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## August Currents - News from MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge

1 message

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Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends <hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org>  
To: Sara Blood <saranoelblood@gmail.com>

Thu, Aug 13, 2020 at 11:28 AM



Photo of the Minnesota River at sunset by Joanna Gilkeson/USFWS. Submit your photos and videos taken at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge for possible publication to [hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org](mailto:hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org).

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## Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Currents

Issue 1, Volume 2 | Aug. 13, 2020



Dear Friends:

What a difference a year makes.

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends started *Currents*, this newsletter you are now reading, one year ago with the promise to keep our members better informed about events and opportunities taking place at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

In my 20+ years in marketing, I have never seen readership levels as high as I do with *Currents*. It's clear you are wild about this wild place. Your passion, in turn, fuels me, the volunteers, the board members and the staff at the Refuge.

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is one of a handful of our nation's premier urban refuges, making it one of the few wild places close to a major metropolitan area. And the Refuge is accessible via light rail, just one-quarter mile down the road from the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center. This makes the Refuge available to anyone and everyone every single day with no special equipment or a long commute required.

A premier urban refuge deserves a premier Refuge Friends organization. We have had to adapt like everyone during the pandemic, from moving events online to adapting learning opportunities to be viewable on our YouTube channel. To our members who have invested time, energy and financial resources to this organization, thank you.

And while the pandemic has put the brakes on some things, we are forging ahead with new and exciting opportunities with existing and new major funders, including a new bird watching mentoring program for urban youth as well as a project on one of our Refuge's creeks. Look for more specific details in future issues.

I took a lovely drive with my husband last night around Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles. With the moonroof open and a slight breeze blowing through my hair, I remarked to my husband, "It's starting to feel like autumn." Just like the seasons, I am optimistic that the season of Corona will pass. I look forward to what the future has in store.

To quote our organization's founder Steve Sutter, "Many thanks for all YOU do for the Refuge."

We hope to see you soon at the Refuge.

Sara N. Blood  
Interim Executive Director  
[Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends](#)

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## Online events & resources

Just in time for back to school, here are some new resources from the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for parents and educators to foster learning both at home and in nature.

["Just for Kids"](#) Learning Adventures (Grades K-6) - Find new distance learning activity packets for outdoor exploration from Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

[Conservation Connect Series](#) (Grades 3-12) - A web-based video series produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, featuring the great outdoors, wildlife species and conservation careers. Several six-to-eight episodes feature conservationists and wildlife footage.

[Wildlife Webcams](#) (All Grades) - Live feeds from various wildlife cameras at National Wildlife Refuges across the country.

Latino Conservation Week -

[Meet Minnesota Valley's Latinx Family Liaison, Oscar Hernandez](#)

[Get inspired with young local Latinos in conservation](#)

[Virtual Storytime: Read The Dream Carver](#)

[Monarch Butterfly Face Painting Tutorial](#)

[Click here](#) for Latino Conservation Week kids activities, including downloadable coloring books and nature journals in Spanish and English.

For Spanish and audio described versions, please visit the [Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends YouTube Channel](#).

For questions about environmental education resources available at the Refuge, contact Environmental Education Coordinator Cortney Solum at [cortney\\_solum@fws.gov](mailto:cortney_solum@fws.gov).

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## Dick Duerre, co-founder of Refuge and protector of Minnesota River dies at 91



Duerre

Dick Duerre, a passionate protector of the Minnesota River and co-founder and key in the establishment of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, died from natural causes Tuesday, July 14. He was 91 years old.

Duerre (rhymes with “flurry”) was one of the founders of the Burnsville Environmental Council (BEC), which first promoted the idea of establishing a National Wildlife Recreation Area in the lower Minnesota River valley in 1973. He was the first person to send to Congress a booklet proposing the area as a federally protected “wildlife recreation area” with the idea that the area would be protected by a unit of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and be comparable to the National Park Service’s National Recreation Areas but to be managed by the refuge system. However, to be authorized as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System and processed by then Minnesota Rep. Jim Oberstar’s congressional committee, it had to be a refuge.

“Frustrated with our inability to stop the renewals of permits for the operation of two flood plain sanitary landfills, our council prepared a 34-page booklet,” said Nancy Sullivan, then chairman of the BEC, during a 1975 hearing before the subcommittee on the environment of the United States Senate. The booklet was distributed widely to both local and national leaders, which resulted in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service investigating the Minnesota River valley for its suitability as a national wildlife refuge.

The legislation was ultimately enacted in 1976 to establish the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

“Dick was proud of the Refuge and eager to introduce others to it,” wrote Steve Sutter, founder of the Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends and a board member, in an email.

According to an obituary provided by longtime friend and the Refuge’s first manager, Ed Crozier, Duerre “was active in monitoring water quality at Black Dog Lake and other locations along the Minnesota River” as well as Crystal Lake in Burnsville. He started weekly monitoring of Minnesota River quality about two years before the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, according to Sutter.

Duerre received the Volunteer of the Year Award in 2007 from Minnesota Waters (which merged with and renamed as Conservation Minnesota in 2012) for his work in monitoring water quality for more than 34 years.

Duerre and Crozier went on numerous hunting expeditions together, enjoying bird hunting and fishing. The men and their wives also traveled abroad to Costa Rica and Ireland. His annual pheasant hunting trips to North Dakota with his son Paul were always a highlight. He loved his golden retriever Bridger, his French Brittany Scout, and even Gus, a misfit pet.

Duerre is described as “want(ing) the world to be a better place” in the obituary. Born Oct. 5, 1928, in Rochester, Minnesota, his family moved to Wabasha when he was young. After graduating from Wabasha High School, he served in the military during the Korean conflict. He graduated in 1952 from the College of Liberal Arts at Hamline University in St. Paul. He worked as a representative for an industrial supply industry manufacturer for most of his career.

In addition to the Refuge, Duerre was also instrumental in helping to establish the Burnsville Park System, and spent time improving facilities at the Bush Lake Izaak Walton League property. He also served as president of the Brain Injury Association and was a supporter of Habitat for Humanity. He started kayaking in his 80s and fished into his 90s from his kayak in Florida and Minnesota. He was also active in organizing programs at senior living community Friendship Village Bloomington up until his death.

“Dick was a quiet guy but, like the Minnesota River, was always moving with a current of service,” wrote Sutter.

He is survived by his wife, Harriett, whom he married in 1960; children Jane Hall (Ron); Paul (Micki) and David; and two grandchildren.

Memorials preferred to the [Friends of the Minnesota Valley](#).



## Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends seeks candidates for board of directors

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends seeks to fill up to three seats on its board of directors during its next fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1, 2020.

Board of directors serve staggered terms of three years each. The board meets monthly 11 times of year typically on the fourth Thursday of every month at 5 p.m. at the Refuge's Bloomington Education & Visitor Center, but is currently meeting via ZOOM due to COVID-19.

Interested candidates can attend a future meeting as a guest and will be voted on following their second meeting.

Candidates especially interested in volunteer recruitment, environment education, advocacy, habitat restoration or in a professional service that would benefit the Refuge are especially encouraged to apply.

For more information, please contact Sara Blood at [sarablood.mnvr@gmail.com](mailto:sarablood.mnvr@gmail.com).



**Keep your eyes on your feeder to catch a glimpse for ruby-throated hummingbirds, tiny, fast-moving beauties, as they make their journey south.**

## **Wildlife watch: A feast for birds**

by Melissa Schneider  
Refuge Environmental Educator

While at home this summer, consider this a great time to set up your own bird feeders if you haven't already and bring the joy of watching birds to your own yard or window. I want to highlight two birds who love a feast in August and whose diets consist of things beyond your usual wild bird seed. Consider upgrading your feeders to include these foods!

### **American Goldfinch – The “Almost” State Bird**

Before the loon was chosen as the Minnesota state bird in 1961, the American goldfinch was a frontrunner for the spot, and was seen as the unofficial state bird by many people. The goldfinch remains abundant and beloved today and is a bit of an anomaly among songbirds in more than one way. First, it nests and raises young into August, long after other songbirds have fledged and moved on. This is because their cycle is tied to the cycle of native thistles. They use the thistle down to build their nests and feed the seeds to their young. This brings me to the second anomaly: while most seed-eating birds feed their nestlings insects, the goldfinch is a strict vegetarian and feeds their nestlings partially-digested wild seeds, with a particular love for thistle. So conservation of native thistles is very important to our goldfinch populations, and in addition to that you can hang a thistle feeder in your yard to provide extra food for these late-season families to enjoy (and keep that feeder up all winter, as many goldfinches are year-round residents). Our native Tall thistle is blooming at Rapids Lake right now if you're interested in checking it out.

## Ruby-throated Hummingbird – A Feeding Frenzy

August is when ruby-throated hummingbirds, now approximately double in population after nesting, begin their migration south. With this impending migration comes a sort of feeding frenzy called “hyperphagia.” Hummingbirds will spend an increased amount of time feeding on nectar and insects, with males nearly doubling in weight. This extra energy allows them to fly much farther without needing to refuel on their journey to Central America. While a hummingbird’s first choice is nectar producing flowers and the insects they find on them, putting out feeders with a sugar-water mixture can give them another food source—especially if it’s near the flowers they prefer! Mix one part granulated white sugar to four parts water; boiling for two to three minutes helps slow fermentation; do not add food coloring, which can be harmful; and clean and refill weekly in mild weather or twice weekly in warmer weather. Keep your eyes on your feeder to catch a glimpse of these tiny, fast-moving beauties on their journey south.

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**DONATE****Like the Refuge? Let's be friends.**

If you enjoy this newsletter written by our staff and Refuge employees, [please consider joining or renewing your membership with Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends for \\$25](#). If we all pitch in a little, we can make a big difference in supporting the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Thank you!



### Our Contact Information

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