



Glow from the Valley. For more information on 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:



Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge volunteers came together to do an inventory of the Bloomington Blufftop Nature Store. I don't know if it was the impending storm, but we were able to complete this task in record time before the first snowflake fell. It is moments like these I'm so thankful for volunteers.

Less than half of our nation's refuges have Friends groups. Without them, the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge would not be able to accomplish everything it needs to be one of the premier urban refuges in the country. Refuge Friends are also critical for funding, protection and the perpetuation of the National Wildlife Refuge System. All events at our Refuge are free and remain free, thanks in part to your support.

And volunteers are a critical ingredient to our Refuge's success. In the last fiscal year, 389 people volunteered close to 8,000 hours - equivalent to about four full-time staff! - according to Refuge staff.

Please contact us at hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org if you are looking for an opportunity to volunteer. Whether you are an introvert or an extrovert, I like to say we have an opportunity for you, including staffing our visitor centers' front desks, seed collection, off-site events, monitoring trail conditions, and much, much more.

We hope to see you soon at the Refuge!

Sara N. Blood
Interim Executive Director
[MN Valley Refuge Friends](http://MNValleyRefugeFriends.org)



National Wildlife Refuge, which was presented by Deputy Manager Eric Mruz on Saturday, Feb. 8, during the Refuge's Volunteer Appreciation Event. Barb has volunteered more than 500 hours at the Refuge and is the "go-to" trainer at the Refuge's visitor center front desk and Blufftop Nature Store. She is also Treasurer of Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends and has worked tirelessly to update our accounting processes. Thank you, Barb, for All You Do for the Refuge!

Meet a Refuge volunteer: Jim Coleman



How many years have you volunteered at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge?

About six years. (Jim have volunteer over 800 hours at the Refuge!)

What do you do at the Refuge?

I work at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center visitor desk, as a Trail Ranger and other various events.

What's a commonly asked question about the Refuge?

Can I bring in the baby bunny I found in the backyard?

What is your favorite thing to do at the Refuge?

Hiking, photography and bird watching.

Outside of the Refuge, what is another favorite outdoor spot for you?

The [Sax-Zim Bog](#). (Meadowlands, Minnesota - about 50 minutes north of Duluth).

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.

Help wanted: Ideas for members-only events

We are excited to report back that our first members-only event, an intro to snowshoeing at the Refuge on Feb. 23, is completely booked. That has us wondering, what other members-only events would you like to be held at the Refuge? Send your ideas to hello@mvalleyrefugefriends.org. Thank you!

Saturday, Feb. 15

Photo Workshop Series: Winter Wonderland

Join professional photographer and Refuge volunteer Don Tredinnick for an early morning photo hike to capture the winter light at the refuge. This location provides some fantastic winter scenes.

During the hike, Don will discuss camera settings, and help with subject selection and composition tips. Plan to meet at 7 a.m. sharp to catch the sunrise and excellent lighting opportunities of the early morning in winter. Old Cedar Avenue Bridge area parking [lot, 9695 Old Cedar Ave S., Bloomington, MN 55425](#).

Also on Saturday, Feb. 15

Puppet Show Series: Dream of Owls

In Dream of Owls, little Theo is drifting off to sleep when he is frightened by a hooting sound. His father shows him how to overcome his fears by naming them. As Theo drifts off to sleep, he learns more and more about owls, the source of the sound, from a strangely familiar dream dragon. Will it be enough to banish his nightmare? Dream of Owls is focused on teaching about owls and learning to name your fear to overcome it. Produced and performed by Seth Eberle.

Show is from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Stay after the show to make your own owl puppet. Recommended for ages 3 and up.

Saturday, Feb. 29

Workshop: Eco Hacks for Thrifty Women

Do you want to save money and reduce waste? Everyday sustainability is achievable, affordable, and can be - dare we say? - fabulous! Environmental Educator Jazmyn Bernard will lead participants through upcycling projects, eco-crafts, and provide an in-depth dive into how you can easily incorporate the 3 R's (reduce, reuse and recycle) into your life every day. Please bring an old t-shirt for the upcycling project.

This event, held from 1:30-3:30 p.m., is free but registration is required. Register [here](#).

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 Sunday, Feb. 23, and Saturday, March 7, 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.

Gallery exhibition now through Feb. 28

Now showing at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center art gallery, "Migration and Motion," a series of paintings by Emily Donovan that captures ideas about the environment, seasonal change and bird migration in Minnesota. Each work is created with natural dyes and pigments from plant materials, a process that provides a rich connection to nature. Bird migration and plant growth work together to create healthy ecosystems as they support one another and signal the arrival and departure of seasons. Birds can predict when flowers bloom, bugs arrive, and the weather, and their resiliency or decline can mirror the health of our environment.



Trumpeter Swan by Emily Donovan

Save the dates

Saturday, May 30
EcoArts Fest

Saturday, June 6
Old Cedar Bridge pedestrian and biking bridge grand reopening public celebration
2-6 p.m.

Saturday, July 18
Fiesta Mexicana

Sunday, Oct. 25
Dia de Los Muertos and Family Art Day

Volunteer opportunities are available at all of these events. Please contact us at hello@mvalleyrefugefriends.org if you'd like to learn more.

Wildlife watch: Owls

by Refuge Education Practicum Melissa Schneider

By February 1 we have gained one whole hour of daylight since the winter solstice. Sunshine is the name of the game in February, as spring starts to feel just a tiny bit closer. Owls have started establishing territories and nesting sites and great-horned owls are the first bird to lay eggs in Minnesota. They will begin laying their eggs in February and owlets will hatch 30-40 days later just as the snow is beginning to melt and prey is abundant. You may still be able to get out and hear plenty of owl calls as pairs have hooting duets establishing their nesting territories. This [website](#) from Audubon will help you learn five common owl calls.

Share your love of fishing or birdwatching... Become a Refuge Fishing or Birding 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 and birding.

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 paid 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 desired but not necessary.

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 regularly 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.



Share your love of the Refuge this Valentine's Day

Have you purchased your dear ones Valentine's Day gifts yet? Share your love of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge by making a tax-deductible gift in their honor to Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends. Your gift will last longer than candy or flowers, and you will support youth visiting our Refuge and learning about the nature in nature. Please consider supporting us by making an online donation [here](#) on our website or by mailing in your donation today. Include your loved one's name and contact information and we'll notify them of your donation with a thank you letter.

Our Contact Information

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends
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