



# Zumbro Valley Audubon

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

Vol. 38 No. 1 Rochester, MN Sept 2013

## Upcoming Audubon Programs

Sept 24, Tues – Raptors of Hawk Ridge

Oct 22, Tues – Animals of Antarctica

Mark Martell, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon MN, will entertain us with the history and current vision of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory located in Duluth. Hawk Ridge is one of the premier raptor migration observation locations anywhere. Every fall from mid-August to mid-November many thousands of raptors including Bald and Golden eagles, Broad-winged Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Merlins, Peregrine Falcon, Swainson's Hawk, Gyrfalcon and many other species pass over Hawk Ridge. It is a favorite location for many birders from all over the world.

Mark has been visiting Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth since first coming to MN in 1980 and has been involved in various research projects there. He has also participated in bird conservation studies for over 30 years, serving as coordinator of the Midwest Peregrine Falcon Restoration Program, the MN Osprey Reintroduction team, and as a member of the National Bald Eagle Recovery Team. He was the former Coordinator of Conservation/Research Fellow at The Raptor Center at the U. of Minnesota.



Merlin photo courtesy of: [my.opera.com](http://my.opera.com)



Photo credit unavailable

Michelle LaRue – Research Fellow at the Polar Geospatial Center with the U. of MN, will discuss her research involving the use of high-resolution satellite imagery to study Antarctic marine mammal and bird populations, and how changes in sea ice may affect their populations. She currently uses GIS and remote sensing to monitor population status and abundance of Emperor Penguins and Weddell seals.

As a research fellow at PGC, her responsibilities range widely from analyzing remotely-sensed imagery, to supporting logistics, operations, and planners, to mentoring students, and collaborating with Antarctic researchers worldwide. She is also PGC's team lead in the field, so is responsible for planning, organizing, and conducting field work in the Dry Valleys every year.

This topic is especially relevant with the rapid melting of our sea ice worldwide. Check out the web-site <http://www.agic.umn.edu/>.

**ZVAS Officers**

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 Treasurer Joyce Grier

**Board Members**

Bill Bruins  
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**Minnesota Birding Information:**

[www.birding-minnesota.com](http://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](mailto: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 7, Sat – The Chickadee Bird Walk**, Quarry Hill Nature Center 9 AM  
 Led by Terry & Joyce Grier

**Sept 24, Tues – Raptors of Hawk Ridge** Quarry Hill Nature Center 7 PM  
 See front page

**Sept 28, Sat – Fall Sparrow Field Trip** – Led by Jerry Pruett and John Hockema.



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 at 8 AM 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 . Bring water-proof footwear as the grass will probably be quite wet.

LeConte's Photo courtesy of: [www.roysephotos.com](http://www.roysephotos.com)

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

**Oct 22, Tues – Antarctica, the Animals who Live There** Quarry Hill Nature Center 7 PM See front page

You can always donate to ZVAS at:



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**Please Help Your Chapter - Choose Email Delivery!**

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*Thank you!*

## Seeds Treated with Pepper Extract

From National Audubon website

Are seeds treated with pepper extract (capsaicin) harmful to birds? Can it get in their eyes?



Capsaicin does deter squirrels from eating your seeds. The nerve receptor in mammals that is triggered by capsaicin, however, is apparently not activated in birds; and, therefore, the mucous membranes in the gastro-intestinal

system of birds ingesting capsaicin are not irritated. This might be the same for their eyes, but that is not clear from the scientific literature.

There really haven't been any scientific studies on whether the hot pepper extract, capsaicin, is harmful to the animals' eyes.

Capsaicin is deadly to bees and other beneficial pollinators, so that is not something we promote spraying around our yards as an insecticide.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology operates Project FeederWatch, with whom we work closely on backyard citizen science bird projects such as the Great Backyard Bird Count. The advice they provide to people feeding birds is the following: "Use no additives in seed or nectar. Capsicum [the genus for hot peppers] irritates the eyes of humans and is likely to do so with birds as well. We do not recommend adding capsicum to bird seed."

Photo courtesy of: [arbroath.blogspot.com](http://arbroath.blogspot.com)

## Ah, the Good Old Days!

By Joel Dunnette

We often long for the less-stressed times of our youth, remembering the years when our parents took care of our every need, and we could play much of the time.

But youth for wild creatures is no picnic! By late summer almost half of the birds you see are young of the year. Many of them will not make it to their 'hatch day' anniversary.

Within a week or two of fledging, a bird must know how to take off, fly, avoid running into objects, and land safely - no kiddy seats or training wheels for birds - they are the 'pilot' right away!

They also need to learn how to find and obtain food for themselves and what they can and can't eat. The harder it is to find food, the more likely they are to starve.

Within weeks of hatching, birds need to know how to groom and care for their feathers. They need to know what dangers exist, from cats to raccoons to cars and windows, from rain, heat and cold to high winds and hail. We don't know how most young birds die - although it is probably alone and un-mourned. Their tiny bodies are quickly consumed by predators, scavengers, or simply decay.

Very soon, birds need to know how to find others of their kind, and what predatory birds to avoid. Many may have to learn when to migrate and to where; how to avoid the many dangers *en route*; and how to find their way back north.

Before their first birthday many songbirds are already setting up territories, mating, nesting, and laying eggs. Much of this is driven by 'instinct'. We often disdain instinct, feeling that thought and learning is better. But consider how powerful, comprehensive and successful the 'instincts' of birds are!

The birds must do the learning, but we can help them survive this difficult first year. We can provide habitats of native plants to provide needed insects, berries and seeds; shelters of brush piles and tall vegetation where birds can hide; make our windows visible to birds so they don't crash into them; and keep our cats indoors.

Also support organizations that provide habitat - Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, the 'chickadee checkoff' and more. *Cont'd on pg 4*

## Wild Birds Unlimited®



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(507) 292-9266

Stop in and check out all our new items!  
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: COZM140Z

### Ah, the Good Old Days, cont'd

And don't forget to support groups providing habitat for 'our' birds that spend their winters in South and Central America. Even drinking 'shade grown' coffee can help.

So as you watch the birds this fall, keep an eye out for the young ones. Yes, they are harder to identify than full adults. But adults had to be young once. It was a tough time for them too. Do your part to help the next generation of winged singers survive for us to enjoy in years to come.

### *Collins Feed & Seed Center*

The freezing cold weather has our feathered friends feeding heavily to keep up their body fat.

You can help by providing tasty treats at your feeder.

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\*\* Show this ad with your purchase & we'll donate to ZVAS \*\*

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