

# The Cardinal

FEBRUARY MARCH 2021

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## Warbler Record Will Remain Unbroken During Modified Warbler Weekend

**May 8-10, 2021**

Saint Paul Audubon Society members and friends have been gathering at locations in and around Lake City and Frontenac State Park during peak warbler migration every May for 50 years. These Warbler Weekends, besides being a much anticipated time for socializing and birding, have also created an astounding birding database. Precise records have been kept not only on the 33 warblers and 250 total species sighted from 1972-2020, but also, since 1987, on weather conditions and special bird appearances and behaviors.

COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 canceled the annual gathering and threatened to end the continuous record-keeping, but a few members went to Lake City informally and kept the count going. And now, as we approach May 2021 and COVID safety precautions continue to restrict social gatherings, the Warbler Weekend Committee has planned a modified weekend that will allow for independent birding and continued record keeping.

The rules for this year's event allow people to still go birding in the Frontenac area, with group size of 6 or fewer and COVID precautions in place, but there will be no led walks. The Hok-Si-La Park Dining Hall will be used to provide bird lists, maps, and return instructions, and all information will be set out on socially distanced tables. There will be no Friday talk or sit-down meals and the event will require no registration or cost. Watch the website and the *Cardinal* for updated information as we adapt to changing conditions.

We look forward to a more normal Warbler Weekend in 2022 and meanwhile hope that you will be able to enjoy birding at the modified Warbler Weekend in 2021, and also gather enough birding data to keep the long-running Warbler Weekend database intact.



## Group Events Will Stay On Hiatus

At the Saint Paul Audubon Society's January meeting, the Board of Directors discussed prospects for scheduling group bird walks and other events in the spring and agreed that besides the modified Warbler Weekend, we need to continue to hold off on scheduling in-person events. Board Vice President Jane Braun, who has detailed knowledge of MN State Health projections, regrettably says that it might be late summer before there is enough "herd immunity" to safely sponsor group events.

Meanwhile, the board will continue its monthly meetings via Zoom and our online speaker series will take the place of monthly chapter meetings. The speaker series on Zoom has been very successful with audiences as large as the in-person meetings. Recordings of the talks are available any time on our website. Please enjoy birding on your own and continue to observe safe birding guidelines.

## SAINT PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY

PO Box 7275, St Paul, MN 55107-7275

Welcome...  
To the Saint Paul Audubon Society.

**Next issue: April/May 2021**

We're a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and Earth's biological diversity.

The Saint Paul Audubon Society welcomes everyone to become a member or participate in activities as a non-member regardless of their race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, age, or gender identity.

### SAINT PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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### ABOUT OUR CHAPTER

Founded in 1945 as the 'St. Paul Bird Club' with twelve members, the Saint Paul Audubon Society now serves the entire East Metro region of the Twin Cities, and has around 2,800 members. Our Member Meetings are held from Sept.-Dec. & Feb.-May on the second Thursday of the month. For more info please contact leaders at left, or visit [www.saintpaulaudubon.org](http://www.saintpaulaudubon.org)

**ABOUT THE CARDINAL** The Cardinal is published 6 times a year and posted on [www.saintpaulaudubon.org](http://www.saintpaulaudubon.org) at the beginning of February, April, June, August, and October. For information contact Martha Douglas, editor, or Jackie Bussjaeger, assistant editor. Copy is due to the editor on the 15th of the month preceding publication.

The Cardinal is available free to everyone on our website. If you would like to receive a notice when new issues are ready, go to [www.saintpaulaudubon.org](http://www.saintpaulaudubon.org) and go to the "Newsletter" tab to subscribe with your email address. Our Webmaster is Ben Wilson, [ben@simpledesigns.biz](mailto:ben@simpledesigns.biz) or 651-332-1362.

## Help Wanted!

Saint Paul Audubon Society members and friends are involved in a wide range of activities promoting the enjoyment, understanding, and protection of birds and their habitats. For an all-volunteer organization, we get a lot of work done! But there is more to do and volunteers are always needed. To help match volunteers with jobs needing to be done, we will list current opportunities in the *Cardinal*. If something catches your eye, please contact the person identified for more information, or contact our volunteer coordinator Barbara Lindeke ([bclindeke@gmail.com](mailto:bclindeke@gmail.com)) for additional suggestions.

### Manager of Social Media

A volunteer is needed to help spread the news about St. Paul Audubon Society activities and the people involved, through the use of major social media networks. This person would create and oversee organizational accounts for the society on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This is a great opportunity for someone who has an active interest in social media and has time to regularly post new material and monitor material posted by others.

### Reporter/Writer

We would like to provide more information in the *Cardinal* about activities hosted by other organizations that might be of interest to Saint Paul Audubon members and friends, and are looking for someone to gather the information and write the copy for the newsletter.

Volunteers for both of these roles will work with Martha Douglas, VP of communications on the society's board. Please contact her at [mdouglas@umn.edu](mailto:mdouglas@umn.edu) if you are interested.

## BOARD MEETINGS

The Chapter's Board Meetings, held the first Monday of most months, are conducted via Zoom. The next meetings will be February 1 and March 1 at 6 p.m.

## *President's Message*

### **Becoming a Strong Voice For Birds**

The Saint Paul Audubon Society has been a leading force for birds and conservation in the east metro area for more than 50 years. Society members want to share their experiences with nature with other birders but also advocate for birds and conservation. To focus and increase its advocacy activities, your society has re-established an Advocacy Committee and held its first meeting in January.

The committee's objective is to become a strong voice for birds and conservation in local, county, and regional governments in the east metro area. It will, of course, support efforts of National Audubon and other conservation organizations on state and national issues but most of our efforts will go to local and regional matters. The issues we will tackle are not "just for birds." We believe the natural world offers great benefits to people too. We want to have nature accessible for a quick walk in the woods, a park, or your own neighborhood where you can hear the birds singing, feel the wind blowing, or see the seasons changing. These experiences create a feeling of peace and calmness essential in our chaotic world.

At its first meeting, the Advocacy Committee identified the following issues of concern, with specific actions to be determined at future meetings:



- **Pigs Eye Lake Islands Project.** This project aims to use dredged sediment from the main channel of the Mississippi River to create a group of islands in Pigs Eye Lake. Some conservation groups believe this will enhance the lake and surrounding environment. Others raise concerns about the potential quality of the dredged materials that will be deposited in the lake. There are also concerns about the impact upon existing rookeries for Great Blue Herons, American Egrets, Black-crowned Night Herons and other species.
- **City of Maplewood and Ramsey County properties.** The City of Maplewood and Ramsey County each propose to sell for development a parcel of land adjoining Battle Creek Regional Park. The first parcel is an 80-acre grassland and the second is a golf course. Both tracts are valuable as open space. The golf course contains 26 acres of wetlands, buffers and natural areas. The 80-acre tract is especially important as a vanishing grassland habitat. The land also has federally endangered rusty patch bumblebees.
- **Tree Preservation Ordinance in St. Paul.** St. Paul does not have a city ordinance that discourages removal of trees.
- **Bird Safety.** The committee will work with several area communities to encourage or mandate bird-safe practices in construction, including bird-safe glass.
- **Natural Parklands.** East metro parklands are losing natural areas because of land being converted to recreational activities such as mountain biking and other uses not compatible with wildlife.
- **Dark Skies.** An increasing amount of artificial light at night is impacting birds, insects, and other wildlife. Much of the lighting serves very little purpose and could be removed or reconfigured rather than dispersed over large areas.

The new Advocacy Committee will help us educate and engage members on conservation issues in our region. Please feel free to offer your comments on public policy issues that affect birds and conservation in our region. Contact Donn Waage at 612-735-4085.

*Donn Waage, Saint Paul Audubon Society President*



## Online Speakers Coming Up

More great speakers are coming up as part of our online series, taking the place of our monthly in-person member meetings for the time being. The presentations begin at 7 p.m. on the dates shown below. To tune in, go to [saintpaulaudubon.com](http://saintpaulaudubon.com) and click on the current meeting's link.



### February 11: "Hidden Gems of the North Shore," featuring photographer and naturalist Phil Hartley.

Minnesota Master Naturalist Phil Hartley will use photos to show us 20 or so locations along the North Shore that are not actually hidden, but better known and used by locals than tourists. These locations, running from Duluth to Silver Bay, are great spots for nature lovers and bird watchers, and are generally just enough off the beaten path that "social distancing" is rarely an issue. Phil's presentation will use photos to highlight how you know you are there and then some of the most interesting features and birding opportunities of each location. Download the PDF handout ([https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E5eH5apbE\\_jT1CjwxXD\\_3d3ynlwZKxRO?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E5eH5apbE_jT1CjwxXD_3d3ynlwZKxRO?usp=sharing)) to follow the presentation site by site, including information on why the location is included, where it is, and when is the best time to visit.

Phil Hartley moved from the Twin Cities to the Two Harbors area about 20 years ago. The advent of digital cameras gave him an opportunity to combine photography with a love of the natural beauty of the North Shore. Landscape, nature, and wildlife photography gradually turned from hobby to passion. Phil uses his photography to tell a story and has given presentations on a variety of North Shore topics such as wildflowers, state parks, the Superior Hiking Trail,

Lake Superior storms, and hidden gems. You might find him, often with his wife, Helen, along the Lake Superior shoreline, in the Superior National Forest, or in Sax-Zim Bog.

Phil posts many of his photos on [facebook.com/phil.hartley.14](https://facebook.com/phil.hartley.14) and on his website, [philhartley.smugmug.com](http://philhartley.smugmug.com).

**March 11: "Prairie Haven – Prairie and Savanna Restoration on an Old Wisconsin Farm," with Marcie and Mike O'Connor.** Marcie and Mike O'Connor bought their farm in 2000 and decided to make a project out of trying to restore the land back to the way it was before it was farmed. They had no idea it would take so long or be so rewarding. They planted prairies in all the old crop fields, cleared overgrown bluff prairies and savanna, and restored and replanted wet prairies along the creek. They've also been working to learn about the many birds, animals, and plants that have returned and share the land with them. Marcie will talk about the restoration and Mike will tell about his project to record birds and animals and use the recordings to document what they've done.

Marcie has a B.A. in biology from Grinnell College, an M.A. in design from the University of Minnesota, and many years of experience doing smaller restorations before they bought their farm. Mike's managerial and technical background provided the foundation for serving as operations manager and maintenance staff for the restoration. He's the audio-ID half of the birdwatching team, where being a lifelong musician comes in handy. Visit [PrairieHaven.com](http://PrairieHaven.com) to learn more about the project.

**April 8:** Lynette Anderson, Interpretive Naturalist and Restoration Assistant at Belwin Conservancy, will present "Belwin, Bison, and Birds." She will talk about the wide variety of habitats at Belwin, most notably prairie and oak savanna, and about the introduction of a bison herd onto their land. Belwin was founded in 1971 and launched Belwin Outdoor Science, a collaboration with Saint Paul Public Schools. Belwin has served more than 400,000 students since then and continues to serve over 10,000 a year, currently through virtual field trips.

**May 13:** Rob Schultz, Audubon Minnesota executive director and conservation team leader.

## Meet Saint Paul Audubon Society Volunteer Julian Sellers

Those who are familiar with the history of the Audubon movement would agree that Julian Sellers has had a brush with fame. Growing up in Rockledge, Florida in the 1950s, he attended meetings of the Indian River Audubon chapter led by Allan Cruickshank, the National Audubon Society's official photographer and educator for 37 years and the national editor of the Christmas Bird Count from 1954 to 1971. During this time, going birding with Allan and his wife, Helen, was a Saturday morning routine. After Allan's death, Julian continued to correspond with Helen, who was also renowned as a photographer and nature writer.

Birds were part of Julian's life from the beginning. The feeders outside the family's home attracted interesting species, including Painted Buntings, and there was an orange grove across the street that was the site for many birds and adventures. Once during spring migration, Julian saw warblers drinking from a split-open orange on a tree, then he climbed into the tree and perched there watching them for some time. The orange grove was also where he became interested in American Kestrels, a major focus for Julian today.

With college, time in the military, and the start of his career as a software engineer, "birding took a back seat," says Julian. He met his wife, Barbara, in Germany where they were both working for Siemens. They moved to St. Paul in 1978, had two kids, and eventually Julian decided to get back into Audubon. He was the field trip organizer for ten years and the Christmas Bird Count organizer. He also led the "birding by ear" field trips for many years. "When I resumed active birding, here in Minnesota, I tried to learn as many songs and calls of local birds as I could, he says. "I like to think that my background in music helps me recognize the voice quality and patterns of bird songs and calls."

Julian's music background includes singing with the Dale Warland Singers for nine years and it is a skill he relies on for birding since his color vision is not good. "I realized I would never be a



*Julian Sellers going to check on a kestrel nest at the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.*

good bird photographer, but thought that maybe I could make good sound recordings," he says. "I have recorded 86 species, in the metro area and in Waseca County (Barbara's home), and several have served to document rare species."

Another favorite birding activity for Julian is calling in owls. He tells about standing at an overlook above Hidden Falls in St. Paul one December morning at 4 a.m. and using the screech owl call he learned from Allan Cruickshank to bring one in. "I was calling for 20 minutes and was about to give up when I heard a screech owl calling in the distance," he says. "It started coming closer, responding to my calls, until it was right overhead and I could see it. Calling in owls and having them respond is magical."

A favorite place for Julian and Barbara to bird is the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park in a part of the German state of Schleswig-Holstein known as Nordfriesland. "It's flat, wet, and windy there," says Julian. "At low tide there are exposed mud flats over a very large area, which, together with wetlands and ponds near the dikes, attract millions of migrating fowl and shorebirds."

In recent years, a major focus of Julian's has been establishing nest boxes for American Kestrels, to help counteract their decline as

*Volunteer profile continued on page 6...*



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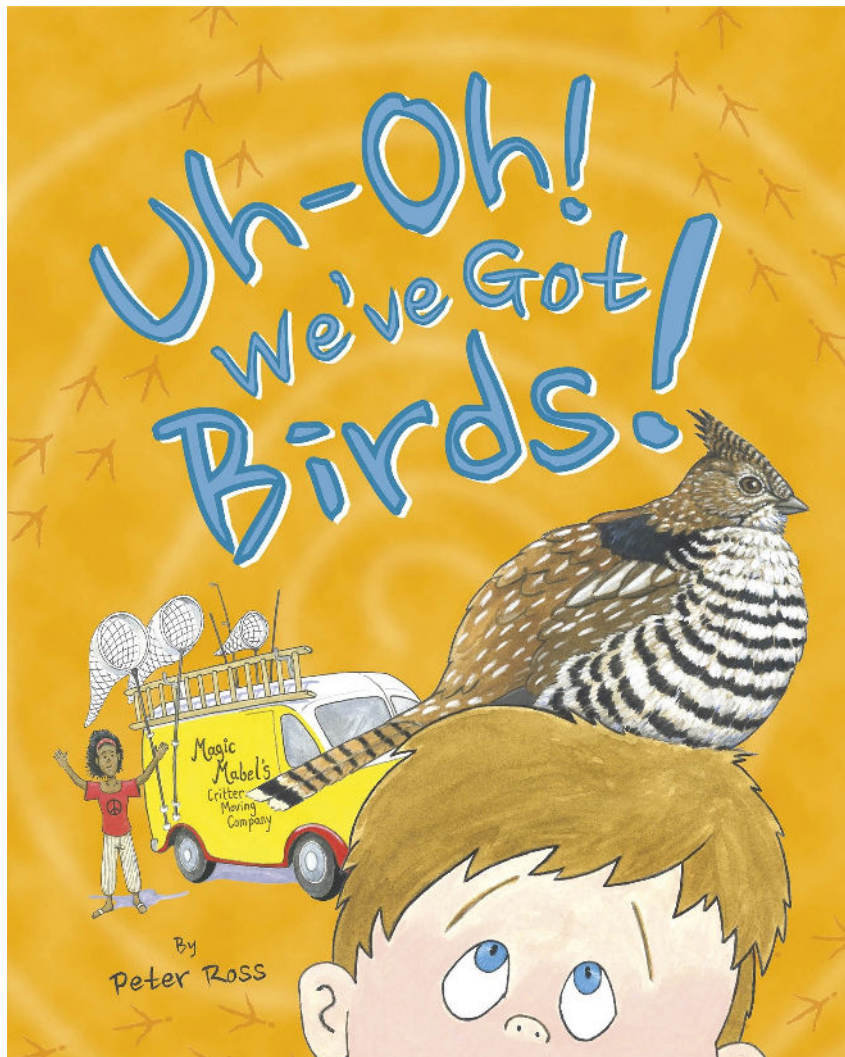
recorded since 1967. It started in 2012 as a project for the Conservation Committee, with one box in the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. There are now eight boxes at various sites in Ramsey and Washington counties. "The nest box has to be on a pole so you have to get permission from the authorities – park, city, county or whatever – and their help, to put up the pole." Julian explains that American Kestrels nest in large areas with short, grassy vegetation where they can find small mammals and insects to eat. They hunt from perches on trees or utility wires, and sometimes by hovering. Where there are not nest boxes, they build nests in woodpecker cavities in dead trees.

"If a pair occupies a nest box, we monitor their activities at prescribed intervals and report

in to the American Kestrel Partnership, which sets the standards for nest box projects. I have a wonderful crew of volunteer monitors who help. We use a pole-mounted camera to look inside the box and count eggs and chicks. We'll move a box if it doesn't attract kestrels within a reasonable number of years or if it attracts starlings."

"I'm fortunate to have been introduced to birding so early in life," says Julian. "Birding has allowed me to meet many interesting people, and it has opened the doors to wonderful friendships."

-Martha Douglas, Cardinal Editor



## ***Uh Oh! We've Got Birds!***

### **A Book for the Whole Family**

#### **Review by Rebecca Flood**

I was thrilled to recently receive the children's book *Uh-Oh! We've Got Birds!* by Peter Ross, a resident of St. Paul's Macalester-Groveland neighborhood. I first came to know Peter as a fine artist (his amazing painting of a black-crowned night heron hangs in my living room). Peter takes that fine art talent and populates this wonderful children's story with all sorts of wild birds that get into mischief in young Oliver's home when someone inadvertently leaves the front door open. Not only are the birds accurately depicted, but he includes some of their habits, thus introducing young folks to the types of food or other habits each bird is known for. Peter says: "I love nature in general, but birds really fill my heart with awe and joy."

This book will certainly do that for young children and adults alike. You can order *Uh-Oh! We've Got Birds!* online at [PeterRosscreates.com](http://PeterRosscreates.com) or at the Red Balloon or I Like You Too stores, both in St. Paul.

-Rebecca is a Saint Paul Audubon Society board member.