



Sara Blood &lt;hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org&gt;

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**May Currents - News from MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge**

1 message

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**MN Valley Refuge Friends** <hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org>

Thu, May 13, 2021 at 7:54 AM

Reply-To: hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org

To: Sara Blood &lt;hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org&gt;



Photo of spring prescribed fire. Submit your photos and videos taken at the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge for possible publication to [hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org](mailto:hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org). Photo / Hanna McBrearty, USFWS



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**Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Currents**

Issue 10, Volume 2 | May 13, 2021

**Dear Friends,**

Is it the beginning of the end?

Minnesotans rejoiced this month when Gov. Tim Walz said he planned to roll back remaining COVID-19 restrictions over the next two months, ending limits on indoor gatherings by May 28 and dropping the state's mask mandate, fingers crossed, by July 1.

The past 14 months have tested our mettle in many ways. Some lost jobs. Some had special events like weddings or graduations cancelled, delayed or diminished. Some lost loved ones. All lost a sense of normalcy. I thought of younger kids — do they remember when they didn't need to wear a mask? And I also thought of families who had to wait it out, patiently, *maddingly*, until all could safely reunite.

I started this job in March 2019 as a part-time interim. Everything was closed one year later. I wondered how our little organization and the refuge would weather a pandemic. We were thrilled to see parking lots full as visits to the refuge increased five-fold. People sought out nature in their communities as an escape from quarantine and working from home.

Our board members never gave up hope that a premier urban national wildlife refuge such as Minnesota Valley deserved a premier Friends group. That people still saw value in the refuge and its staff, the environment, habitat restoration, urban outreach, environmental education, and the many other opportunities and challenges impacting the refuge every day.

Because of you, Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends is beginning to blossom. Year-over-year membership increased 53 percent. Giving from individuals, meanwhile, grew by 230 percent. And while some funding organizations understandably said no as they shifted their priorities to address the public health emergency, new ones came through. A special thanks to refuge partner Minnesota Valley Trust for their continued guidance and support.

We're excited to emerge from this pandemic healthier and stronger as an organization. We're thrilled to reengage *in person!* with volunteers and visitors. And we look forward to working with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in its mission to be a thriving urban refuge where nature connects people, communities and wildlife.

Thank you for supporting your refuge.

Sara N. Blood  
Executive Director



Walter Mondale.  
**Photo / Star  
Tribune**

### Farewell to a friend: Walter Mondale

Former Vice President Walter Frederick "Fritz" Mondale has died. The former senator, ambassador, and Minnesota attorney general was 93.

Mondale is credited for landmark legislative accomplishments in fair housing, civil rights, women's rights, and environmental protections. As vice president, he helped lay the groundwork for the 1978 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, the Panama Canal Treaty, and nuclear arms negotiations with the Soviet Union. In 1984 he made history when he became the first major-party nominee to select a woman as his running mate.

Shortly after arriving in Washington in 1965, Mondale found himself at the forefront of the environmental movement. He was a chief sponsor of the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which included the St. Croix River. He also advocated for creating Voyageurs National Park and full protection of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

He wrote in his book, "The Good Fight, published in 2010, "environmental issues would take a special place in my public career... There was something almost spiritual about working on legislation where water and wilderness were at stake. It became one of the issues where I was willing to risk public opposition of the sort that could end a career."

In 1975, Mondale introduced S. 2097, establishing the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Recreation Area. "I think we must be realistic in recognizing that it is only an accident of history that has allowed the lower Minnesota to remain much the way it was hundreds of years ago. We now have an opportunity to assure that man's carelessness in the rush for new development sites does not deprive future generations of an irreplaceable natural asset. I hope we will take this opportunity to preserve the lower Minnesota, thereby assuring that our children and their children will be able to use and enjoy this valuable, but fragile, resource." 94th Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record 121 (July 11, 1975): 22266-22269.

Mondale is survived by sons Ted and William, grandchildren, daughter-in-law Rebecca Monday and son-in-law Chan Poling. Funeral services are planned for September of this year, with public memorials planned for Minnesota and Washington D.C. A complete statement from the Mondale family can be found [here](#).

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## Refuge happenings

### Visitor centers update

Information tables will be staffed outside at the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays starting in May. In June, tables will be staffed Fridays-Sundays at Bloomington, and Saturdays at Rapid Lake Education and Visitor Center, from 12 to 4 p.m. Please visit the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife website for the latest updates, including trail conditions.

### Prescribed fires

One of the most effective tools in the conservation toolbox is fire. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and many state and local conservation agencies employ professional firefighters to perform this important work. Fire helps restore native prairies, wetlands, and park landscapes across the nation. [This brief video feature](#) from the City of Bloomington describes how fire is used locally.

Learn more about the benefits of fire for wildlife at [www.fws.gov/fire/](http://www.fws.gov/fire/).

Eco Arts Festival  
Saturday, May 22  
11 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Join ArtStart in partnership with Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge for a FREE nature art event on Saturday, May 22nd, from 11:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. outdoors at the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center. To learn more and to register, which is required: <https://signup.com/go/ndEwdGS>.

### Painting in nature

Various locations throughout the month of May

This month, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's Logan Sauer will host multiple Painting in Nature programs. Participants will be led step by step through a nature painting, enjoying the nature in their own communities from a new perspective. Set in multiple locations across Bloomington, programs are free, and all materials are provided. [Visit this page](#) to learn more and to register.



Art by Amy Rice

### Swoop - There it is!

Online artist exhibition & artist talk

Now-July 2

Swoop - There it is!, an online art exhibition featuring the work of Amy Rice, will be featured now through July 2 at Confluence Gallery at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

The artist will hold a talk Wednesday, June 9, at 6:30 p.m. To view Rice's art and to learn more about the talk, visit [this link](#).

Learn more about the Confluence Gallery at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center and our partnership with Artistry by visiting [this link](#) on the refuge website.

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## Friends alerts

### #SpringForwardMN update

Thanks to those who participated in our first-ever #SpringForwardMN campaign supporting the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. We raised a total of \$1,300, surpassing our match of \$500. These donations will go a long way in supporting COVID safe activities for students and visitors. If you are interested in learning how you can help the Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends in its fundraising efforts, please [contact us](#).

### Volunteer alert

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends is looking for volunteers to serve as table hosts at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center on Saturday, May 22, during the Eco Arts Festival. Volunteers will sign up for 1.5-hour shifts from 11-3:30, share information about the Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends, and hand out free pollinator seed packets to visitors. The table will be outside with a sunshade and seating, and COVID-19 safety protocols will be in place. Please visit our [registration page](#) to learn more and sign up for a shift. Thank you!



Dragonfly nymph. Photo / Richard Toller, Creative Commons

## Wildlife watch: The underwater world of aquatic macroinvertebrates

by Mel Schneider  
Refuge Environmental Educator

When spring arrives, birders flock to wetlands to spot migratory waterfowl returning, painted turtles emerge to sun themselves on logs and rocks, and frog choruses erupt in sound. However, another world in the wetlands is often unseen: the world of aquatic macroinvertebrates.

Aquatic macroinvertebrates are small (but not microscopic) organisms with no backbone that live in the water, like insects, snails, and leeches. The underwater world of aquatic macroinvertebrates is an incredibly diverse one worthy of a closer look.

One of the most abundant groups of aquatic macroinvertebrates is aquatic insects. Many of these insects spend their entire life in the water, while others live in the water only in their larval or nymph stage. These latter insects transform into adult insects we are more familiar with, like mayflies, stoneflies, and dragonflies. A dragonfly nymph spends four or five years underwater before climbing out to molt into a full-winged dragonfly that lives for a single warm season.

Aquatic macroinvertebrates play many critical roles in a healthy wetland, including being an important food source for fish, birds, frogs, and other animals. They are also extremely useful to scientists. While some species have adapted a tolerance to pollution and changes in the environment, many cannot survive changed conditions. Consequently, the diversity of aquatic macroinvertebrates living in a particular wetland is a key indicator of the ecosystem's overall water quality and health.

If you have a net and a bucket of water, you can head to your nearest pond and get a closer look at some of these creatures. Use the [Key to Life in the Pond](#) chart to identify the species you find—how diverse is *your* underwater world? And always remember, these are live animals, so handle them with care and always return them carefully to their proper home.



Sandhill cranes. Photo / National Wildlife Refuge Association

## Action alert: Tell Congress to increase refuge system funding

Love the Refuge System? Let Congress know how necessary increased funding is for national wildlife refuges in FY2022. Please contact your Members of Congress to ask that they fund the National Wildlife Refuge System's Operations and Maintenance account at \$600 million and \$50 million for the Refuge Fund.

The National Wildlife Refuge System encompasses more than 850 million acres of lands and waters across America's 568 National Wildlife Refuges, including five Marine National Monuments. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is responsible for managing these lands and for fulfilling its obligation to the Refuge System's 59 million annual visitors and diverse wildlife on a budget of a mere 59 cents per acre, a fraction of what other land agencies receive per acre. For comparison, the National Park Service gets \$31 per acre for land management of 85 million acres.

Refuge management requires investments in staff and tools to manage wildlife populations, recover endangered species, control harmful invasive species, adapt management strategies to address climate change and provide opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation. The Refuge System is grappling with a 16.5% cut to its overall budget in the past 10 years. This cut is a \$100 million loss when factoring in inflation.

This strain on resources has affected all aspects of the Refuge System. Refuges have had to cut numerous staff positions and sacrifice vital habitat management, visitor services, and maintenance activities to reduce costs. Even critical volunteer programs, which provide additional free labor equaling 20% to the Refuge System workforce, have been cut back or eliminated for lack of supervision from full-time professional staff. However, Congress has recently included a slight but meaningful increase for volunteer programs.

Despite this severely constrained budget, the Refuge System generates approximately 35,000 jobs and provides \$2.4 billion in economic output each year. For every \$1 appropriated to the Refuge System, an average of nearly \$5 is returned to local economies. The Refuge System requires adequate funding to sustain these economic, social, and biological benefits for all Americans.

[Ask Congress to increase Refuge System funding by clicking on this link.](#)

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## Before you go

Enjoy a virtual tour of the newly renamed Confluence Gallery at the Bloomington Visitor Center, which just wrapped up its first virtual exhibition with artist Jodi Reeb. Click [here](#) to learn about upcoming exhibits and events at the Confluence Gallery.

Donate to MN Valley Refuge Friends



### Our Contact Information

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### Engaging People with Nature.

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Contributions are tax-deductible. Thank you for your support!

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