



## Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Currents

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### Dear Friends:

Reportedly great philosopher Yogi Berra said, "You can observe a lot by watching." Lately I have been watching birds and here are some of my observations:

Stay Active. These nice weather months since last winter have been full of activities, including flocks arriving, couples building nests, butterflies doing their thing, apples ripening, off-spring learning to fly and flocks reforming and heading south. While it is tempting to "look up" stuff on Google or "surf" TV Nature Channels, I suggest you take random walks in your neighborhood, solo or guided hikes on the Refuge trail, even biking (cycle-therapy?) or auto touring along the Minnesota River Valley. I notice if I walk the same route at different times of the year the seasonal changes are not only enhanced, but I also usually discover something new each visit.

Celebrate the Seasons. I'm pretty sure that Nature's critters don't check their PDAs or pocket calendars to check plans for the coming migration, mating, harvest, etc. seasons but there appears to be common reaction to changing conditions. I don't know how wildlife realizes that daylight hours are reducing or increasing or atmospheric pressure is changing but they do. Cardinals molt in the fall with new feathers having brown tips, which wear off to reveal resplendent red for spring mating season. Note to self: wear your best flannel until Earth Day April 22. Be prepared, change is coming.

It's good to be part of a team. The coolest Yin/Yang thing about Team is the realization that both components are necessary for either to function at their best. A flock of little birds feeding increases each individual's level of safety from predators. Another example: geese work together while migrating in their famous V formations to take advantage of aerodynamics and offer encouragement to whichever is cutting the wind. I tried out a local legend about when birds gather at feeders, fish also feed or bite better. Result: I saw birds feeding. I went fishing. I caught fish. Myth proven? Not scientifically, but I think it is more than coincidental that feeding time is feeding time for overlapping species.

Oct. 8 was a special day for Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Back in 1976, the many efforts of talented and energetic individuals that included Elaine Mellott, Dick Duerre and Ed Crozier culminated in President Gerald Ford signing legislation that established Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Now 43 years later, the Refuge is a wonder-filled facility with places for wildlife and people who enjoy them. I was honored to be a part of classes from Valley View planting 200 native plant bundles at the restoration of Old Cedar Avenue nature play area. Can you imagine those elementary school kids visiting in years to come saying "I planted that (patch of wildflowers)!"

One way you can help Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends is financially. [Give to the Max Day](#), a coordinated fundraising effort by nonprofit organizations, is Nov. 14. While you can check out our website, [enroll as a member](#) or [make a donation](#) of any size at any time, contributing in November helps Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends' budget for improved environmental education programs in 2020.

It boils down to Awareness of Place. Get out there. Look around. Get involved.

Many Thanks for All You Do for the Refuge.

Steve Sutter

Founder, Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Board Member

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge volunteer since 2000

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## Wildlife watch

This November, keep your eyes out for larger mammals venturing out of their summer grounds and nearer to available food (like visitor center bird feeders). White-tailed deer, for example, are in their mating season, and we will see wandering bucks and does around the trails. Foxes and coyotes wander more widely, and you might get a chance to see their tracks, especially after any snow falls this month.

Deer opener is this month as well, and we want to remind visitors to the Refuge to be aware of hunting activities at our Wilkie, Louisville Swamp, Rapids Lake, St. Lawrence, Jessenland, and Blakely Units. We recommend wearing an article of clothing with blaze orange or pink when hiking or biking on our trails in those areas. Be safe, and let us know what spectacles of nature you're seeing when you visit the Refuge via our [Facebook page!](#)

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## What's new at the Nature Store

The Blufftop Nature Store has some fun items in stock just in time for early holiday shopping.

New knit caps come in a variety of critters including fish, gophers, and lynx. They are certain to make heads turn. The hats retail for \$20.

The bookstore also offers a variety of small animal sticker books for \$1.99 that are perfect for stocking stuffers plus larger children's books and field guides.

Planning to send holiday cards? Send a special card to someone special featuring wintertime nature photography highlighting our Refuge and greater Minnesota.

Check back regularly as items are always on sale, usually at a 50% discount.

And please consider having a friend become a Minnesota Valley Refuge Friend member by purchasing a gift membership for just \$25.

The Nature Store is located inside the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center and is open 9 a.m.-4 p.m. seven days a week except for holidays and days when the center is closed to the public.

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends members receive a 10% discount on select items. The store is operated by Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends volunteers, and profits support

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education programs connecting youth at all ages with nature.

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## MN Valley Refuge Friends will participate in Give to the Max Day

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends will be joining nonprofit organizations across Minnesota in asking supporters to give to their favorite charities during Give to the Max Day on Thursday, Nov. 14. Now in its 10th year, the 24-hour event serves to raise awareness for philanthropy and create a spirit of community

giving. Here are five reasons to consider including Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends in your Give to the Max Day giving plans.

- 1. Be Part of the Celebration.** Give to the Max is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2019 and has raised more than \$170 million for Minnesota Charities. Your donations to Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends will help us increase our chances in winning "Golden Tickets" or cash prizes, which are given throughout the day.
  - 2. Renew or Enroll in Refuge Friends.** Those donating \$25 or more to Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends will automatically be enrolled or have their membership renewed. Membership to our organization includes a 10% discount on select items at our Blufftop Bookstore at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center; access for you and your family to exclusive events; a subscription to this newsletter; and opportunities for exciting educational opportunities.
  - 3. Your Donations Go Further Nov. 14 with Our Board Match.** As part of our efforts to rebuild Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends (formerly Refuge Friends Inc.), our Board of Directors has graciously agreed to match up to \$2,000 raised on Nov. 14 either through our [Give to the Max page](#) or through our [website](#). A huge THANK YOU to [RBCU](#) for donating \$500 toward this match!!
  - 4. Help Support Your Refuge.** Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting the Minnesota Valley Refuge in its mission "to be a thriving urban Refuge where nature connects people, communities and wildlife." Help keep our Refuge parking, visitor centers and events free with your generous donation and Give to the Max!
  - 5. All donations are tax-deductible.** Visit Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends' Give to the Max page [here](#) to learn more or to make a donation.
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## November events at the Refuge

### Public events

All events are free to the public but may be canceled due to inclement weather. Events are held at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center unless otherwise noted.

Parking is available but may be limited. The Refuge is easily accessible via the Metro Transit Blue Line at the American Blvd. stop. For more information, call 952-854-5900.

**Photo, Left: Many kids and adults enjoyed dressing up for October's Minnesota Bat Festival held at the**

**Refuge.**

### Refuge Friends at the Mall of America

L.L. Bean is [celebrating its fifth anniversary at the Mall of America and in Minnesota Nov. 13-17](#). Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends will be hosting a table and activities. The store is located on the first level of Mall of America, 100 South Avenue. Stop by for the celebration and say hi to our Refuge Friends!

### Bird Walks

Learn about some of the 220 species of birds that stop during their migration south during bird walks led by Refuge volunteer naturalist Craig Mandel held at various locations at the Refuge throughout the month of November. Birders of all levels are welcome to join! Bring along binoculars and a field guide. Please dress for the weather. Bird Walks at Bass Ponds are Monday, Nov. 11, and Saturday, Nov. 23 at 8-10:30 a.m. Meet at Bass Ponds Trailhead, 2501 86th Street East, Bloomington, MN 55425. Learn more [here](#).

Bird Walks at Wilkie Unit Trailhead are Saturday, Nov. 9, Sunday, Nov. 17 and Monday, Dec. 9, from 8-10:30 a.m. Meet at trailhead, located at 7701 County Road 101E in Shakopee. Learn more [here](#).

### Bird Language

Want to learn more about birds and their behavior? Wonder what they're chirping about, or why they fall silent? Join volunteer Refuge naturalists Jonathon Poppele and Donnie Phyllaier for this special workshop series Sunday, Dec. 1, from 9:15 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Workshops meet in Classroom A for discussion and will head outside for observations and more learning. Bring a notebook, pencils and something to sit on. Be sure to dress for the weather. Registration encouraged. To learn more, visit [here](#).

### National Take a Hike Day

Celebrate National Take a Hike with a day hike hosted by L.L. Bean Sunday, Nov. 14, at 9 and 10:30 a.m., noon 1:30 and 3 p.m. Activity level will be easy to moderate. Bring weather-appropriate clothing, sturdy closed-toed shoes, water, trail snack and personal medications. Learn more [here](#).

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## Volunteer action alert

### **Wanted: Front Desk Volunteers**

With the expanded hours of our visitor centers, we're in need for volunteers to serve at our front desk and Nature Store. 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](mailto:joel_vos@fws.gov). And thanks to those members who have already volunteered!

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## MN Valley Refuge Friends elects new slate of officers, extends interim executive director role

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends held votes for new officers during its September and October board meetings. Officers elected for the fiscal year ending September 2020 are Robert "Randy" Petzel, president; David Guzzi, vice president; Pat Graham, secretary; and Barb Corriveau, treasurer. Members of the board are Richard Sanford, Andy Grewell and Shannon Breimhurst. Sara N. Blood continues on as interim executive director.

### **Our Contact Information**

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