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Make a Difference with Your MHAS Membership!

New Changes Ahead... by Peter Buessler, MHAS President

Do you know that there are two types of MHAS memberships? Most of us signed up as a National Audubon member – either by sending MHAS a check or paying our dues directly to the National Audubon Society. As a National Audubon member we are automatically assigned to a local chapter – like MHAS – based on our zip code. Most of our National Audubon membership contribution goes to support the work of the national organization. Only a small portion comes back to support local programs and activities.

If you become a MHAS ‘Local Chapter Member’, all of your membership dollars stay in our community and are used for things like boardwalks and trails at the Neilson Spearhead Center and Preserve, the Young Naturalist Program, community partnerships such as Birds, Bees & Butterflies – Bemidji, Bird City Minnesota, and more.

Over the next few months the Board hopes to revamp our MHAS Local Chapter membership structure by adding new levels such as Student, Adult, Family, Supporter, and Community Partner. All Local Chapter Memberships will continue to include use of the Neilson Spearhead Center and Preserve, as well as other benefits. But we need to make a few amendments to our bylaws to support this change.

On **Wednesday, November 6th** we will hold a special MHAS Members meeting to vote on these bylaw changes. You can look at and download a copy of the changes and a ballot from our website: www.spearheadmhas.org, pick one up at the Neilson Spearhead Center & Preserve, or request one be mailed to you. **The meeting will be held at 6:30 PM, Lueken’s North Community Room, Bemidji, MN.**

There will also be a presentation on “Birds of the High Arctic” by George-Ann Maxson immediately following the Members meeting. They will show photos and tell us stories of their adventures! Steve and George-Ann Maxson will share photos from the edge of the Arctic. Life at high latitudes faces many challenges: long, cold, dark winters followed by short, 24 hour daylight summers, cyclic food abundance, and always, the wind. Meet the birds of 60° North, plus a few large mammals.



Orange Belted Bumblebee



GA Maxson 2013

If you're reading this and are not already a member of the Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society, consider joining! Find our membership information at www.spearheadMHAS.org

Young Naturalists in 2019

Once again, the kids had an awesome summer out at Spearhead! The programs were led by Master Naturalist, Dan Bera and Assistant Naturalist Sarah Nemgar. The summer started out with Dan's Crew, consisting of 8–12TH graders, preparing the trails, lab, and equipment for use. This is how the summer always starts at Spearhead. Dan leads this group of young men and women, making sure the camp is safe and ready for the upcoming participants. The crew learns plenty of skills completing these tasks, all while playing games, sharing past experiences, as well as making lasting memories.



Campers had plenty of opportunities to enjoy Spearhead and what our Young Naturalist Program has to offer. During the 8 weeks of programming, they learned about natural history by identifying and recording over 170 different species of animal and plants found in and around the camp. They hiked many of the trails, played several fun games like fox & squirrel and capture the flag, which helps players develop important job skills like teamwork, leadership, communication, and problem solving. Other games and activities in this year's programming introduced campers to different animal behaviors like predator—prey relationships.

Some campers also learned how to use a compass and take nature photos. They swam, canoed, did some birdwatching, identified animal tracks, went hiking and fishing. All in all another amazing summer!

John Latimer Speaks at MHAS Annual Membership Meeting!



This August at the annual members meeting expert naturalist, John Latimer shared his love and passion for nature to a packed house at the Neilson Spearhead Center.

Neilson Spearhead Center gets a Pollinator Garden!



Students from Oak Hills Christian College helped us plant flowering shrubs near the caretaker house at the Neilson Spearhead Center. We're excited to watch it grow!

120th Annual Christmas Bird Count! Dec 14th and 16th



Join us for the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) sponsored by the Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society. The Bemidji CBC has been a tradition since being started by founders of the Headwaters Audubon Society chapter back in the 1970s. Participants regularly see crossbills, redpolls and other winter finches. You need not be an expert in bird identification to participate in this citizen science project. MHAS has loaner binoculars and bird guides and we will team up less experienced folks with more seasoned birders.

Join us in this fine holiday tradition! Bring warm clothes, good boots, binoculars, and a bird book. Contact this year's compiler, Doug Johnson, at 218-751-4162 or dougjohn23@gmail.com for more information. Birders will gather at the following locations:

Bemidji Christmas Bird Count

7:30 AM, Saturday, Dec 14th
Minnesota Nice Café

Itasca State Park Bird Count

7:30 AM, Monday, Dec 16th
Itasca State Park Visitor Center

Study Shows Reduced Abundance of North American Birds

This September researchers from Cornell Lab of Ornithology, American Bird Conservancy, and Smithsonian published a study in the journal of *Science* revealing some shocking news on the status of North America's bird populations. In less than a single lifetime, North America has lost more than one in four of its birds. Using long term population monitoring data as well as weather radars dating back to 1970 they found an overall 29% reduction in bird populations. The decline in bird population and abundance is not just limited to rare species, but also includes steep declines in fairly common species, with grassland birds taking the hardest hit.

This finding is not just about birds. Loss of overall avian abundance can signify overall loss of habitat for other wildlife species and ecosystem function. But it's not too late to bring birds back! Like our success with bringing back the Bald Eagle and the Trumpeter Swan, you can be part of the solution. Here are some ways you can be a hero for birds:

Be a Hero for Birds!

- Make your windows bird-safe. Use decals or reflective tape on windows tending to have avian strikes
- Replace part of your lawn with native wildflowers
- Save birds from potential predation from house cats by keeping your cat indoors.
- Avoid using pesticides and herbicides.
- Drink shade-grown/bird-friendly coffees. Many of our migratory birds depend on the forests in which our coffee is grown. Consider switching to bird-friendly coffee.
- Watch birds and share what you see. Hint: Come to the Christmas Bird Count!
- Write your representatives. Tell them you support conservation!



**AUDUBON SOCIETY -
MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS CHAPTER**

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We're on the WEB!!
www.spearheadMHAS.org

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US Postage paid
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Permit #28

The Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats.



Fostering environmental education and resource protection in Northern Minnesota

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Upcoming Events!

Birds of the Far North - Churchill, Iceland, Finland

Wed, November 6, 2019, 6:30pm, Luekens North Community Meeting Room

Steve and George-Ann Maxson will share photos from the edge of the Arctic. Life at high latitudes faces many challenges: long, cold, dark winters followed by short, 24 hour daylight summers, cyclic food abundance, and always, the wind. Meet the birds of 60° North, plus a few large mammals.

Bemidji and Itasca SP Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 14th and 16th. See inside for more information.

Snow Sparkles and Winter Wonders at Spearhead

Friday, December 27, 2019, 12 noon to 5:00 pm

Join Naturalist Dan Bera at the Neilson Spearhead Center (an Audubon nature site located 9 mi SW of Bemidji) for a very special post-Christmas treat! Enjoy a toasty bonfire, hot chocolate, and snowflakes, snowsnakes, animal tracks, and a walk on the frozen lake. Second grade and older - welcome! Dress warmly; bring an extra pair of snowpants and mittens, bring gorp ingredients, and leftover Christmas cookies to share.

\$10 per person, or \$15 for two siblings or friends.

www.spearheadMHAS.org

Register by December 22 by calling Dan at 218-214-2312.