

The



Cardinal

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2024 • WWW.SAINTPAULAUDUBON.ORG • SAINT PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Join Us for October and November Presentations

Presentations on a wide array of topics are the main event at Saint Paul Audubon's monthly meetings, held the second Thursday of the month, September through May, at 7:00 p.m. These events, free and open to the public, are held in person (except January and February) in room 207 of the Anpétu Téča Education Center at 1910 County Road B West, Roseville. Come early for refreshments and socializing. An option for watching via Zoom is also offered and talks are taped for later viewing.

Learn more below about the October and November presentations and visit <https://saintpaulaudubon.org/upcoming-events/> to get the full schedule, last-minute updates, and zoom links.

October 10, 7:00 p.m.: Mags Rheude and Mags Edwards present "Chimney Swift Conservation and Community Engagement." Mags Rheude, a biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, will introduce the Twin Cities Urban Bird Treaty (UBT) Program and their research on the efficacy of free-standing chimney swift towers in the Twin Cities. The Twin Cities hosts over 70 freestanding swift towers, built 10+ years ago during a conservation effort supported by Audubon chapters, Boy Scouts, and other civic groups.

The Twin Cities UBT group has examined whether towers were still present, monitored, and used by Chimney Swifts. Mags Edwards, Community Science Program

Coordinator with the Minnesota DNR, will discuss the group's recommendations moving forward in light of these results, and the group's current focus on community engagement with Chimney Swifts. This includes the development of a survey tool to crowdsource existing nests and roost sites, promoting community swift sits, and engaging with property owners to preserve existing sites.



Bird of Honduras: White Necked Jacobin, photo by Fi Rust

November 14, 7:00 p.m.: Gregg Severson will present "Birding in Honduras." Gregg says that Honduras is a gem of neotropical birding, with many fantastic locations and stunning birds. However, despite this abundance of natural beauty, it is not as established for ecotourism as places like Costa Rica or Columbia. Gregg will talk about Honduras as a destination, with a particular focus on how birders can be part of building birding tourism for the future and supporting the up-and-coming entrepreneurs who are making things happen there.

Gregg says, "While it is not my day job, I am a bird guide for my own little company, called Birding with Gregg. I primarily guide in Sax-Zim Bog in the winter and on weekends, and I am expanding into international guiding. I co-organize both the Minneapolis Birds and Beers group and the Minnesota Global Birders Group."



Chimney Swifts, photo by Ben Coengros

SAINT PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Welcome!

To the Saint Paul Audubon Society. We're a chapter of the National Audubon Society. **Our mission** is to engage a diverse community in enjoying, understanding, and protecting birds and the habitats all living beings need to thrive.

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.

Get Involved

We are a volunteer organization that relies on people willing to donate their time to our shared mission. Please consider getting involved with volunteer opportunities involved with birding walks, conservation efforts, or other activities. Visit <https://www.saintpaulaudubon.org/volunteer/> for a full list of committees and committee chairs, or get in touch with us on our contact page at <https://www.saintpaulaudubon.org/contact/>.

Become a Chapter Member

You are invited to become a Saint Paul Audubon Chapter Member by making a gift of \$25 or more. Your donation goes directly to our chapter's local efforts to educate about, advocate for, and protect our birds. Make a gift online at <https://www.saintpaulaudubon.org/get-involved/donate/>.

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. **Monthly chapter meetings** are held the second Thursday of the month, September-May, and are open to the public.

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. Martha Douglas is the editor and Laurie Wachter is the graphic designer. 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."

Contact Us

If you have a comment or question for a board member or the Cardinal editor, please use the contact form on the website at <https://www.saintpaulaudubon.org/contact/>. Your message will be forwarded promptly to the appropriate person.

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Next issue: December 2024 / January 2025

Help Wanted: Field Trip Coordinator

Cathy Croghan will be retiring from field trip coordination in early 2025. Please send her an email if you would like to learn more about this great volunteer gig at crogh001@umn.edu.



Conservation Committee 2024 Work Plan

As 2024 zooms by, we want to share what the conservation committee is working on, which includes having more activities that engage Saint Paul Audubon members as well as community neighbors. We will announce these events in the *Cardinal* and *News Updates* emails. We aspire to do more for conservation and welcome new members. Do you have a conservation project that benefits birds or their habitats that you're willing to coordinate? Please consider joining the conservation committee and we can help publicize projects and recruit additional volunteers.

Birds are in trouble. To do more for them, we must engage a much broader and diverse community. Our focus areas for 2024 include:

- American Kestrel nest box project - continuing this successful project to help kestrels, a declining species
- Chimney Swift conservation efforts - recently a member successfully convinced a homeowner's association for a 120-year old St. Paul condominium building not to cap their chimney, which would keep out chimney swifts
- Supporting the work of Pig's Eye Park Friends
- Collaborating with St. Paul Parks & Recreation to revitalize Audubon Woods near Como Lake
- Supporting conservation work on Saint Paul's east side
- Seeking ways to collaborate and advance Bird City - Saint Paul

Calendar

October 10 - Chapter meeting with Chimney Swift presentation. Page 1.

October 22 - Crex Meadows field trip to see Sandhill Cranes. Page 4.

October 23, November 25 - Birds and Beers St. Paul. 6-9 pm. Back room of Sweeney's Saloon, 96 Dale Street, St. Paul.

November 14 - Chapter meeting with "Birding in Honduras." Page 1.



Chip Notes

Happy fall, everyone. Your board of directors held a planning meeting in early September to assess our chapter's status and determine how we will guide its focus in the coming year and beyond. Here are a few highlights.

Mission Statement Revisited

The first order of business was to review our mission statement to ensure it expresses our goals and aspirations. We know birds are in trouble, and to positively "bend the curve," we need to build on what we are doing today by expanding our chapter's outreach and engaging a larger and more diverse audience. We also want to acknowledge that, though we are focused on birds, our work to improve habitat impacts all living beings. With these two points in mind, we evolved our mission statement to – *Our mission is to engage a diverse community in enjoying, understanding, and protecting birds and the habitats all living beings need to thrive.*

We then examined our three strategic pillars – community engagement, conservation, and advocacy – to assess what we are doing well and where to tweak or expand our work to better serve our mission. We should take great pride in the work we are already doing.

Community Engagement

We plan to build on the work we have started in bringing our message directly to more Saint Paul communities. Our focus will be to engage people across a broader age, social, economic, and cultural spectrum, and with varying physical abilities and levels of birding experience. This will allow all bird lovers to connect with birds, get information about how they can protect birds

and habitats, and be advocates for our mission.

We are expanding our reach into additional Saint Paul neighborhoods through grants and educational programming. We are also building stronger partnerships with organizations such as Urban Bird Collective, Bird-ability, and MyBirdClub to help us spread our message to audiences we do not traditionally serve.

Conservation

We continue to expand our conservation work. For more details, please see the additional article on page 2.

Advocacy

We are strong advocates for birds and habitats. This work demands building and maintaining meaningful partnerships with many organizations and governmental agencies that share our mission. Our work at Pig's Eye, moving Saint Paul towards passing and implementing MRCCA ordinances (see Aug/Sept *Cardinal*), and supporting other community initiatives have made an impact. However, we need to engage more people by better leveraging our community engagement activities in advocating for changes that protect birds and habitats.

How Can You Help

We constantly need volunteers to lead and assist with these initiatives. If you are interested in joining us, please send a note to general@saintpaulaudubon.org or go to our website and click on **Get Involved**. We would love to have you on board.

Greg Burnes
President,
Saint Paul
Audubon Society



Vote "Yes" in November to Continue Dedicated Funding for the Environment

More than 30 years ago, Minnesotans voted to dedicate a portion of state lottery proceeds to conservation. Since then, it's provided more than \$1 billion (since 1991) to fund projects to protect and restore our state's water, land, and habitats. This includes more than \$1.8 million for projects that support birds, riverside habitats, local planning efforts, wetlands, and more.

In November, a question to renew this funding will be on the front of every Minnesotan's ballot. To ensure that this critical funding source remains dedicated for the environment, more than 50% of voters must vote "YES." Leaving the question blank counts as a "No" vote. If it doesn't pass, the constitutional protection for this important conservation funding will expire.



FIELD TRIP



Sandhill Cranes

Photo above by Johns Feikema

Photo at right by Valerie Fuller

Sandhill Cranes at Crex Meadows SWA

102 E. Crex Ave., Grantsburg, WI
Tuesday, October 22, 4:00 ~ 8:15 PM

Since historic times, Greater Sandhill Cranes have congregated by the thousands every autumn evening in the marshes and ponds now called Crex Meadows SWA, located on the north side of Grantsburg, WI. People likewise gather to witness the sight of seemingly never-ending strands and haunting sounds as the birds seek and settle in to shelter for the night. Perhaps this is your year to experience anew or again this enduring ritual. Introductory remarks and instructions will begin at 4 p.m. in the parking lot of the Visitor Center at Crex Meadow State Wildlife Area in Grantsburg WI. Destination(s) chosen will depend on CMSWA staff information, recent main roost areas, number of cars in the caravan, and current weather. Most likely either roost sites in Crex Meadows or at Fish Lake will be the general area.

DIRECTIONS Take I-35 North to the Rock Creek/ Grantsburg Exit #165 (Highway 70), approximately 34 miles from Forest Lake. Take exit 165, turn right (EAST) on Highway 70, go 15 miles to the stop light in Grantsburg, WI. Turn left (NORTH) onto Pine Street. Follow the goose signs through town to the Visitor Center, located on the NE corner of the junction of County Road D and County Road F. Park and meet in the parking lot. 45.796350, -92.680483

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 • Be sure to check <https://saintpaulaudubon.org/upcoming-events/> for more details and field trip changes throughout the season.
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INSTRUCTIONS Bring binoculars and a scope if possible. Dress for cooling temperatures during the evening. Consider bug repellent, sunscreen, water, car supper or snack. Group will gather in the parking lot for basic information by the leaders with Q and A. Departure time from the parking lot depends more on weather than conversation. We will caravan from the parking lot and depart as one group at the end of the evening. If destination is in Crex Meadows SWA, carpooling will be strongly encouraged; if destination is Fish Lake SWA all will drive separately.

REGISTRATION Register with Louise Eidsmoe 651-231-0453 louise.eidsmoe@gmail.com

DIFFICULTY Viewing can be improved somewhat by walking the road slowly, staying close beside the cars, so as not to spook the cranes. Primarily a car caravan with some short walks along road. NOTE: Modern restrooms are located in the Visitors Center (715-463-2896) which has limited hours in October.

LEADERS Louise Eidsmoe 651-231-0453 louise.eidsmoe@gmail.com and Chase Davies 651-246-9754 RockyBirder@gmail.com



Our California Condor Sightings

[How serendipity led to the sightings of a lifetime]

By Holly & Paul Peirson

It's 4:15 p.m. pacific time, in a hot, dusty, tiny campground, where we were lucky enough to get the last campsite. We are gazing up at very tall cliffs in Pinnacles National Park, ESE of Monterrey Bay – two mountain ranges from the Pacific Ocean. We had been given the tip that at about 4:30, a dozen or so California Condors will come over the mountain to roost for the night in the trees along the ridgeline. Amazingly, they DID! So Cool. We were transfixed. We set up our scope, showed other campers what we were looking at, and completely forgot about dinner until it got too dark to see the birds any longer.

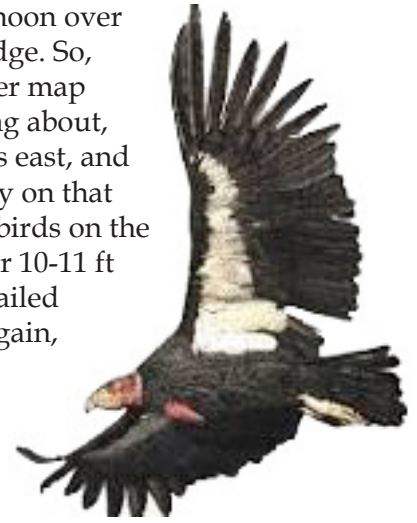
We had been given that information a long way to the southeast, while watching condors soar overhead and swoop in to roost out of the sun under the 'new' bridge at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. This was at the Historic 'Navajo Bridge' Visitor Center in Marble Canyon on the Colorado River. There are two bridges. The old bridge is now a walking bridge, while the new bridge carries semi's, fishermen, campers, and holds roosting condors!

Our FIRST tip about where to view condors came from a good friend here in Minnesota. She gave me very specific directions, which I studiously wrote verbatim: "Drive east from Kanab about 50 miles on Hwy 89A, and turn north on the 1st road you'll see. The Vermilion Cliffs are right there. About 3 miles up this road, there is a viewing area. I saw 6-8 condors last week!" She sent along some photos as living proof! She was right: the ONLY road near the cliffs is House Rock Valley Rd [BLM 1065], which leads up the west side of Vermilion Cliffs National Monument.

At the condor viewing area, we hauled out our scope and were looking for the birds when along came an official condor-watcher, a volunteer for the *Peregrine Fund*. They have the 'task' of making sure the young birds they hack each Spring are being 'socialized into the group' and shown how to find food by the older birds that live in the area. The volunteers periodically put out goats and roadkill deer, but it's up to the birds to *find* the meal. The hacking building is at the top of the cliff opposite, but there are many miles of very tall cliffs, so help finding it was readily accepted. Several birds could be seen inside the wire enclosure. They were young who had just been moved from the breeding facility, and would be released within the week. Older birds soared overhead, their long, flat wings clearly visible against the deep blue of the sky. Some were roosting on jagged outcroppings, visible with a scope or binoculars by first looking for areas with 'whitewash' along the cliffs.

As we were watching, we listened to the volunteer. At some point he casually mentioned that some of these

birds will spend the afternoon over at the Marble Canyon bridge. So, after poring over our paper map to find what he was talking about, we drove another 35 miles east, and were rewarded generously on that beautiful drive by seeing birds on the wing, and comparing their 10-11 ft wingspan to that of Red-tailed Hawks – twice as long! Again, serendipitously, another *Peregrine Fund* volunteer gave us the tip about Pinnacles National Park. People are so generous with information when they can see that you are genuinely interested in the birds.



So . . . all that happened 4-5 years ago. Last October we again found ourselves at the condor viewing site, and were given the tip that a CHICK was being raised in a cave very close to the bridge. We were headed that direction, so we stopped. Out on the walking bridge, we looked in both directions for a cave. In another instance of great timing, here came two *Peregrine Fund* volunteers with a very nice scope. They trained it on the nest cave and we all got a great look at the 5-month old chick. It is being raised by new parents who have just recently become a pair. It is one of the first *wild* chicks born to captive-raised birds. The chick, if it survived to be 6 months old, is now flying about the Colorado Plateau with its parents. So Cool.

If You Go:

- There is a restroom, but no water at the condor viewing site. 2 stationary scopes are provided.
- There are campgrounds within a 50-mile radius. They don't necessarily have amenities beyond a restroom. Hotels and gas are available in Page, Jacob Lake, and Wahweap Marina in AZ, plus Kanab and Big Water in UT.
- Download maps before leaving town; there are no cell towers nearby. The "Indian Country" map from So. California AAA is excellent, if you like paper maps.
- There are SO many things to see & do in this out-of-the-way area. Visitor Centers in Kanab and Big Water (on Hwy 89) can give pointers for sightseeing and hiking.
- BLM 1065 is OK for passenger cars if it's dry (very bumpy), so 4WD is better. Do NOT attempt to drive on unpaved roads in the Southwest if it has rained or snowed in the recent past. Most are of a silty clay that turns to muck, grabs tires, and doesn't let them go. Be Prepared.