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# Audubon MINNESOTA

SUMMER 2007

[ *The Newsletter from the Minnesota State Office of the National Audubon Society* ]

## In brief...

### Bird Fests Feature Audubon

Spring bird festivals are becoming increasingly popular and serve as a great way for Audubon to generate public enthusiasm for birds and to provide large numbers of people with information on bird conservation. Audubon Minnesota helped with bird festivals around the state again this year including the Great River Birding Festival in Lake City, featuring our researcher Jon Stravers as the keynote speaker, and at the Audubon Center of the Northwoods Birding Fest near Sandstone, where director Mark Peterson spoke about bird conservation.

### Eagles' Comeback is Official

Once facing extinction, the bald eagle is set to be removed from the federal government's list of threatened and endangered species. The "de-listing" is a recognition of remarkable efforts to bring the bald eagle back from the brink. With their eggshells weakened by the pesticide DDT, breeding pairs of eagles in the lower 48 states had declined to 417 in 1963. After the eagle was declared endangered in 1967 and DDT banned in 1972, the population began to rebound. It now is at 9,789 known nesting pairs. Minnesota has an estimated 1,312 nesting pairs, up from 40 pairs in 1963. "This is a great conservation success story and shows that the Endangered Species Act really works," said Mark Peterson of Audubon Minnesota. "With a plan and purpose, we can save many more species as well."



CREDIT: S. HILLEBRAND / USFWS

## CONSERVATION

# Minnesota Warming: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

**A**T THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY'S annual meeting in May, the Board of Directors endorsed an ambitious national effort by Audubon to help achieve a 60-80 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. Audubon will announce the campaign elements soon. However, securing state and federal legislation and inspiring voluntary actions to reduce the carbon footprint of individuals and communities will be key program components.

Global warming is the greatest threat to birds and other wildlife of our times, and is already impacting birds. Those impacts will become more severe over the coming decades, leading to the loss of one-quarter to one-third of all species on earth.

Scientists already see alarming impacts of global warming on birds. More than 80 percent of plant and animal species studied have shown changes in the timing of migration or reproduction, shifts in habitat or migratory routes, and other changes associated with climate change. For example:

- On Michigan's Upper Peninsula, 15 species – including the rose-breasted grosbeak and the black-throated blue warbler – are arriving up to 21 days earlier than in the 1960s;
- Several North American warbler species have shifted northward more than 65 miles. The golden-winged warbler's range has moved nearly 100 miles north just in the past two decades;
- Adelie penguins are taking longer routes to find food in the ocean as icebergs break off Antarctica's Ross Ice Shelf.

In states like Minnesota, being both



CREDIT: DAVID CAHLANDER

**Many warblers, such as this golden-winged warbler, have shifted their range north as an early response to global warming.**

northerly and away from the buffering influence of the oceans, the impacts will be more pronounced. Our boreal species may disappear. Droughts will be more frequent and severe, causing prairie pothole wetlands to dry up. The projected loss of neotropical songbirds in our state is very high – 53 percent in the Great Lakes region, compared to 32 percent fewer in the Pacific Northwest.

With changes in climate, the extent of forested areas in Minnesota could change little or decline by as much as 50-70%. Hotter, drier weather will likely increase the frequency and intensity of wildfires.

### What's Happening in Minnesota?

In Minnesota, greenhouse gas emissions have increased about 20% since 1988. Electric utility and transportation sectors are the primary sources of the long-term increase in greenhouse emissions in Minne-

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**ABOUT AUDUBON MINNESOTA**

Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

*Audubon Minnesota* is published three times a year by the Minnesota State Office of the National Audubon Society. As a non-profit organization established in 1979, we share Audubon's 100-year heritage of working to protect our environment.

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 This newsletter is printed on recycled paper with soy based ink.

**TO OUR SUPPORTERS**

**Why Birds?**

Often when people learn we're with Audubon, they ask: "Why birds?" They're really wondering: *Is bird conservation still an effective approach to conservation?*

They may have in their minds that the Audubon Society began a century ago. Audubon rallied the public around saving birds from devastation by commercial plume hunters motivated by the highly profitable millenary trade. Audubon wardens patrolled important bird rookeries during nesting season. Three of them were killed on duty in Florida. But these beautiful plume birds were saved from extinction, and the great egret became Audubon's symbol.

*But are birds relevant to the complex environmental challenges of today?* More than half a century later, America faced a new and more subtle threat. Rachael Carson was among the first to grasp the magnitude of the problem. In her landmark 1962 book *Silent Spring* she used a simple bird metaphor to convey a powerful message: If bald eagles, osprey and brown pelicans could become extinct because of DDT and other toxins, will people be next? Through her words, birds inspired the nation and launched the modern environmental movement, saving countless human lives.

Effective? Relevant? More than ever, our answer to these questions is an emphatic "yes!" for three simple, and powerful, reasons:

- Birds are often keystone species that are excellent **indicators** of other biodiversity.
- Birds **signal** potential danger to people, like a canary in a coal mine.
- Birds have an amazing ability to **inspire** people and motivate action.

In June, we released a "State of the Birds" report documenting dramatic declines in some of Minnesota's common bird populations since 1967. No doubt, the 77 percent decline of northern pintail ducks is an indicator of other, less visible, wetland creatures' disappearance. By the silence of their absence, they are speaking volumes. Each species listed is giving us a signal of a potential danger ahead.

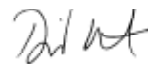
And the power of birds to inspire and motivate is tremendous. This report generated tremendous media attention across Minnesota and the nation. People know many of these species – they're almost like family – and to see their numbers rapidly dwindling can awaken within us a determination and passion to action. The return of the bald eagle, osprey and trumpeter swan in Minnesota and the rediscovery of an ivory-billed woodpecker in Arkansas has inspired hope that nature can be resilient, that we can have a second chance.

Unlike many other approaches to conservation, Audubon is community-based, focused on engaging people in direct conservation action. Our culture of citizen action is based on five core beliefs:

- Individual action is the greatest force for conservation.
- Every person can do something to make a difference.
- The collective power of enough individuals working together is unstoppable.
- People are motivated to take action because they care about nature.
- People learn to care about nature through direct experiences outdoors in nature.

We start with sound science. Then, we educate people about the environment and what they can do to make a difference. This is how we build a constituency of people who care about protecting birds, wildlife and habitat.

Why birds? They may very well be nature's best ambassadors to the human spirit.

DAVID HARTWELL  
*Board Chairman*




MARK PETERSON  
*Executive Director*

# Around Audubon Minnesota

## AUDUBON CONFERENCES COME TO THE TWIN CITIES

Audubon President John Flicker, scholar and author Bridget Stutchbury, and Minnesota state climatologist Mark Seeley are a few of the notable speakers at the Upper Midwest Audubon Conference in Bloomington, Minnesota, October 13-14, 2007. The conference theme is “Declining Birds, Declining Habitat: Reversing the Trend.” Four concurrent tracks – birds and wetlands, forests, grasslands, and birds in your neighborhood – will be offered.

Dr. Stutchbury, the keynote speaker Saturday evening, is a professor of biology at York University in Toronto and author of the new book, *Silence of the Songbirds*.

Her research includes studies on the breeding behavior of songbirds and the effects of habitat loss on their nesting success and winter survival. In her book she follows migrants from the tropical forests of Panama to the boreal forest of Canada to understand why populations are declining.

On October 12 there will be a day-long symposium entitled, “America’s Flyway: The Mississippi River.” Topics include tracking birds by land and over sea, environmental sustainability of the river system, and current policy initiatives affecting the river and its restoration. An afternoon paddleboat trip on the river will include presentations on the river’s history, use, and preservation. Guest speaker Kenny Salway, author of *The Last River Rat*, will talk about his colorful life on the River.

Registration is required. For details go to <http://mn.audubon.org>.

## AUDUBON REPORT RECEIVES OVERWHELMING ATTENTION

Audubon’s national “State of the Birds” report, issued on June 14, documents the alarming 40-year declines of our most common and beloved birds. Audubon’s release of its analysis clearly resonated throughout the U.S., generating over 600 media stories to date including articles in leading newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Philadelphia Enquirer*, and *Chicago Tribune*. Many papers coast to coast followed up by publishing editorials and op-ed pieces. In addition,

Audubon garnered substantial radio and television coverage, including CNN, NPR, and many local radio and television stations. Google reports that just shy of 400 blogs have mentioned the analysis.

The Minnesota state analysis, issued by Audubon Minnesota, garnered similar attention in the state as we collaborated with our national office to deliver analysis of our citizen science efforts.

On June 19th, the *New York Times* printed its editorial on the report, entitled “Millions of Missing Birds, Vanishing in Plain Sight.” An excerpt appears below.

**The New York Times**

“...We recognize the extraordinary distinctness of the passenger pigeon now because we know its fate, killed off largely by humans. But we have moralized it thoroughly without ever really taking it to heart.

The question is whether we will see the distinctness of the field sparrow — its number is down from 18 million 40 years ago to 5.8 million — only when the last pair is being kept alive in a zoo somewhere. We love to finally care when the death watch is on. It makes us feel so very human.

Like you, I’ve been reading dire reports of declining species for many years now. They have the value of causing us to pay attention to species in trouble, and the sad fact is that the only species likely to endure are the ones we humans manage to pay attention to. There was a time when it was better, if you were a nonhuman species, to be ignored by humans because we trapped, shot or otherwise exploited all of the ones that got our attention. But in the past 40 years, we have killed all those millions of birds or, let us say, unintentionally caused a dramatic population loss, simply by going about business as usual.”

©THE NEW YORK TIMES - JUNE 19, 2007



Visit our website for the latest information on programs and events: <http://mn.audubon.org>

Bald eagle chick



In May and June, NBC affiliate KARE-11 featured Audubon Minnesota on three of Sven Sundgaard’s *Simply Science* weekly segments. The series highlighted a Mississippi River Birding Boat Cruise co-sponsored by Audubon Minnesota; Backyard Birdscaping with Director Mark Peterson; and a boating tour of Audubon’s Twin Cities Mississippi River Important Bird Area with Dan McGuiness. Above, Dan and Sven view a bald eagle’s nest just south of Wakota Bridge in Saint Paul while photographer Matt Passolt films an eagle for use in the segment.

## AUDUBON RECEIVES CONSERVATION AWARD

On June 19, 2007, Dr. Michael Jawson, Director of the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center in Onalaska, Wisconsin, presented the Department of Interior’s “Cooperative Conservation Award” to Audubon for our strong support of and assistance to the Department’s Long Term Resource Monitoring Program (LTRMP) on the Upper Mississippi River.

This program has been in existence since 1986 and Audubon has participated in their program team meetings and annually supported congressional funding for this important program that tracks trends in habitat conditions on the river.

Audubon’s Dan McGuiness accepted the award, a beautiful plaque and citation, on behalf of Audubon staff, chapters and members all along the Mississippi River.

**Experience the Best of Minnesota Birding!**

Birding guides for many great places in Minnesota are now in a bookstore near you! Audubon Minnesota has finished its three volume collection: *North Shore Birding Trail: Duluth to Grand Portage*; *Minnesota River Valley Birding Trail*; and the latest, *Great River Birding Trail: Mississippi River from Headwaters to the Minnesota - Iowa Border*. You can also order these guides at: [www.adventurepublications.net](http://www.adventurepublications.net).

# A Landscape Worthy of Protection

## MCGREGOR IBA

IMAGINE MORE THAN 100,000 RING-NECKED DUCKS IN ONE AREA during fall migration.

Add to that yellow rail, sharp-tailed grouse, Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow, golden-winged warbler, black-billed cuckoo, and black tern and you will find yourself in the McGregor Important Bird Area (IBA)!

This IBA is located around the city of McGregor in Aitkin County. The area is extensive (67,175 acres) and well-known to birders and biologists as a premier site for birds. Included within the IBA is the 18,300 acre Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and state wildlife management areas. The City of McGregor itself is included because of its location adjacent to significant habitat areas.

The McGregor IBA has a suite of important bird habitats. This includes wetlands, lowland forests, upland deciduous forests, open brushlands and open grasslands. The area is probably best known

for the fall ring-necked duck migration, but also has a variety of nesting birds of interest, such as the sora, black tern, sandhill crane, 12 species of nesting warblers, trumpeter swan, bald eagle, American woodcock, wood thrush, black-billed cuckoo, LeConte's sparrow and bobolink.

McGregor Marsh itself, an extensive marsh land in the former bed of Glacial Lake Aitkin, contains the very specific habitat requirements of the rare yellow rail and sharp-tailed sparrow. Bird watchers from around the country visit this area to look for these rare birds and other species. Wild rice has been harvested by native peoples for thousands of years on Rice Lake and other shallow lakes within the IBA.



Open brushlands provide wonderful habitat for a wide variety of birds in the McGregor IBA. The type of brushland shown abounds with cotton grass, which is actually a sedge, and is indicative of bogs. It is also found in conifer swamps and marshes. Sites like this contribute to the diversity of quality habitat found within this Important Bird Area.

CREDIT: JODIE PROVOST / MINDNR

Wild rice provides food and good escape cover for waterfowl broods and molting adult ducks. From early-May to late-November, ducks, geese and other waterbirds feed on the sprouting seeds, young shoots and ripe grains.

In the open brushlands you may find sharp-tailed grouse, short-eared owl, Northern shrike, and sandhill crane. Sharptails require large (about one square mile or larger) open brushland areas consisting of grass and brush. The buds and twig ends of birch, willow, and aspen, various fruits and berries, and small grains found in the area provide excellent food for these birds.

Lack of fire, which has maintained various communities, is a problem in areas.

Some of the sedge wetlands are succeeding to brush making it less suitable habitat for wetland dependent species. Rice Lake NWR and the Minnesota DNR have established prescribed burn programs and recently burned a large unit (4,600 acres) to reduce brush within the IBA. Both agencies plan to continue to use fire to set back succession within the IBA.

From the sheer magnitude of the huge concentration of ring-necked ducks to the individual yellow rail to the dancing of the sharp-tailed grouse in spring, one can readily agree this is indeed an Important Bird Area! Add to that the rails, grouse, sparrows, warblers, terns, and bitterns and you will find yourself wanting do whatever you can to help protect this most valuable area in Minnesota!

— RON WINDINGSTAD

WHAT YOU CAN DO. With financial help from our donors, Audubon Minnesota has been able to establish this IBA and provide the leadership necessary to develop long term management plans. Please contact Mark Martell (mmartell@audubon.org) to learn how you can get involved as a volunteer IBA monitor.

To date, Audubon Minnesota's technical team of scientists has identified 28 Important Bird Areas in Minnesota.



Wood thrush

CREDIT: USFWS

## ARCOLA MILLS IBA



CREDIT: RON WINDINGSTAD

Audubon dedicated the St. Croix River Bluffs Important Bird Area (IBA) on June 14<sup>th</sup>. The IBA stretches from Stillwater to Taylors Falls, MN. It was recognized for its bird diversity and numbers of breeding birds, including two great blue heron colonies (total of 534 nests); a high density of bald eagle nests, and 25 pairs of Louisiana waterthrush. Pictured above, left to right, Mark Martell; Lynda Hallbert, Director, Arcola Mills; Mark Peterson, and Tom Bradley, Superintendent, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway.

### A DAY FOR THE BIRDS!

#### Governor Pawlenty Proclaims Bird Conservation in Minnesota Day

The need for conservation of all birds was highlighted when Governor Pawlenty proclaimed May 12, 2007 as Bird Conservation Day in Minnesota. The proclamation raises awareness of the need for bird conservation and emphasizes the importance of partnerships in undertaking such conservation efforts. To see the proclamation, go to [www.birdconservationminnesota.org](http://www.birdconservationminnesota.org).



Bird Conservation Minnesota representatives, left to right: Mark Peterson, Audubon Minnesota; Bill George, Minnesota Ornithologists' Union; Bob Zink, Bell Museum of Natural History; Lori Naumann, Minnesota DNR; Governor Pawlenty; Ron Windingstad, BCM; and Tom Will, USFWS.

Bird Conservation Minnesota (BCM) is a cooperative conservation initiative involving partnerships with federal, state, and local government agencies; conservation groups; academic communities; industry; and private individuals committed to conserving all birds in Minnesota. BCM has grown to 175 partners over the past year.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR TIM PAWLENTY

## Big Birds and a Pig's Eye

**P**IG'S EYE LAKE IS NOT YOUR TYPICAL URBAN PARK. It is not a lake that comes to mind when you ask someone to "take a walk around the lake" or go out to "see and be seen" in the Twin Cities.

In fact, this "lake," just downstream from downtown Saint Paul, is really more of an urban backwater to the Mississippi River than it is a lake. And a visitor is more likely to notice large bald eagles on the lake than people (adult eagle wingspans can measure 6' or more!). Pig's Eye Lake is home to several active bald eagle nests along with a colony of great blue herons, great egrets, a green heron or two, and occasional rafts of white pelicans.

Where else do bald eagles nest on the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities and how are they doing?

To answer these questions, Audubon, for the second year in a row, teamed up with the National Park Service to locate every active bald eagle nest in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

Over the period of six days, the team



CREDIT: JIM WILLIAMS

**Audubon's Mark Martell measures the thickness of the beak and the length of the primary feathers of each eagle to determine its age and sex. This information, along with weight, claw length, and other observations, help us assess the relative health of the birds. Our records kept over time will help determine long term trends and may alert us to threats to the population.**

retrieved 18 bald eagles from 12 nests beginning upstream of Minneapolis to Prescott. We measured and weighed each bird, checked for evidence of what they are feeding on, and noted general conditions of the birds, nests and the nearby habitat.

A few volunteers and guests accompanied the team to learn firsthand the importance of the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities area for these "big birds." Audubon and the National Park Service have a common interest in studying bald eagles on this reach of the river.

For 70 miles, from Rogers, Minnesota downstream to Prescott, Wisconsin, the Mississippi River is a unit of the National Park Service and an Audubon Important Bird Area. As part of an internationally significant migratory flyway for more than 300 bird species, we have a common interest in protecting and restoring the ecological health of the river for the birds, fish, wildlife and people who use this river that runs through our communities.

With financial support from the Mississippi River Fund, Flint Hills Resources, the Katherine B. Andersen Fund of the Saint Paul Foundation, The McKnight Foundation and others, we are monitoring the health of not only the majestic bald eagles, but also other common and not-so-common bird species that nest and/or migrate in the river valley.

Our thanks to Anne Hunt, City of Saint Paul, and Mike Davis, Minnesota DNR, for their help in transporting staff and volunteers to our banding sites.

To find out more about our bald eagle monitoring or to learn how you can be involved, contact Audubon Minnesota.

— DAN MCGUINNESS



CREDIT: DAN MCGUINNESS

**If someone took your babies, put them in large cloth bags, and carried them away, you might be moved to action.**

Bald eagles respond surprisingly calmly to such events.

When young bald eagles are banded, as many in Minnesota were in May and June, the parents simply circle high over the banders, their tinkling calls filtering down through the trees.

Eagles favor height for their nests. The day I observed the banding effort the team was working on Pig's Eye Island in the Mississippi River near St. Paul. The nests were way, way up in cottonwoods.

A pair of young men from California did the climbing, employees of a company that won a bid for this work. They used a crossbow to loop a line over a branch offering nest access. The line was used to pull a climbing rope into place. Gripping devices that could be moved up or down the rope carried the climbers to the nest.

The young eagles were placed in bags that were then hung from the climber's belt. Once delivered to the ground, biologists from Audubon Minnesota and the National Parks Service quickly weighed and measured the birds, took blood and feather samples, and applied a numbered band. The birds were then returned to the nest, and the adult eagles eventually did the same.

The biological samples are the important part of the effort. They were to be analyzed for contaminants – harmful chemicals the birds might have ingested with their food. Eagles are at the top of their food chain, accumulating whatever their body will not process out.

The eagles are a warning system for the environment in which they live.

Collection of data from the birds began last year and will continue.

The banding project began at Pig's Eye and moved north through Minnesota's prime eagle territory. It was expected to take about six weeks to complete.

— JIM WILLIAMS

### Protecting Habitat for Birds in Saint Paul

In 2004, Audubon staff member and Saint Paul resident Dan McGuinness was appointed by the Saint Paul City Council to serve on the Mississippi River Critical Area Task Force. This group was charged with developing recommendations for a new zoning ordinance to better protect habitat along the River for birds, fish, wildlife and people, while providing for sound economic development.

After 2½ years of bi-weekly meetings, the task force presented its report to the City of Saint Paul. In the upcoming months, the City will review the plan and send it to the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota DNR for approval. Audubon supports the task force recommendations and urges its members to let the City Council and the Mayor know that long term protection of the Mississippi will be advanced by adoption and enforcement of rules as recommended by the task force.

Go to <http://www.stpaul.gov/depts/ped/planning/index.html#documents> for more information. For a copy of Audubon's position statement, contact Dan McGuinness at [dmcguinness@audubon.org](mailto:dmcguinness@audubon.org).

# Volunteers Help to Achieve Success

## 2007 STATE LEGISLATIVE ISSUES SUMMARY

Minnesota will remember the 2007 and 2008 legislative sessions as making history in protecting Minnesota's outdoor heritage.

**Dedicated Funding:** For the last nine years, Audubon has seen the imperative to convince lawmakers to prioritize funding to protect Minnesota's great outdoors. We worked hard convincing legislators to support a constitutional amendment dedicating 3/8 of one percent to the state's sales tax, generating about \$300 million a year, to the environment (and arts). On the last day of the legislative session, despite the fact that the controversial bill made it through both houses and the final conference committee, the House ran out of time to consider the bill on the House floor for its final vote. Legislative leaders and the Governor promise that the bill will be taken-up the first week of the 2008 legislative session for final passage. After this, Audubon will focus its efforts to convince the public to support the referendum initiative on the 2008 ballot.

**Motorized Recreation:** Bird habitat and the wilderness character of our state forests continue to be damaged and destroyed by unmanaged motorized recreation. Each year, Audubon members prioritize the need for improved management of motorized vehicles on public lands. This year, our victories included the protection of the North Shore State Trail from ATV use; a prohibition on mudder trucks in state forests located in Cass, Crow Wing and Hubbard Counties, and the ability for environmental organizations to



**Audubon's Mark Peterson and Susan Solterman joined House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Minneapolis), State Representative Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Minneapolis) and Majority Leader Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisom) during the signing of the House Resolution for the Lights Out initiative in Minnesota's urban areas. The resolution, authored by Representative Kahn, supports tall buildings dimming their lights during spring and fall migratory periods, an effort that will reduce thousands of bird deaths due to building collisions.**

apply for DNR funding to provide environmental education to motorized riders on public lands.

**Great Lakes Compact:** Minnesota became the first state in the region to endorse the Great Lakes Compact. Once approved by each of the eight Great Lakes states and Congress, the Compact will provide uniform protection for new or expanding water usage within the basin.

## THANK YOU EIC!

Audubon's lobbying efforts at the State Capitol this year could not have happened without the tremendous commitment and effort from the Environmental Issues Committee. EIC met every two weeks to evaluate priority issues and progress and to strategize on upcoming committee hearings and floor action. Audubon's EIC members are seasoned activists who know their way around the State Office Building and State Capitol, and many of them spent a great deal of time trolling the halls of the capitol. It's a hard job, but if we're serious about protecting the environment and saving birds and their habitat, it must be done.

Thank you to Jerry Bahls, Gene Larimore, Joan Meierotto, Don Janes, Richard Newmark, Lois Norrgard, Ginny Black, John Hunt and Greg Jeunemann for their hard work. And, a special acknowledgment to Gary Botzek, who did an outstanding job leading our lobbying efforts.

Receive monthly email updates on Minnesota environmental news. Email [ssolterman@audubon.org](mailto:ssolterman@audubon.org) and type "subscribe" in the subject line



Blue-winged teal

## PLANNING FOR THE 2008 STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Because Audubon Minnesota is a member-based organization, our contribution in the conservation community is truly unique. Our members tend to be educated activists – bringing skills, years of experience and opinions to the table on a variety of policy issues. In fact, in 1979, Audubon chapters created the state office in Minnesota primarily for the purpose of consolidating advocacy efforts at the State Capitol.

Audubon's power at the state legislature relies on our grassroots base and their willingness to influence and affect legislative outcomes. For this reason, members help the Audubon Minnesota Board select and prioritize state legislative issues for the following spring's legislative session. Audubon's typical state legislative agenda consists of two to three issues, with the caveat that priority issues in previous years will be again prioritized if under attack.

Issues nominated must adhere to Audubon's mission statement: Working with others to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

In addition, nominated issues must address one or more of the following points:

- Presents a law or policy change that has a reasonable chance of legislative or administrative success and will achieve measurable conservation results
- Protects and restores essential sites, especially Important Bird Areas, for vulnerable species
- Stabilizes and increases populations of at-risk species of birds
- Prevents declines in numbers or range area of common native birds
- Improves and protects the health of landscapes that support or could support native birds.

In 2007, issue nominations are due by August 29. Issue descriptions should be a paragraph in length and include the nominator's name and contact information. Please email nominations to [ssolterman@audubon.org](mailto:ssolterman@audubon.org) or mail to Audubon Minnesota, Attn: Susan, 2357 Ventura Drive, #106, Saint Paul MN 55125.

— SUSAN SOLTERMAN

## SAVE THE DATE! 2007 ANNUAL AUDUBON MEMBERS MEETING

Each fall, on the second Saturday in November, Audubon members from all over Minnesota gather to socialize with one another and set the course for Audubon advocacy activities at the State Capitol. Mark your calendars for this year's annual meeting on November 10, 2007, and watch for details on location and guest speakers!

## CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

There are a dozen Audubon chapters located in Minnesota (from Austin to Thief River Falls). Each works locally, mobilizing its members to provide environmental education, conservation, and advocacy to meet the needs of their local communities. In this series we spotlight a program of an individual chapter.

### SAINT PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY SUMMER BIRDING CLASS FOR KIDS

June marked the fourth year that the Saint Paul Audubon Society hosted birding classes for children at the Streetcar Station in Como Park. Children ages 6 to 12 learned about birds in their community in a creative and artful way.

Students began by learning how to use binoculars and headed out for a bird walk to hone their new skill. Each morning the class started with a walk and talk about birds – why they sing, what types of nests they build or use, how and why they migrate, what they eat, how they fly, how bills, feathers and feet work, and more.

During the week students researched their favorite bird and created a presentation for the class. The results were astounding – some projects lovingly done on paper, others gave creative puppet shows and some gave a high tech PowerPoint presentation! One student researched two birds in the same family and talked about their similarities and differences.



CREDITS RON WINCH

This year the class was expanded yet again. A class was held at Como and at a new location on the east side of Saint Paul at McDonough Recreation Center. Saint Paul Audubon Society subsidizes class fees for children with financial need. Contact Holly Peirson at 651-464-6743 for details.

Founded in 1945 as the “St. Paul Bird Club” with 12 members, the Saint Paul Audubon Society now serves the entire east metro region of the Twin Cities area, has 2,000 members, and holds nine member meetings a year. Visit [www.saintpaulaudubon.net](http://www.saintpaulaudubon.net)

### CHAPTERS & CENTERS

AGASSIZ AUDUBON SOCIETY  
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MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY AUDUBON  
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AUDUBON CENTER OF THE NORTH WOODS  
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AUDUBON SCIENCE CENTER  
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### Minnesota Warming (continued from page 1)

sota. In 1960, these two sectors accounted for about 40 percent of all emissions from the state. By 1997, their contribution had risen to 60 percent.

Last December, Governor Pawlenty introduced the Next Generation Energy Initiative. The initiative includes strategies to increase renewable energy use, increase energy conservation and decrease carbon emissions in Minnesota. The Governor’s proposal to reach a goal where 25% of energy comes from renewable sources by 2025 is supported by increasing E85 pumps, raising the state’s Renewable Energy Objective, and promoting cellulosic ethanol and other biomass technology. The legislature responded and passed leg-

islation that meets these goals. Currently, half of Minnesota’s energy is derived from coal-fired power plants and renewable sources contribute only about 5 percent.

An important element of the Governor’s energy initiative is to develop a state greenhouse gases reduction plan. Towards this end, the Governor created a Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group (MC-CAG) for recommendations. The MC-CAG is made up of 50 members representing a broad range of stakeholders. The group is expected to report to the Governor by February 1, 2008 – at the start of the next state legislative session.

### And on the Federal Level...

While Audubon’s waiting for the MCCAG recommendations, we are focused on developing the political will – at a federal level – to put the nation on a carbon diet. We are working on three areas of federal legislation:

**Comprehensive Global Warming.** Bills would put the U.S. on the path to reducing emissions addressing several strategies. The Senate’s *Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act of 2007* (S 309) would bring emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and to at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. Its companion bill in the House is the *Safe Climate Act of 2007* (HR 1590). These reductions are achieved through a series of emissions caps combined with clean technologies, higher efficiencies, and renewable electricity standards.

**Renewable Electricity Standards.** Much like Minnesota’s new state law, the House’s *Federal Renewable Energy Portfolio Act of 2007* (HR 969) requires utility companies to increase the portion of electricity produced from renewable resources to 20 percent by 2020. Twenty-one states have already passed their own standards.

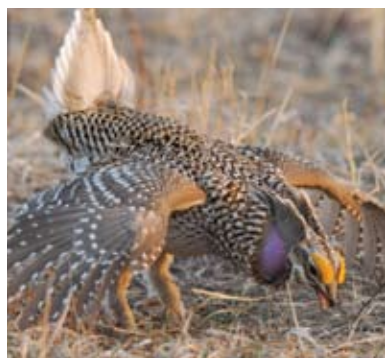
**Vehicle Fuel Efficiency Improving.** Vehicle fuel efficiency standards are a critical component to combat global warming. The House’s *Fuel Economy Reform Act* (HR 1506) would require new vehicle fleets to average 35 mpg by 2018 and would mandate that automakers improve fuel economy by 4% per year after 2018, unless technologically unachievable.

We still have time to turn around the climate crisis if we adopt these strong policies to reduce global warming pollution. Call your representatives to cosponsor these important pieces of legislation. You can reach Congressional offices through their switchboard at 202-224-3121.

— MARK PETERSON

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Saint Paul, MN 55125

**SPECIES PROFILE**



CREDIT: JIM WILLIAMS

**Sharp-tailed grouse**  
*Tympanuchus phasianellus*

**Description:** The narrow, pointed tail with white outer tail feathers gives this bird its name. Chicken-like, weighing about 30 ounces and measuring about 16-17 inches long. The legs are feathered to the base of its toes. Displaying male makes odd hoots and rattles tail.

**Habitat:** The sharp-tailed grouse is the "in-between bird" inhabiting open areas that are too brushy for prairie chickens, but too open for ruffed grouse. During the spring, several males congregate on traditional dancing grounds (called "leks") which usually are open, slightly raised areas in a larger grass-brushland.

**Distribution:** Once distributed state-wide in open grass-brush areas, the "sharpie" is now concentrated primarily in the northwestern and east-central parts of the state where some suitable habitat remains. These large open areas are also excellent for several unique non-game birds, such as the sandhill crane, short-eared owl, northern shrike, and yellow rail.

## Helping Minnesota's Birds has its Benefits!

Audubon Minnesota's work cannot take place without your financial support. If you'd like to help protect Minnesota's birds and the habitats on which they depend, make a donation to Audubon Minnesota. Gifts to Audubon Minnesota remain in the state to support local programs. All gifts, no matter the amount, are welcome and appreciated. Thank you.

Benefits and Gift Levels 2007	\$20	\$50	\$100	\$250	\$1,000+
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Local Audubon chapter membership including bird walks, field trips, member meetings, and chapter newsletter	•	•	•	•	•
One-year subscription to the <i>Audubon Minnesota</i> newsletter plus timely conservation updates		•	•	•	•
Invitation to the annual Donor Appreciation Event featuring a well-known birder, naturalist, or author			•	•	•
Recognition in the <i>Audubon Minnesota</i> newsletter			•	•	•
Complimentary Audubon publication				•	•
Annual Leadership Donor Luncheon with a special guest speaker					•
Recognition in the National Audubon Society Annual Report					•

### Three Easy Ways to Give

1. Donate online at our secure site, go to <http://mn.audubon.org> and click on Donate Online
2. Donate by mail using the envelope inside this newsletter
3. Call 651-739-9332 to make a credit card donation

Your gift to Audubon Minnesota is tax deductible except for the \$15 fair-market value of *Audubon* magazine.

### Author and Naturalist Scott Weidensaul to Speak

Scott Weidensaul, prominent birder, naturalist and prolific writer, will be the guest speaker for our first annual **Donor Appreciation Event** on September 19. Donors making annual gifts of \$100 or more to Audubon Minnesota will receive special invitations to the event. Weidensaul has written more than 24 books including a Pulitzer Prize finalist, *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*. His latest book, *Of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding*, will be published in September. He is a field researcher, specializing in birds of prey, saw-whet owls, and hummingbirds.

### AVEDA AND AUDUBON WORK FOR CLEAN WATER

Earlier this year, Aveda chose Audubon as an Earth Partner for 2007. In April, Aveda Corporation and participating Aveda salons and spas in Iowa helped to raise funds for Audubon's efforts to protect the waters of the Upper Mississippi River.

Through events, services, and product sales, Aveda raised over \$27,000 to help Audubon in its work to improve the health of the Mississippi River for birds, fish, wildlife, and people. We are grateful for the generosity of Aveda Corporation and its staff and Aveda salon teams and clients!