

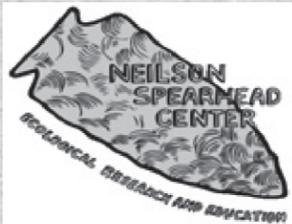
# Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society



Audubon Society - Mississippi headwaters Chapter  
Po box 193  
Bemidji, Mn 56619



"Fostering personal connections to, and stewardship of, our natural world."



### Visit us on the Web: [www.spearheadmhas.org](http://www.spearheadmhas.org)

You can make donations, buy t-shirts, and check our scheduled events. If you have pictures of birds, wildlife, or nature you would like to share, email them to us at:

[headwatersaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:headwatersaudubon@gmail.com)

"I believe that if one always looked at the skies, one would end up with wings."

-Gustave Flaubert

## Join the fun with The Young Naturalist Program

Young people eagerly await summertime, because not only is school out, but Dan Bera is again leading young naturalists on adventures into the backwoods and waters of Spearhead. Will there be a bountiful crop of berries at Berry Heaven? Will the Amazon be a trickle or a torrent, and will there be a mudhole this year? So far they've discovered the joys of leeches, played around with reed blowpipes, practiced the art of dental pictography, made bulrush boats, hiked over to the Lost Island, got to feel one of the cold springs that feed into the creek, identified

various plants and creatures, such as gecko skin, bloodroot, a wolf spider, and stinging nettle, and then still had energy for games of *Mafia*, "Oh Deer!" and *Fox & Squirrel*. MHAS offers this program to kids as the perfect alternative to video games: experience nature instead of passively watching it on a screen.

Give your kid the memory of *The Great Outdoors*, and sign them up for the Young Naturalist Program today. Simply visit our webpage and register: <http://www.spearheadmhas.org/young-naturalist-program.php>

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# The Source

Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society

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### Events

The Young Naturalists Program is accepting registration for sessions 6 - 8. visit our website and click the YNP tab for details

New at Neilson-Spearhead:  
Fly Fishing Seminars  
Contact Dan Rice for details (307) 472-2906

Monthly Birding Club  
Contact John Eggers at (218) 766-9009

Volunteer day, July 27: trail work, lab repair, etc.  
contact Matt Eiler (507) 210-5218 or  
Brick Fevold (715) 892-8370

### Meet your new board member

Brick Fevold

Brick is the current Vice President elect for the MHAS board, and also chairs the maintenance committee, and co-chairs the trails committee for the Neilson Spearhead Center. Brick brings diverse experience and training in environmental ecology to support the MHAS mission. His wife Kathryn and he recently moved to Bemidji from Wisconsin to work with sustainable homesteading concepts and to be closer to family living in Roseau, MN.

### The new Newsletter Editor

Dan Rice

Dan resigned from his position with the USGS in Wyoming and moved to Bemidji in spring of 2011. His first four months here were spent living alone out of a tent on an isolated property along the Big Fork River near Effie, MN where he wrote the novel *This Side of a Wilderness* and the nature journal *The Unpeopled Season*. His free time is divided between camping, canoeing, nature hikes, and fly fishing.

## SAX-ZIM BOG: A BIRDER'S PARADISE IN MINNESOTA

by Erica Ellis



lower 48. Over 240 species can be found at Sax-Zim, including the stately Great Gray Owl, the Boreal Owl, and the Boreal Chickadee.

An annual bird festival is held at Sax-Zim every winter and attracts birders from all over the country and the world. Birders are loaded on to school buses and driven around the bog looking for birds to photograph and add to their bragging rights. Next year's festival is scheduled for February 14-16, but they only allow 150 participants, so plan ahead. If you don't want to wait until winter (or plan to be on a beach somewhere in February) Sax-Zim is also a great place to see breeding song birds this time of year. But you better hurry. They are only in full song until early July.

February is not a typical tourist season in northern Minnesota. Even the locals, who are used to sub-zero temperatures and biting wind chills, are dreaming about tropical locales that time of year. But there is one group of people who dream of February in the Northwoods: extreme birders. Every winter, they flock to Sax-Zim Bog west of Duluth to add many hard-to-find birds to their life lists. Sax-Zim Bog, 146,000 acres of boreal forest habitat, is known to birders as the place to find elusive boreal owls. The area gained

some fame in the 2011 movie, *The Big Year*, about a group of birders competing to gather the most bird sightings, but many Minnesotans have never heard of it. The National Audubon Society has named Sax-Zim an Important Bird Area, a designation they give to sites that provide essential habitat for one or more species of bird. From December to March, birds migrate down from northern Canada to winter at the bog, providing birders the opportunity to see birds they normally wouldn't find in the

# 11 Interesting things about Loons.

by John Eggers

1. Many of their bones are solid unlike most birds. This makes for faster dives.
2. Loons can dive more than 100 feet and can stay under water for five minutes.
3. In 1961 the loon was declared the state bird. Eight birds were on the list: wood duck, belted Kingfisher, Killdeer, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Mourning Dove, and Common Loon.
4. December 30 is the latest a loon has been recorded in Minnesota. Most are gone from north country by end of November.
5. Lead fishing sinkers, which loons ingest when they scoop up pebbles off the lake bottom to store in their gizzards, have been a significant cause of loon deaths from lead poisoning.
6. The common loon has four calls. The tremolo, which sounds a bit like maniacal laughter, is an aggressive call. The wail is a long, drawn-out sound. The hoot, a shorter call, is used to communicate among parents and young. The yodel is sounded by male loons guarding their territory.  
(continued on opposite page)

## THE SOURCE OF OPPORTUNITY

by Daniel J. Rice



Mississippi River Headwaters

Each of us has likely heard the saying, "We all live downstream". This reference to the interconnectedness of our environment alerts us to the fact that what we do affects those who follow us in the chain of events. It is also meant to enhance awareness of our actions so we may live wisely and treat our resources with respect. Living at the source of our country's largest river, we can say, "We all live *upstream*", as the Mississippi river basin covers approximately 40% of the contiguous U.S., and is home to roughly 70 million people. This is a big responsibility. It is also a great opportunity to set an example for those who live downstream.

Every contaminant we place into the river is an indicator to people living downstream of who we are as a community. It is not only the people who are affected, but also the birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, and plants. As part of the

Headwaters community we have the opportunity to send this great river on its way with a clean bill of health, and to show those who come after us how respecting the river is a noble and rewarding cause.

So what can we do? We've all heard cleaning the propellers and undercarriage of boats is a good practice. So is reducing or eliminating lawn fertilizer. As students of nature we all know better than to dispose of garbage in the river basin. These are certainly good habits. There is another habit that will help this magnificent watershed – appreciation. Spend time with your river. Whether it be hiking the shores, fishing the channels, or studying its history, we naturally take care of what we appreciate, and appreciation is strengthened by understanding. So get to know your river and send some TLC downstream.



Mississippi River at New Orleans

## GET OUTSIDE!

by Jaime Thibodeaux

I hope everyone is taking advantage of our short summer and enjoying the great outdoors. This year I have been pushing myself to make summer fun my number one priority! The cold spring was perfect weather for bird watching; with late leaf growth, the birds had nowhere to hide. This year my husband decided to join me in my stare toward the sky. I now have an extra pair of eyes to watch for pesky warblers playing hide-and-go seek in the tree tops! We haven't had to go far to find good birding spots. We take walks along the lakeshore by Bemidji State in the afternoons and see a wide diversity of warblers and ducks during early migration. On our way to check on items at Spearhead, we stop and take a few minutes to listen and look for birds, and usually find a new species sighting for the year.

New birders make the best birding companions. They are always the first to spot the birds! We learn together as we follow their movements, how they forage, and other behaviors. I took a trip to Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge with Cindy Kuettel, her daughter, and my husband, and we all experienced a great view of a Wilson's Snipe, flocks of Yellow-Headed Blackbirds, Black Terns, Bobolinks, Black-Billed Magpies, Solitary Sandpipers, and a White Crowned Sparrow. Welcome to summer. Get out and explore... and take someone new with you!

## DON'T MESS WITH MAMA!

by Julie Patten  
NSC Caretaker

I had an interesting encounter here at the Spearhead Center this week! I was mowing alongside the driveway when a ruffed grouse came strutting out of the woods. She was all puffed up and not happy with my presence. I shut the mower off and told her I was sorry and would leave, knowing she must have a brood nearby. Every time I tried to move forward she cut me off and came toward me quietly scolding me for getting too close. We danced and played this game for a bit until I was finally able to get around and she went back to her little ones.

We have all been warned not to get between a mama bear and her cub, well don't mess with mama grouse either!

Come visit all the wonders of nature here at the Neilson Spearhead Center and enjoy it's beauty!



Birding with Jaime, Miranda, and Cindy.



# 11 Interesting things about Loons. (cont.)

7. Because their bodies are heavy relative to their wing size, loons need a 100- to 600-foot "runway" in order to take off from a lake.
8. Minnesota has more loons (roughly 12,000) than any other state except Alaska.
9. One of the ways parents care for their young is to carry them on their backs to keep them safe from fish and turtle predators. Young loons don't fly until they are more than two months old.
10. Their diet consists of mostly fish, particularly perch and sunfish on their northern lakes. Biologists estimate that loon parents and their 2 chicks can eat about a half-ton of fish over a 15-week period.
11. Baby loons that hatch this year will remain on the ocean for 3 or 4 years. Length is 28 – 36 inches. Spread 52 to 58 inches.