

## **Board of Directors Candidates 2026/27**



### **PRESIDENT – 1-year term Kiki Sonnen**

Kiki Sonnen is running for re-election as President for a one-year term. Kiki is a lifelong resident of St Paul. Her favorite bird is the Great Blue Heron. She has worked for years to protect heron rookeries, parks, and open space, and to bring birds and people together.

Kiki is retired. Her employment history includes financial assistance for Ramsey County Human Services; serving as the director of a community-based nonprofit that provided Meals on Wheels and emergency assistance to families in need; serving as a legislative aide in the City of St. Paul; and serving as a Crime Analyst for the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office. Kiki was also elected to the St. Paul City Council, where she served from 1984 to 1990. Kiki has been an active volunteer with Saint Paul Bird Alliance, on and off, since 1976.

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### **VICE PRESIDENT – 1-year term Debbie Brown**

Debbie Brown is the current Vice President of the Saint Paul Bird Alliance and also serves as a volunteer Co-Chair of the Conservation Committee. A current project is the cleanup and native plant restoration of Cardinal Woods, a small pocket of songbird habitat within Como Regional Park. Debbie has a background in the U.S. Army and in corporate roles. Debbie is an occupational safety and health professional who works as a consultant. Debbie and her husband, Mark, enjoy traveling to visit friends and family. Debbie enjoys hiking, running, cross-country skiing, biking, and looking for mushrooms, wildflowers, and birds.



**TREASURER – 1-year term**  
**Neil Carlson**

Neil Carlson has a wide range of interests, including birding, photography, science fiction, lichens, astronomy, and rocks and minerals. He also works full-time as an industrial safety and health specialist and is deeply involved in the Master Naturalist program. His favorite bird is the Green Heron. He lives in New

Brighton. Neil is always ready to help!



**SECRETARY- 1-year term**  
**Allison Campbell Jensen**

Allison Campbell Jensen is skilled in writing, editing, and public relations. She has volunteered with the Bird Alliance for over a year, helping develop outreach and communication efforts in the community. She is active in her church. She and her husband live in Roseville and enjoy weekend birding outings and attending Minnesota Twins games.



**NEW BOARD MEMBER – 2-year term**  
**Micki Long**

Micki Long spent her career as an English professor in Ohio, where she discovered the Ohio version of a Master Naturalist program. After retiring a bit early and moving to Montana, she became a Master Naturalist there as well, served on the Bitterroot Bird Alliance Board (eventually as president), and served on the Bitterroot Forest Collaborative. She's now a Master Naturalist here in MN.

Across these endeavors, birds and their habitats, especially trees, have been her focus. A few years ago, Micki discovered nature journaling and enjoys painting birds, including those she's photographed. Micki joined the Saint Paul Bird Alliance's Program Committee in the winter of 2026.



**NEW BOARD MEMBER – 2-year term  
Jennifer Gleason**

Jennifer Gleason has been a Zookeeper specializing in birds for the past 25 years and has worked with more than 200 species from around the world, as well as various mammals and reptiles. She has worked with Pacific Bird Conservation and the Mariana Avifauna Conservation program on a translocation project

and holds a degree in Zoology and Psychology from Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Whenever she travels, you can bet she's got her binoculars packed. Whether it's Mankato, California, or Africa, she never leaves home without them. She's a co-host of the St. Paul Birds & Beers gatherings and has participated in the Christmas Bird Count for the past 10 years. Jennifer also enjoys seeing live music with friends and family, going to the theater, fishing, puzzles, and spending time with her cats.

## **BOARD MEMBERS - Currently Serving – Not Up for Reelection This Year**



### **BOARD MEMBER - Monica Bryand**

Monica is the founder of Urban Bird Collective, a non-profit community-based organization that provides safe and welcoming spaces for BIPOC and the LGBT community in the Twin Cities. Her career includes working for philanthropic foundations, community-based organizations, and consulting agencies. Monica also works as a scorer, announcer, and support staff for the U of M's athletic department.

In addition to these jobs, Monica volunteers on many environmental-focused nonprofit boards. She is the Co-Chair of the Bird Alliance's Conservation Committee. She has served on our board for several years.



### **BOARD MEMBER - Craig Cox**

Craig grew up in Saint Paul and has spent 40-plus years working to protect natural resources, with a particular emphasis on water and wetlands. He has worked for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the National Academy of Sciences, the Senate Agriculture Committee, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Soil and Water Conservation Society, and the Environmental Working Group.

His work gave him the experience of seeing how good policy can intersect with public lands, agriculture, and the environment for the greater good. Craig became hooked on birding while watching Cedar Waxwings feed in a meadow on the North Shore. Now, binoculars are always with him, including in his fishing vest, as he pursues his other passion – fly fishing for trout. Now retired, he is volunteering with the Saint Paul Bird Alliance. He has served on the Board and as Secretary, and he is now chairing our chapter's grants program.



### **BOARD MEMBER - Lucas Lin**

Lucas is an avid birder and wildlife photographer currently studying at the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry. His interest in birding was sparked when, as a college student, he spotted a flock of cranes at a Wisconsin marsh in the spring of 2022. They were Whooping Cranes! Since then, his curiosity has blossomed into a passion for birdwatching and wildlife photography, leading him on birding trips across the country.

Throughout his adventures, Lucas has used his passion for birding to raise awareness of the diversity and beauty of birds and the habitats we depend on.



### **BOARD MEMBER - Owen Stefanich**

Owen is an avid birder who first became interested in birds in high school. He spent many hours birding in the Pacific Northwest before coming to Northfield to study biology at St. Olaf College. During his freshman year, he founded an on-campus Audubon chapter, the Bird Alliance of St. Olaf. The chapter leads weekly bird walks and advocates for environmental policy and habitat restoration.

This summer, he will work at a MAPS Station, monitoring bird populations in south-central Minnesota. In the fall, he will study abroad but will participate as a Board of Directors member via Zoom.