



Zumbro Valley Audubon



CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

Vol. 39 No. 1 Rochester, MN

Sept / Oct 2014

Upcoming Audubon Programs Tuesdays at Quarry Hill Nature Center

Sept 23rd – Laura’s Big Year



You're invited to a special presentation by Laura Erickson about her "Big Year" in 2013. Laura traveled more than 50,000 miles throughout 28 states to see 604 wild bird species.

Laura is the 2014 recipient of the American Birding Association's highest honor, the Roger Tory Peterson Award.

An avid birder from Duluth, Minnesota, she has written 7 books, and previously served as a licensed wildlife rehabber. Her radio program, "For the Birds," has aired on several radio stations from New York to Oregon.

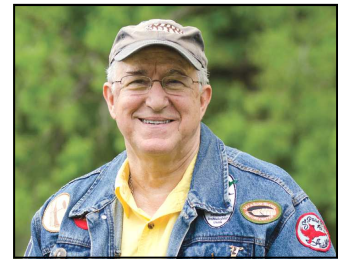
Oct 28th - In Defense of Crows

In Rochester, we know all about crows... Well, maybe we don't!

Crows often get a bad rap. In this talk, St. Paul area author and columnist Clay Christensen will introduce us to Minnesota's corvid family, with emphasis on the American crow and what their family life is really like.

Crows do have a "dark side," and we'll discuss that as well. Then we'll talk about their enemies and the case for crow intelligence.

Clay will be assisted by his "prop" crow, Colby. Plus, there's plenty of humor for everyone.



Our Busy ZVAS Summer! *By ZVAS President, Joel Dunnette*

Some groups take the summer months off. But with SO MUCH happening biologically in summer, I feel it is the 'ripest' time to connect people with nature. So we have been busy.

The nature walks we led with Century high school classes were an opportunity to connect to teens. We generally miss connecting with this important group.

We took our display to 6 events, talking to scores of people about nature and what they can do. The events included an open house at Whitewater state park, a pollinator celebration, two Sargent's Nursery events, a garden tour, and a planting with natives seminar. For the first time in many years, we also had our display at the Olmsted county fair.

I gave two presentations to minority children, encouraging them to see the interesting birds and insects around them. Having done this for prior years, I can see how the kids are getting more open to and enthusiastic about nature.

Our summer programs are growing in popularity too. Seeing kids get excited about catching and handling dragonflies and other insects is gratifying. Too many people these days are afraid of all insects; which are a critically important part of nature.

How about you? Did you 'take the summer off'? Or did you get out and see the wild abundance and fascinating diversity of summer in Minnesota?

ZVAS Officers

President Joel Dunnette
 V.Pres.. Sandy Hokanson
 Secretary Cliff Hansen
 Treasurer Joyce Grier

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 Dave Moehnke
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Minnesota Birding Information:

www.birding-minnesota.com

About Our Organization

ZVAS meets at Quarry Hill Nature Center every 4th Tuesday of the month. Socializing starts at 6:45 pm followed by a program at 7:00. Everyone is welcome.

This Newsletter is published from Sept through May. Copy deadline is the 1st Tuesday of the month of publication. All submissions are subject to editing or revision.

Send as documents to yegrnaturenut@gmail.com. or typed to: Ruthann Yaeger, c/o ZVAS, PO Box 6244, Rochester, MN 55903-6244

Please do not send items in PDF format

CALENDAR OF EVENTS**Sept 27, Sat – Fall Sparrow Field Trip**

Late September is a great time to look for migrating sparrows. We should see White-crowned, Lincolns, White-throated, Savannah, Vesper sparrows, and with a little luck, we may pick up Nelson's Sharp-tailed, LeContes and Harris's sparrows as well.

We'll meet in the parking lot on the east side of the Kalmar Reservoir (East Landfill Reservoir) just off of 19 St NW and Valleyview Ct. about 2 miles west of the Rochester Athletic Club at **8 AM**. Bring water-proof footwear as the grass will probably be quite wet.

Led by Jerry Pruett and John Hockema.

Oct 5, Sat – Red Tail Hawk Bird Walk Quarry Hill Nature Center
 9 AM, Led by Terry & Joyce Grier

Nov 1, Sat– The Kinglet Bird Walk Quarry Hill Nature Center
 9 AM, Led by Terry & Joyce Grier

2014 Butterfly count

The 16th annual Rochester butterfly count was held on July 26th and led by Joel Dunnette. We started at Quarry Hill Nature Center with overcast skies and even a few sprinkles, so our morning count was low. Things improved in the afternoon when the sun came out. We spent considerable time at Chester Woods and Quarry Hill, but covered a few other places as well.

Thanks to good observers and photographers, and persistence, we identified 31 species and counted 456 individuals. We believe we found two or three new species this year, bringing our species count over the past 16 years up to 64. New species this year were: a Silver Bordered fritillary, a Peck's Skipper and a Little Glassy Wing Skipper (being confirmed).

If you have not tried butterfly watching, you are missing out on the fun!

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We promise not to share your e-mail address without your consent, and to send you only rare, but important notes relevant to our chapter happenings.

Thank you!

You can always donate to ZVAS at:



Visit us at:

www.zumbrovalleyaudubon.org or Like us on Facebook

Chimney Swifts Now Breeding in New Preston Tower ! *Text and photos by Terry Grier*



Four swift fledglings in tower for the birds to roost in and gather before migration, while nesting pairs with a couple of helper birds use small chimneys to raise their young.

Thanks to the persistence of Carlyle Corson (whose family owns the old schoolhouse in downtown Preston that has been re-purposed into the Trailhead Suites), a count done on August 29, 2011 recorded 1,100 Swifts, more than any of the over 300 counts compiled in Minnesota that year. The large, old chimney, deteriorating from age and lightning strikes, was unsafe, with bricks from the top occasionally falling to the ground below. Rather than letting it be torn down, a group of citizens and organizations came together to save the chimney.

Greg Munson, former director of Quarry Hill Nature Center in Rochester, had a plan to not only fix the chimney, but to educate people about Chimney Swifts by building a 16 foot tall demonstration chimney by the Preston-Harmony Bicycle Trail head near the old schoolhouse.

The Zumbro Valley Audubon Society agreed to be the coordinating organization, and worked with Minnesota Audubon, the Non Game Wildlife Division of the Minnesota DNR, and the City of

Minnesota Audubon has sponsored a Chimney Swift Sit where people sit and count the number of Swifts that fly down into masonry chimneys to roost for the night. Large chimneys are indispensable

Preston, all of whom contributed the needed support to get the project done. ZVAS also obtained a \$1000 grant from the Preston Area Community Foundation. Corson supervised the work on the big chimney while Munson had the smaller one built in August of 2012. On September 1st, 525 Swifts were counted using the restored chimney, and some 25 went into the demonstration chimney, investigated, but came back out. Beautiful color panels laid out by ZVAS' Sandy Hokanson were installed around the tower to interest people about swifts and other local birds. The Preston Historical society also has a panel about the granary they restored on the site.

On August 1, 2014, Terry Grier was working on a design for an access door to the demonstration chimney when he noticed some bird droppings on one side of the chimney floor. Crawling inside, he was amazed to find a nest of twigs glued together with Swift saliva attached to the wall about 8 feet off the ground. Above that, clinging to the rough mortar, were 4 young Chimney Swifts. They were fairly large and well feathered, too big and too curious to stay in the nest, and soon to fledge. They showed no sign of panic, but moved very little, and were totally quiet as Grier quietly watched, took some pictures, and then slipped out, excited to have seen a sight that few have ever seen directly. When the parents or helper birds came with food, the young ones could be heard chirping and begging from 20 feet away, but when the adults were gone they were silent again.

This new chimney will be a helpful addition for these struggling birds.

Zumbro Valley Audubon is proud to have contributed so much to this important effort.

Swift nest in new Preston MN tower



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Saving the world, one backyard at a time

Our Mission

To bring environmental awareness, appreciation and advocacy to the community by:

- supporting environmental education of our youth.
- developing an appreciation and awareness by the public of the natural world.
- advocating efforts of individuals and community leaders to pursue environmentally positive activities and policies.
- encouraging members to participate in decision-making processes concerning environmental issues.

National Audubon Society Chapter Membership Application (Not for renewal)

Yes, I'd like to join!

My check for \$20 is enclosed. Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and Zumbro Valley Audubon Society. Please send Audubon Magazine, the ZVAS Newsletter, and my membership card right away to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

C/S/Z: _____

Make checks payable to National Audubon Society.

Send to:

National Audubon Society
PO Box 422250
Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250

Zumbro Valley Audubon Society's
chapter code: C0ZM140Z

Getting the Word Out

For our programs and outings to be effective, we need to make them known and attractive to more people. We have expanded our publicity by using Peachjar (a school mailing to parents of Rochester), really nice flyers, Facebook, and a redesigned web site. Thanks especially go to Sandy Hokanson for the webpage as well as her many artistic and design contributions, and to Ruth Johnson for getting us on Facebook.

We have great programs! Please help us get the word out – let your friends and neighbors know. Birds and nature can use all the help we can give them!

Collins Feed & Seed Center

Time to stock up for fall. Birds are busy fattening up for migration and winter. They need lots of energy and we have just the right food for your birds.

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