



Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society

The Source: A quarterly publication

VOLUME 40, ISSUE 1

headwatersaudubon@gmail.com

MARCH 2015

MHAS Needs You!

Please consider serving on the board of directors or on a committee in support of your Chapter's mission. Send email to: headwatersaudubon@gmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Julie and Lee Patten
218-444-8672

Board meetings are held at 5:30—7:00 P.M. on the second Tuesday of each month Sep–May located in the open lounge area at Lueken's Village Foods North, 1171 Paul Bunyan Dr NW Bemidji, MN 56601; and Jun–Aug at the Neilson Spearhead Center, 48851 County 29, Bemidji, MN 56601

THE MESSENGER

Come join us to view the exclusive premier of the 90-minute film documentary titled: "The Messenger", directed by Su Rynard.

"THE MESSENGER is a visually thrilling ode to the beauty and importance of the imperiled songbird, and what it will mean to all of us on both a global and human level if we lose them."

"... THE MESSENGER explores our deep-seated connection to birds and warns that the uncertain fate of songbirds might mirror our own."

— songbirdsos.com/about/messenger

MHAS has joined with local area sponsors to provide three opportunities for members and the public to see this incredibly moving, and hopefully motivating, special edition documentary.

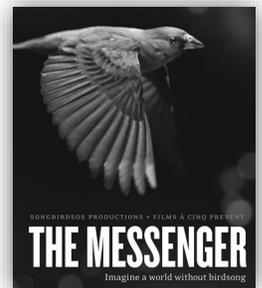
Times and locations to view in Bemidji:

⇒ April 22nd (Earth Day!) @ 3pm & 7pm
Bemidji State University
Hagg-Sauer Hall 100
(Refreshments will be provided)

⇒ June 11th, 8pm
Lake Bemidji State Park
(7:15-8pm—guided bird walk)

* Future showings will be posted on the Chapter website and Facebook page

**FREE
EVENT!!**



Environmental Award winners at the Northern MN Regional Science Fair

Jaden Chelsey—Bagley Elementary;
Attracting Northern Pike with Decoys

Sheyanne Erb—R.J. Elkington Middle School; *Effect of Temperature and Daylight on Animals*

CHAPTER BYLAWS

MHAS and its board members are in the process of updating the chapter bylaws and ask for membership input and participation in a vote for approval. The current bylaws, last revised and membership approved in 2004, are in need of updating to better reflect organizational needs and governance in order to guide effective decision-making. Inside this edition of the newsletter, you'll find a double-sided, 1-pg document of the proposed revised bylaws with mail-in ballot attached.

The board asks that members review the revised bylaws, and if able, to attend the next regular board meeting in April in order to participate in a vote to adopt the new bylaws. The April board meeting will held Tuesday, April 12th at 5:30-7:00 P.M. at Lueken's Village Foods North, 1171 Paul Bunyan Drive NW in Bemidji. The proposition to adopt the new bylaws will be brought to vote at 6:30 P.M. to allow time for members to participate after typical business hours. To adopt the new bylaws, a majority vote of approval is required of all board members and chapter members in attendance, and mail-in ballots received.

NSC Caretaker's Report

Snow has covered the lake and woods of the Neilson Spearhead Center in a beautiful blanket of white. Hikers are enjoying the quiet beauty of the Center's trails, and a few portable fish houses can be seen on Spearhead Lake from time to time. Just recently, a long-time neighbor of NSC, shared just how great the fishing was here years ago. It was "the place to go" he said. Now, the stories are more about the tranquil experience of fishing and spending time in such a beautiful place than they are about the number of fish caught. We invite you to come walk the trails, watch the eagles soar, or even drop a line....it's truly an amazing place.

YOUNG NATURALIST PROGRAM

Beginning to plan summer activities for your child, a grandchild or special niece or nephew? Consider a week or more where that special youth can spend their time out of doors at the Neilson Spearhead Center engaging with other children immersed in fun and interactive educational programs that combine creative games and activities such as exploring the world of bugs, wading in streams and cattail marshes, hiking woodland trails, and canoeing on Spearhead Lake. Youth are closely supervised by a highly qualified instructor assisted by a seasonal naturalist, and where they often gather around senior naturalist, Dan Bera, as he narrates tales and shares his knowledge of the hidden wild secrets of Spearhead.

The MHAS education committee is developing the 2016 summer schedule for the Young Naturalist Program, and will post the schedule on the chapter's website www.spearheadmhas.org by early March. Before the YNP season begins, consider joining members of the education committee at the Summer Camp Resource Fair on March 12, 1-3 pm, First Lutheran Church, Bemidji. Or, if you can't make it then, drop by the Bemidji Summer Camps Booth during the Home, Sport and Travel Show held at the Sanford Center, Bemidji, April 1st-3rd.

"Teaching children about the natural world should be seen as one of the most important events in their lives." - Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*

Please help in support of the NSC and the Young Naturalist Program by contributing a financial donation of any amount to MHAS and/or by participating in the MHAS education committee. Donations and inquiries can be mailed to: Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society, P.O. Box 193, Bemidji, MN 56619.

INSECT WINTER OLYMPICS

Pole vaulters and sprinters gambol on crusty snow on a warm sunny day. The jumping flecks of black pepper are wingless relatives of a primitive insect group called Collembola, springtails or "snow fleas," which normally live on soil beneath the snow, but tunnel to the surface to forage for bits of plant debris, and perhaps even to sunbathe during a mild winter's day. They're a very small insect measuring 1/32—1/8th inch long, and the group is one of only just a few insects that can be found near both poles. Tucked under their abdomens is a rod called a furcula which vaults the insect into the air if threatened.

Another insect, the snow fly (*Chionea valga*), scurries at the speedy rate of 4 feet/minute. It's a wingless species of crane fly that is most active at around



30 degrees, and mates during the winter months. Very little is known about the 16 or so species of snow flies, including basic life history facts, such as what the larvae eat during the summer or whether adults eat at all. The males have elaborate copulatory structures while the females are much larger, with big abdomens containing several hundred eggs.

So, as you make tracks in the woods this winter, particularly in places that receive a lot of sun, watch for these and other winter invertebrates like flightless wasps, stoneflies, and spiders as you enjoy those rare spring-like days in the winter woods.

News from Audubon MN

If you heard someone ask "why half of our birds are at risk," would you be able to explain why?

Go to:

<http://mn.audubon.org/videos/climate-change-and-birds-0>

— to view a 3 1/2 minute video that describes the why, and what we can do as individuals and as a community to help reduce that risk.



CREATING A BIRD FRIENDLY WORLD

Bird lovers of all ages have had a long curiosity with songbirds. Their vibrant colors, distinct songs, and showy displays provide an irresistible draw that invite all ages and cultures to spend innumerable hours exploring a bird's world. In the documentary, *The Messenger*, amazing cinematography is used to capture how navigating a 'bird's world' has become substantially more complex for a majority of migratory and non-migratory bird species. Fortunately, our love and curiosity for feathered diversity induces a strong incentive for us bird lovers to do all we can to reduce the hazards that birds may encounter day to day right in our own back yards. So, what can we do about it? Are there actions we can take as individuals, homeowners, pet owners, and car drivers to give birds a helping hand? The answer is, yes, indeed there are actions we can take. Consider the following bird-friendly practices for your own personal space:

1. Locate bird feeders as far from any glass windows as practical, and preferably near tall shrubs or trees to provide safe escapes. If near a window, be sure to cover the window with unobtrusive net-

ting, visible blinds, or other patterned material that birds can see to avoid even on cloudy days.

2. Keep your cats indoors, or if you let them outside consider using a halter and short leash to restrain their freedom and movement.
3. Install patterned material on all exterior windows to reduce the reflections of natural sky or woodland.
4. Replace all or portions of manicured lawn with native wildflower, woodland, or mixed-garden habitat to provide an array of different foods and shelter options.
5. Provide other resources that birds need, such as a bird bath maintained regularly with clean fresh water, exposed sand/gravel for dust-bathing and grit for ingestion, and a variety of nest boxes.

MHAS extends a warm thankyou for past donations received from the following:

David Carlson, John Ellis, Ron Mittan and Terry Garrett, Robert Morgan

THE IVORY GULL (*Pagophila eburnea*)

Polar bears, diamond and oil mining, mercury exposure, melting arctic sea ice, the World's most northerly migrant bird species, and Duluth MN—these all have one thing in common—The beautiful and rare Ivory Gull.

This birds Latin name pretty much sums up both its striking color and its habits; *Pagophila*, "ice-loving" and *eburnea* "ivory." Like the common raven, the Ivory Gull, a high arctic species, associates with large predators—scavenging scraps of meat and blood strewn on the sea ice by gorging polar bear and other carnivores. Climate change is a close and personal concern to this unsuspecting wandering nomad of the North in where, Snow and Perrins, in a 1998 publication, defined the birds southern extent of its breeding range based on the July 5 degree C temperature isotherm — an imaginary line where all areas south of it have average July temperatures warmer than 5 degrees Celsius. The Ivory Gull prefers to nest on rocky ledges of mostly inaccessible arctic coastal areas, and now under threat by expanding diamond mining and unregulated hunting.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, The Crossley ID Guide Britain and Ireland

Ivory Gull populations have declined by 90% over the last decade, believed a result of the cascading effects of human-induced climate change, habitat loss and pollution. We can no longer think of even the high Arctic as a 'pristine' environment, and where oil slicks and mercury-contaminated prey can be considered as contemporary stressors, impacting survival rates of this and other secluded marine species. The Ivory Gull was a hot topic this winter, in Duluth, MN where the presence of an immature drew local, regional and international attention. A second immature was found, and, unfortunately, reported as dead near Superior, WI from unknown causes—perhaps given the plight of this species and the laundry list of environmental stressors affecting its populations, determining a specific cause may only be of academic value. - BMF

**MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS
AUDUBON SOCIETY**
A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 193, Bemidji, MN 56619.

headwatersaudubon@gmail.com

We're on the Web!

www.spearheadMHAS.org

Non-profit organization

US Postage paid

Bemidji, MN 56601

Permit #28



Your resource for environmental education and
resource protection in Northern Minnesota

*The Mississippi Headwaters Audubon
Society's mission is to foster personal
connections to and stewardship
of our natural world.*

A Message from the President

Have you ever pondered a broader meaning or the variety of implications represented by a particular word? I recently watched the video trailer of 'The Messenger' in anticipation of its debut (see cover story) and I had to ask myself—how do I and we as individuals and community play the role of messenger? And, what exactly is a messenger? Mariam Webster lists several different definitions, including: 1) *one who bears a message or does an errand*, 2) *a light line used in hauling a heavier line (as between ships)*, and 3) *a substance (as a hormone) that mediates a biological effect*, among others. These definitions imply that a messenger is someone or something that has been selected to represent, or is attached to, something larger than itself. Given that, perhaps each of us, at one time or another serves the role of messenger every time we share a well intended perspective to those close to us. By connecting oneself to family, community, and of course to the natural environment, with which our sustenance depends, we become a catalyst to effect change that otherwise may not alchemize.

The discipline of ecology more commonly uses the term 'indicator' and where its intent and meaning,

for all purposes is synonymous to messenger. Synonymous, in the sense that an organism or environmental condition connotes a cascade of interdependence that connects cause with effect, even if indirect, and where the indicator becomes the messenger. The indicator in this context is providing a message concerning the relative status or health of an important piece of our natural world; a natural world of which humans are but one of approximately 1.7 million species documented by science.

Yet, despite the fact that we represent a mere fraction of the vested interest of all species to enjoy a safe and healthy world, our effect as a single species due to our actions is quite the opposite. So, we are as much the message as we are the messenger. When I think of classic metaphors about messengers and indicators, phrases such as 'a canary in a coal mine,' or 'the tip of the iceberg' and 'a harbinger of spring' come to mind, and perhaps it's needless to say—'don't kill the messenger.'

What comes to mind when you think of the phrase "the messenger?" - BMF

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

-Dr. Martin Luther King Junior