

Central Minnesota Audubon
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NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 47

President's Note, by Dan Kneip

We are excited to announce that the CMAS website has been launched as of June 10th. Go to: <https://centralmaudubon.org/>

Please click through all the pages and check all the links. Let us know if anything is not working or if you find any errors. Let us know what you like and do not like about the site. A web site is only as good as what we post. Our objective with the website is to be a source of information to all our members as well as outreach to the community so that those who are not participants in CMAS can find information and connect with activities of interest.

Thank you to Donn Dinndorf for the photo of the Green Heron we used on our Home page. Thanks also to all who worked so diligently to make this site happen.

CMAS had many activities for April and May. The Woodcock outing on April 18th was popular and we saw many birds. For the second year, we were unable to see the woodcock on the ground but did hear them in flight. Both Brian Jungels and Herb Dingmann had their spotting scopes set up, so we did get a good view of the beautiful Green Teal. We had twelve participants and saw at least twenty-one species with another five species heard.

The Beginning Birding outings at Avon Hills Folk School (AHFS) on April 26th and May 3rd were also well attended. Jim Millard does an excellent job in leading bird walks and the AHFS is a beautiful place to bird. We registered at least thirty bird species at each event.

AHFS is participating with CMAS in our Bird Pack Project. You can check out Bird Packs with binoculars at the school whenever you are there. The binoculars are a great size for children. Spread the word to others about this resource.

Stearns County Park's "Kids to Parks" was a major event on Saturday, 17th May, the day was cold and rainy, but it did not stop people from enjoying the events and participating. Jackie Fallon with her Peregrine Falcon and the American Kestrel were a great hit with the kids. Thanks to all the CMAS members who volunteered for the bird walks and helping at the CMAS table.

Quarry Park is also participating with CMAS in our Bird Pack Project. You can check out a bird pack with binoculars whenever you visit Quarry Park. Spread the word to others about this resource.

CMAS schedules only a few outings during the summer. We have a Bike and Bird at Boho scheduled for Saturday, 12 July at 8am. Join us for the biking or come to take a walk on the Wobegon Trail while you do some summer birding.

On Thursday, August 7th at 8pm we will hold a Chimney Swift Sit at Cold Spring. The Wenner building is a guaranteed location to see a communal roosting. Meet across the street, alongside the Side Bar. Bring chairs.

Our speaker program starts anew in September. Hank has been at work diligently and has a full line-up of interesting Speakers for the Fall.

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Summer 2025

Calendar

July 12, 2025

8 a.m. BOHO Bike and Bird (or walk)
Wobegon Trail, Holdingford



August 7, 2025

8 p.m. Chimney Swift Sit
Cold Spring, Wenner Building (sit across the street by the Side Bar)- bring a chair



September 17, 2025

CMAS Meeting 7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church and Zoom
Speaker: Maddi Nistler, from the National Loon Center at Cross lake Minnesota



October 15, 2025

CMAS Meeting 7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church and Zoom

Speaker: Siah St. Clair
Subject: Red headed woodpecker restoration project

November 19, 2025

CMAS Meeting 7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church and Zoom
Speaker: Deanna Leigh MN DNR
Subject: Plant Watch/Citizen science

Simplicity in all things is the secret of the wilderness and one of its most valuable lessons. It is what we leave behind that is important. I think the matter of simplicity goes further than just food, equipment, and unnecessary gadgets; it goes into the matter of thoughts and objectives as well. When in the wilds, we must not carry our problems with us or the joy is lost. ~ Sigurd Olson

*Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/centralminnaudubonchapter/> · Check out our new webpage: <https://centralmaudubon.org/> · Email: centralmaudubon@gmail.com

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Bird Profile: Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*)

At 4 1/2-5" (11-13 cm), this secretive bird of open fields and prairies is small enough to go unnoticed, even when it is calling because its song is so similar to the buzz of a grasshopper. Their preferred habitats are grasslands, weedy fields, wetlands (marshes) and meadows. A lucky or experienced birder may spot the bird perched on the lowest wire of a fence or a weed stalk while it sings. When it isn't singing, Grasshopper Sparrows stay hidden as much as possible. A behavioral "give away" is flying low to the ground for a short ways before diving into thick cover (if one has been disturbed).

Grasshopper Sparrows are big-headed with short squared tails and a flat forehead. Its crown has a central white stripe bordered by thick dark stripes, otherwise it has mostly plain buff coloration on the face and chest and a gray nape with fine pink stripes. Its back is heavily striped. Small touches of yellow in front of the eye and at the bend of wing are also field marks that help distinguish Grasshopper Sparrows from the other grassland species.

The peak of migration in many areas is during late April and October. They apparently migrate mostly at night and travel to southern destinations such as the southern United States, Mexico, western Central America, the Bahamas, and Cuba.

Grasshopper Sparrows may nest in small colonies in open grasslands. Males sing from low perches to defend their territory. They sometimes sing at night or in flight during courtship. Nest sites are on the ground, very well hidden at base of weeds, shrubs, or clumps of grass. Nests are made in the shape of an open cup of dry grass, lined with fine grass, rootlets, and sometimes animal hair. The nests are often placed in slight depressions, so that the rim of the nest is even with level of ground and they usually have a partly domed back with the sides made of grass woven into the overhanging vegetation, leaving an opening at the front. The female will approach the nest (and leave it) on foot, under cover, making it extremely difficult to find the nest. If a predator is near, the female will act injured (like killdeer will do) to draw the predator away from the nest.

The female lays 4-5, but sometimes 3-6 eggs and only has to incubate about 11-13 days. The male doesn't share incubation duties but will help feed the young. The eggs are creamy white, spotted with reddish brown and gray. Hatchlings will fledge at about nine days after hatching, even though they may not be able to fly well. Due to this rapid reproduction schedule, the female may have up to three broods of chicks per season (one per month), making this bird capable of rapid population recovery if habitat and food sources are available.

Grasshopper Sparrows forage while hopping or running on the ground, picking up food from plant stems and the soil. They almost always forage alone for insects and seeds. In summer, they will eat grasshoppers, beetles, caterpillars, ants, true bugs, and many other insects. They will also eat centipedes, snails, spiders, and even earthworms. Weed, grass, and waste grain seeds are also important, but probably more commonly eaten in winter. The Grasshopper Sparrow is known for grasping grasshoppers behind the head and removing the legs before either eating them or feeding to the young.



Approved Funding for Audubon

During the election last November, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (EN-RTF) was approved by the majority of Minnesotans. As a result, the money could be allocated for a host of environmental projects and research. Audubon MN was allocated part of the \$103.3 million appropriation that will fund over 100 projects. The funding for Audubon will help with marshbird surveys. Additional funding of \$28 million dollars goes to Community Grants that local Audubon chapters may be able to access for local projects.

That's not all though! The Legacy Bill was also passed, which will allow the Audubon Upper Mississippi River chapter to continue to do Tallgrass Aspen Parkland (TAP) habitat restoration work in northwestern MN. Greater Prairie Chicken, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and American Bittern depend on the grassland and wetland habitat present in the TAP.

Did you know... Avian surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey and spring Waterfowl Surveys do not adequately monitor many marsh-dwelling birds? That's mainly due to how hard it is to access their habitats and their inconspicuous nature. Effective conservation planning and habitat management for marshbirds is limited by insufficient information regarding their abundance, distribution, population trends, habitat relationships, and management needs. To address this information gap, monitoring programs specifically for marshbirds have been developed across the Midwest using standardized data collection protocols. (source: MN Audubon)



Bat Box Project Update

The Bat Box Project (the Project) brought together teams from the DNR Parks and Trails, Ecological and Water Resources, the Minnesota Biological Survey, and LCCMR partners, to explore how bat boxes can better support local bat populations. It was very successful!

The Project created outreach materials including posters and bat identification cards that showcase the diversity and beauty of Minnesota's eight bat species; interactive handouts with QR codes linking to new bat box guidance, reporting tools, and a central bat resource page; stickers and tattoos that serve as fun, memorable takeaways for program participants; and a guidance document for using bat boxes that will be available online. These outreach materials will be used at state parks, outreach events, and the DNR's State Fair booth.

This effort demonstrates how cross-division collaboration can spark fresh approaches to conservation communication. By combining science, design, and public engagement, the Bat Box Project is helping to reshape how bats are perceived and protected—and laying the groundwork for future partnerships, volunteers, and monitoring networks. (source: MN DNR)



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!!



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.