

The Cardinal

DECEMBER 2022 JANUARY 2023 • WWW.SAINTPAULAUDUBON.ORG • SAINT PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY

December-January Meetings In-Person

The December and January Saint Paul Audubon Society chapter meetings and presentations will take place in-person at the new Anpétu Téča Education Center in Roseville. Come to enjoy the company of fellow birders and a fascinating presentation.

Monthly chapter meetings are held the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in room 207 of the Education Center, 1910 County Road B West, Roseville. December 8's meeting will include special recognition of Richard Newmark, a long-serving volunteer.

December 8: Dr. Thomas Gable presents "The Voyageurs Wolf Project: Studying the Secret Life of Wolves in the Northwoods." Berry-eating, fish-hunting, beaver-ambushing wolves?? The Voyageurs Wolf Project was started to address one of the biggest knowledge gaps in wolf ecology: what do wolves do during the summer in forested ecosystems? Despite decades of research, the answer to this question has



Dr. Thomas Gable with Wolf Pup

remained elusive due to the difficulties of studying wolves during the summer. With the help of advanced GPS-tracing technology and remote video cameras, the Voyageurs Wolf Project has been able to get an unprecedented look at the summer ecology of wolves in the Greater Voyageurs Ecosystem in Northern Minnesota. This research has revealed new aspects of wolf hunting behavior and shown just how variable wolf diets during the summer are. In Dr. Gable's presentation, you will learn about the complex and fascinating lives of wolves in the Northwoods and literally see for yourself (from remote video footage) how these elusive wolves make a living.

Tom Gable is the project lead for the Voyageurs Wolf Project and he recently completed his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. He has been studying wolves in the Greater Voyageurs Ecosystem since 2014 when he started his master's degree at Northern Michigan University. He is particularly fascinated by wolf-beaver interactions and his graduate work was focused on trying to understand this predator-prey dynamic. Much of Gable's early interest in wolves stemmed from encountering wolf tracks, kills, and the occasional wolf while exploring the wild places around his family's cabin just outside of Killarney Provincial Park, Ontario, during the winter.

January 12: Jesus N. Pinto-Ledezma will present "Harnessing Bird and Remote Sensing Data to Understand Biodiversity Change Over Space and Time." Biodiversity is changing due to alterations in climate and human activities at rates only comparable to the fossil record, and understanding the processes that drive and maintain the composition and structure of ecological communities is a critical challenge for biologists. Additionally, species - the primary unit of analysis in ecology and evolution - are changing their distributions, affecting how biologists understand and study biodiversity. Pinto-Ledezma will talk about harnessing bird and remote sensing data for biodiversity assessments that allow us to go beyond the use of static data sets and perform a more realistic evaluation of the factors that determine species distribution and assemblage composition, to enhance

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SAINT PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Welcome!

To the Saint Paul Audubon Society. 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, religion, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status or age.

Membership

You will automatically become a member of the Saint Paul Audubon Society if you make a gift of \$30 or more to the National Audubon Society and reside in Ramsey or Washington counties and surrounding areas.

About our chapter

Founded in 1945 as the "St. Paul Bird Club" with 12 members, our chapter now serves the entire East Metro region of the Twin Cities and has around 2800 members. **Monthly chapter meetings** are held the second Thursday of the month, September-May and are open to the public.

For more **information**, please visit www.saintpaulaudubon.org or contact the board members and committee members listed here.

About the *Cardinal*

The *Cardinal* is published 6 times a year and posted on www.saintpaulaudubon.org at the beginning of February, April, June, August, October, and December. Copy is due on the 15th of the month preceding publication. Martha Douglas is the editor and Laurie Wachter is the graphic designer. The *Cardinal* is available for everyone to view on our website. If you would

like to receive an email when it is available, go to www.saintpaulaudubon.org, scroll down and click on "Join our email list."

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effective management strategies and conservation actions. He will talk about how ecological communities assemble over time and the processes that drive and maintain the bird diversity we see today, about using Geolocators to help understand migration, and about how we can integrate bird observations and remote sensing data to advance modeling approaches to better understand the associations between species and their habitats.

Jesus Pinto-Ledezma is a Presidential Fellow in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior at the University of Minnesota. He is an evolutionary ecologist and is particularly interested in understanding geographical patterns of biodiversity, the structure of ecological communities, and the underlying mechanisms that drive, maintain, and alter such patterns. His work focuses on terrestrial systems, with a focus on avifauna and vascular plants but also other groups. He integrates evolutionary and ecological theories of biodiversity and develops methodological advances to unveil processes acting in concert at different temporal and spatial scales. The ultimate aim of his work is to apply insights about the onset of biodiversity patterns to inform conservation and management responses to ongoing global change and biodiversity loss.

Help Wanted!

Tech manager for monthly meetings. We are in urgent need of someone to manage the technical setup for our monthly chapter meetings in a hybrid format (in-person and via Zoom); and to manage our Zoom account, run the Zoom portion of the meeting, and provide working links for people who want to tune in remotely. The new facility where the meetings are held, the Anpétu Téča Education Center in Roseville, is well equipped with high-quality audio/visual technology for running professional hybrid events. However, we need a regular tech manager who can learn the system, attend every meeting and run the technology in the room and on Zoom, work with the featured speakers to ensure that their presentations run smoothly, and troubleshoot any problems. The chapter meetings are held the second Thursday of the month, September-May, at 7:00 p.m.

If you are interested in filling this important role, please contact: Jim Stout, jstout@umn.edu 651-645-7017 or Greg Burnes, gburnes@comcast.net 612-205-3071.



President's Message

This past year has been momentous for our Society, especially after recovering from two years of COVID limitations. We were delighted that a near-normal Warbler Weekend returned in the spring; our volunteers participated in the return of both the Wild River and Great River Journeys for elementary schoolchildren; and we sponsored 33 field trips, which may be a record number.

You will see more information about our activities in the 2022 Annual Report, coming around the end of the calendar year. It will include an envelope for making a gift as part of our Annual Appeal. For those of you who prefer to make a contribution before year-end, you can send a check, made out to Saint Paul Audubon Society, to Kenyon Sayler at 2366 Tophill Circle, Roseville, MN 55113.

We have also begun to hold in-person chapter meetings again, although this has given us some new challenges. During the COVID hiatus, the Fairview Community Center, our usual meeting place, was torn down and rebuilt as the Anpétu Téča Education Center, at the same location, 1910 County Road B West, Roseville. The new facility is furnished with high-quality technical equipment, which we are working to master so that we can sometime soon hold hybrid meetings, in-person and broadcast via Zoom. We hope to recruit a new volunteer to oversee the technical aspects of our meetings (see Help Wanted article on page 2).

But we miss seeing more of you in-person. Meeting in-person is essential for building a strong community and I encourage as many of you as possible to attend the December 8 meeting, 7 p.m., at the new education center. This meeting will also include special recognition of Richard Newmark, who, among many volunteer activities, served a remarkable 12 years of service as Treasurer, a vital role for the Society's success. Full details of the meeting and the presentation are on page 1.

See you on December 8!

Donn Waage

President, Saint Paul Audubon Society



Photo by
Genessa Panninte



*Students watching birds on Big River Journey
Photo by Brian Goodspeed*

Volunteers Help Make the Big River Journey a Success

This fall, 1661 students in grades 1-3 attended a Big River Journey fieldtrip and approximately 1000 of them participated in the Saint Paul Audubon's River Birds activity. The students came from 18 area schools. While traveling on the Mississippi riverboat Anson Northrup, they were mentored by our volunteers on bird adaptations, habitat, and using binoculars. Bald Eagles, Belted Kingfishers, and Great Blue Herons were constant crowd pleasers.

The birding activity was led by Saint Paul Audubon members Lisa Keitel, Lynn Swift, Marilyn Maltby, Jennie Orr Thomas, Monica Mogren, and Nancy Uppgren. Thank you!!! Next year's Big River Journey is scheduled for Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from May 2-25. Watch in early 2023 for details on how to sign up for this wonderful volunteer opportunity.

Saint Paul Audubon volunteers also help with the Wild River Journey field trips on the St. Croix River in the spring. Both programs give students valuable information about birds and their habitats, and an introduction to birding.

Guidelines for events

Please follow these guidelines for all Saint Paul Audubon Society events:

- All participants are expected to be vaccinated and boosted (if timing indicates) for COVID-19
- All participants will maintain social distancing
- Masks are optional but welcome
- Attendees will provide their names and contact information at the start of each event



Sunset and cranes over Fish Lake

Photo by Jane Braun

Sandhill Cranes and Tundra Swans Star in Fall Field Trips

Thank you to Chase Davies and Louise Eidsmoe for organizing the annual October field trip to Crex Meadows SWA to see Sandhill Cranes congregate in the evening, during their fall migration. About 25 people attended and were treated to a gorgeous evening with nearly 2000 cranes, although once again the action took place at the Fish Lake SWA on Grettum Dike Road, about two miles south of Grantsburg. In addition to the cranes, the following 14 species were identified and reported: Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, American Coot, Wilson's Snipe, Bald Eagle, American Crow, and Red-winged Blackbird. Jane Braun also reported seeing Snow Buntings in Crex.

Folks had to travel farther and endure blustery late fall weather to view Tundra and Trumpeter Swans on the November 19 field trip to Brownsville. "This year was no exception, with scads of Tundra Swans and hands-full of Trumpeters," says Chase Davies, the trip's leader. "The distinctly different sounds of the two swan species let you know they are both represented. However, determining exactly which long-necked, huge, white-bodied bird is which -- well, good luck, a great scope, and cooperative Trumpeters and Tundras floating alongside for instant comparison sure help."

About 20 percent of the approximately 100,000 eastern population of Tundra swans use the pools near Brownsville to stage and fatten up for the winter migration, leaving when ice blocks them from accessing the nutritious, calorie-laden vegetation they seek and need. "The spectacle of thousands in sight and at least hundreds within hearing is

amazing, calming, and exciting, all at once," says Chase.

Any swans seen in pairs or small family groups after mid-December are assumed to be Trumpeter Swans. Tundras reportedly migrate day or night and new satellite records indicate they stage in several areas along their route eastward. Lead poisoning and poaching are the top threats in Minnesota, where ALL swans are illegal to hunt at all times.

Chase encourages everyone to "pencil in" these annual field trips to Crex Meadows and Brownsville. Both offer birding experiences at their seasonal peak, well worth the extra driving!



2022 St. Paul Christmas Bird Count

Saint Paul Audubon's Christmas Bird Count will take place on Saturday, December 17, 2022. Once again, Gregg Severson will organize and compile the count, with help this year from Kiki Sonnen. It will work in the usual way, as follows:

1. Each area in our CBC Circle will be assigned to a leader. Past leaders are encouraged to continue in their previous roles.
2. The assigned Area Leader will decide how to best survey their given area, splitting it into sub-areas for smaller groups to bird, or to all meet and bird together.
3. Area leaders will fill their groups as they see fit. New participants who contact Gregg or Kiki will be assigned to areas as area leaders request participants.
4. Anyone who lives within the count circle who wishes to participate as a feeder watcher may do so by contacting Gregg or Kiki.
5. Gregg will tally the overall count from area counts submitted by area leaders.

A post-count pot-luck party will take place at 6 p.m. at 1884 N Pascal St., Falcon Heights, home of Brian Goodspeed. Contact Gregg Severson at gregg.severson@gmail.com or 612-568-5272; or Kiki Sonnen at 651-331-9560.



*Female kestrel with newly hatched chicks in Lake Elmo Park Reserve nest box
Photo by Julian Sellers*

Calling for Facebook photos!

We love it when members and friends interact on Facebook, and would like to encourage everyone to post their photos as well. This is not meant to be a competition and photos of all sorts are welcome--birds, their habitats, people birding, places to go to see birds, or anything related to the conversation!

To join the Saint Paul Audubon Society group on Facebook, go to facebook.com/groups/saintpaulaudubonsociety and click on the "Join Group" button at the top of the page. Many thanks to Barbara Lindeke for looking after our site.

American Kestrel Nest Box Project Reaches 100 Kestrels Fledged

By Julian Sellers, Kestrel Nest Box Project Manager

Kestrel pairs raised 18 young this year in four of our eight nest boxes. The occupied boxes were in Afton State Park, The Belwin Conservancy (two boxes), and Lake Elmo Park Reserve. This year's crop brings the total since our project began, in 2012, to 100 young kestrels fledged, 49 in the last three years.

We have retired a nest box and added a new one. The box in the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary was no longer viable due to construction near the box. That was our first box, placed in 2012. Kestrels fledged five young that year, but the box was never occupied again.

Washington County has installed a new pole and nest box in Glacial Valley Park, in southeastern Woodbury. We think this large park with restored prairie will appeal to a kestrel pair.

You can see photos of the 2022 nest box contents at tinyurl.com/2022Kestrels

Thank you, again, volunteer nest box monitors Val Cunningham, Gerry Fuller, Janet Kortuem, Kathy Sidles, Tammy Swick, Lynn & Mike Swift, and Elizabeth Wolf. And thanks to Gus Koutsouvas, who does all of the heavy lifting and ladder work every fall, when we clean the boxes, and whenever we add, remove, or move a box.



Photo by Mark Olsen