



Old Cedar Bridge, Fall 2019. Photo by Doug Wallick. Used with permission. Do you have a photo from the Refuge you'd like to submit for possible publication? Please send it to hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org.

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Currents

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Dear Friends:

A new year is an opportunity for new beginnings and, with 2019 officially in the books, we're excited for what 2020 has in store for Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends.

As many of you know, 2019 brought many changes with the stepping down of our founder and leader Steve Sutter (who has graciously agreed to continue serving on our board). We renamed our organization from Refuge Friends Inc. to Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends, and we promised we would provide you with better updates with the revamping of the [website](#) and the introduction of *Currents*, the monthly newsletter you are now reading.

Our resolution for the coming year is to introduce you to new and exciting volunteer opportunities at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (please keep reading below about our upcoming volunteer open house!) as well as bring back member-exclusive events and activities designed for you and your family.

And, with your support, we will continue to provide funding and services to our Refuge so that it remains a premier urban oasis that is accessible to all ages.

Refuge staff anticipate that more than 10,000 students will receive transportation this school year alone through Refuge Friends' [Blue Goose Bus Fund](#), which sends students round trip to the Refuge from schools where at least half of the population receives free or reduced lunch. We will also set

the hook for future anglers by introducing hundreds of area youth to fishing and providing them with fishing equipment they get to keep. Volunteers at the Refuges' two education and visitor centers will ensure that visitors from around the world continue having a world-class experience at the Refuge.

And your dollars will continue to support staff at the Refuge as well as provide a fertile training ground for future leaders, educators and ambassadors of wildlife refuges and other outdoor services through our internship programs.

On behalf of the Refuge Friends board, thank you for supporting Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends. May 2020 bring you both happiness, good health and more time spent in the great outdoors.

We hope to see you soon at the Refuge!

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

Upcoming events at the Refuge

All events are free to the public but may be canceled due to inclement weather. Events are held at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's Bloomington Education & Visitor Center unless otherwise noted. Parking is available but may be limited during high-demand events. The Refuge is easily accessible via the Metro Transit Blue Line at the American Blvd. stop. For more information, call 952-854-5900.

Friday, Jan. 17

Art Shanty Volunteer Training

Join Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge on the ice of Bde Unma / Lake Harriet as a pollinator champion during the Art Shanty Projects on Saturdays and Sundays, Jan. 18-Feb. 9, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Volunteers have the opportunity to choose between a Pollinator Educator and a Pollinator Bike Helper. Pollinator Educators will alternate between working with the public inside the shanty explaining the monarch butterfly migration or providing pollinator facts outside the shanty, and the Pollinator Bike Helpers will be outside the art shanty in the bike corral and are in charge of insect bicycle sharing and safety.

Volunteers are asked to register for 90- or 60-minute shifts. A volunteer training is also available Friday, Jan. 17, from 6-7 p.m. at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center. For more information, and for the link to register, please contact Thia Xiong at thia_xiong@fws.gov.

Saturday, Jan. 18

Doughnuts & Coffee with MN Valley Refuge Friends Natural Dyes Textile Demonstration

Come to the Refuge and enjoy a hot coffee and doughnut while learning about volunteer activities and upcoming events with Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends and a Refuge staff member. Stay to

watch artist Emily Donovan do a natural dye demonstration that includes examples from locally foraged materials, including oak gall and black walnuts, and how natural colors can be manipulated with additives or mordants like iron and aluminum. The Doughnuts & Coffee hour will begin at 9:30 a.m. in Classroom B with the art demonstration to follow at 11 a.m. No need to register. We hope to see you there!

Bird Walks at Bass Ponds & Wilkie

Join Refuge volunteer naturalist Craig Mandel for a bird walk to learn about some of the 220 species that stop here during migration. Birders of all levels are welcome to join. Bring along binoculars and a field guide, if you have one. Please dress for the weather. Walks are held Saturday, Jan. 18; Sunday, Jan. 26; and Saturday, Feb. 1, from 8-10:30 a.m. Meet at the Bass Ponds Trails, 2501 86th St. E., Bloomington, MN 55425. A walk will also be held on Feb. 22, from 8-10:30 a.m., at the Wilkie Unit Trailhead, 7701 County Road 101 E., Shakopee, MN 55379.

Thursday, Jan. 23

The Twin Cities Metro Area is home to a remarkable diversity of wild mammals. Though often elusive, they leave behind tracks and signs for us to see. The Minnesota Wildlife Tracking Project is a group of nature enthusiasts who gather to explore the art and science of wildlife tracking. Over the years, the project has identified the tracks and signs of a wide range of mammals in the greater metro area, including river otter, black bear and even grey wolves. Come learn a bit about animal tracks, hear stories about adventures in the field, and find out how to get involved in your own neighborhood with Refuge volunteer and Director of the Minnesota Wildlife Tracking Project, John Popple.

For more information about the Minnesota Wildlife Tracking Project, visit MNTracking.org. The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter hosts this monthly speaker series. Come at 7 p.m. to socialize over cookies and snacks in the classrooms, and move to the Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. for the presentation.

Sunday, Feb. 23

MN Valley Refuge Friends Members-only snowshoe event

We are planning a members-only snowshoe event on the afternoon of Feb. 23 from 3:30-5 p.m. complete with hot chocolate and cookies. Limited to 15 participants, ages 12 and older, this event will be an introductory, hands-on opportunity to learn how to size, wear and use the snowshoes available at the Refuge and will include a brief hike around the meadow, weather and conditions permitting. This hike will be led by Grant Fleetwood, a great friend of our Refuge as well as the outdoors program and outreach lead at L.L. Bean. Visit <https://www.mnvalleyrefugefriends.org/events.html> to learn more, which will also take you to our Facebook page link to register for the event.

Wildlife watch: Stay off ice

With this year's mild Minnesota winter (so far), a reminder to stay off the Minnesota River and other bodies of water throughout the Refuge. When a thin layer of ice forms on a lake, it will add one inch of ice for every 15 freezing degree days. While experts say it takes at least four inches of ice to support an adult human's body weight, the only way to know for sure it has reached this level of thickness is to bore a small hole to measure the ice. And even then, ice thickness can vary depending on conditions as ice takes longer to form on moving bodies of water. Refuge staff don't

recommend walking on Refuge bodies of water in winter. With many of the bodies of water being spring-fed, the ice is not guaranteed to be safe in all areas. A reminder that dogs are required to stay on leash while at the Refuge, which is especially important as dogs tend to wander out on ice that will not support their body weight. If they get loose, do not follow your pet onto ice, call them back or go for help.

Share your love of fishing... Become a Refuge Fishing Buddy

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and MN Valley Refuge Friends are currently recruiting mentors to work with youth, young adults and families interested in exploring fishing.

Commitment: Mentors are expected to provide at least 20 hours of mentoring per month. Refuge Staff will provide mentors with planning and coordination support, all required equipment and a monthly stipend. This new program, an extension of our Refuge's urban outreach activities, is made possible in part from a generous grant from the Bosch Community Foundation.

Qualifications: Experience and passion for fishing and the outdoors. Interest in working with beginning anglers within their own communities. Enjoy working with youth and families. Ability to speak Spanish, Hmong or Somali is highly desirable.

For more information, please contact Urban Outreach Manager Suzanne Trapp at 952-858-0729.

Volunteer action alert Wanted: Front Desk Volunteers

The Refuge is in need of volunteers to serve at our front desk and Nature Store. We could especially use volunteers on a regular basis on Monday mornings or afternoons, Wednesday afternoons, Friday mornings, Saturday mornings or afternoons, and Sunday mornings. On-call volunteers are also needed. Training provided.

This is an exciting opportunity to get to know your Refuge while ensuring visitors from all over the world have a positive experience here and throughout the metro. For more information, please contact Joel Vos at joel_vos@fws.gov.

Support your refuge

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in its mission to "be a thriving urban Refuge where nature connects people, communities and wildlife." All contributions are tax-deductible. Please consider supporting us by making an online donation on our website or by mailing in your donation today. Thank you!

Our Contact Information

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