



## 2024 Annual Report

**Dear Friends,**

One of the pleasures of producing an annual report is the opportunity to take stock in what has been accomplished to support the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Here are just some of the highlights from Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends for 2023-2024.

Because of generous support from members like you, as well as funders that include the Minnesota Valley Trust, Minnesota Valley River Audubon Chapter, Burnsville Rotary, and the Bosch Community Fund, Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends has been able to:

- Transport more than 10,000 students from nearby schools during the 2023-2024 school year to and from the Refuge with the Blue Goose Bus Fund. Schools where at least half of the student population receives free/reduced-cost lunches qualify for free transportation.
- Provide countless volunteer hours to staff the front desks at the Refuge visitor centers, operate the Blufftop Nature Store, assist in environmental education learning, and support events both at the Refuge and throughout the community, including the Minneapolis Monarch Festival.
- Provide support for interns at the Refuge in community outreach, conservation, and environmental education, giving them opportunities to grow as conservation leaders.
- Funding the position of our organization's part-time Executive Director, Alison Schaub.

No National Wildlife Refuge "gets by" without a little help from its Friends. Through these and many other activities, YOU are helping the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge secure its rightful place as one of the country's premier urban refuges. Thank you! With time and your continued support, we hope we can also say one day that the Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends is one of the nation's premier Refuge Friends groups.



## Our Mission

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends assists the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife in its mission to “work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance the fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.”

## 2023-2024 Board of Directors

*President:* Dave Guzzi

*Vice President:*

*Treasurer:* Mark Jensen

*Secretary:* Shannon Breimhurst

*Directors:* Michael Kurtz, Tom Worthington

*Ex-Officio:* Steven Sutter, Founder

## About the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a part of a corridor of land stretching nearly 70 miles along the Minnesota River, from Bloomington to Henderson, Minnesota. Comprising more than 17,000 acres, the Refuge has 12 units, offering a variety of free outdoor recreational experiences for individuals and families. The Refuge also manages a 14-county Wetland Management District.

The Refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). These public lands and waters are set aside to conserve America’s wild animals, insects and plants. The USFWS is supported at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge by the nonprofit organization Minnesota Valley Trust, which works with landowners who wish to sell or donate their land to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends, a mostly volunteer nonprofit organization, also supports the Refuge by managing the Nature Store at the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center; recruiting volunteers for information desks as well as Refuge activities and events; fundraising to support environmental education, habitat restoration, urban outreach, mentoring, arts and other Refuge programs; promoting Refuge programs and advocating for local environmental issues; and creating opportunities for the public to engage with nature.



## 2023-2024 MVRF Revenues and Expenditures

Government funding does not cover all that is necessary to manage Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. According to the National Wildlife Refuge Association, the National Wildlife Refuge System encompasses more than 850 million acres of lands and waters across 568 National Wildlife Refuges and Marine National Monuments. The Fish and Wildlife Service receives 59 cents per acre to maintain lands and waters and meet the needs of its more than 59 million annual visitors (pre-pandemic figures). In comparison, the National Park Service receives \$31 per acre for land management. As a result, wildlife refuges depend on "Friends" groups such as the Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends (MVRF) to fill in the gaps, providing financial and volunteer support. In 2023-2024, total philanthropic support and other income sources to MVRF were **\$101,262**.

**69%** of the budget went directly to helping the Refuge in the areas of environmental education, conservation, wildlife protection, research and outreach. Refuge support includes items such as displays, exhibits, student busing, equipment, interpretive signage, intern stipends, and research. Almost **31%**, **down from 36% in 2022-2023**, of our expenses were administrative. Administrative expenses included the salary of our part-time Executive Director, updating our website and database, print and outreach materials, and other fundraising platforms. The remainder of our expenses were related to managing the Blufftop Nature Store.

## Our Programs

- Confluence Art Gallery
- Mentoring Programs
- Refuge Buddies Programs
- Blufftop Nature Store
- Environmental Education
- Supporting the Intern Program
- Little Nature Libraries

## Third Year for Friends' Executive Director

Alison Schaub started her work with the Friends' in April 2022. She brings more than 25 years of experience leading nonprofit organizations.



## Member Perks & Events

- The monthly *Currents* newsletter
- A 10% discount on select items at the Blufftop Nature Store
- Personal invitations to Refuge events, education and training opportunities for you and your family
- Assurance that your contribution is maximizing Refuge success
- Philanthropic Dollars at Work