ways to make a difference?

Donations are welcome for our fund to assist with continuing to print the newsletter, create birding backpacks and to bring 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!!**

CMAS is now registered to receive donations via

GiveMN: <https://www.givemn.org/>



To find us, type in - Central Minnesota Audubon Society
Thank you for your support!!