



Dear Friends:

October is a big month for Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, which not only celebrates its 43rd birthday TODAY on Oct. 8 but also we recognize National Wildlife Refuge Week on the week of Oct. 13.

And these aren't the only reasons for you to come and visit the Minnesota

Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Here are just some of the activities that we will highlight in this month's Currents:

- The city of Bloomington proclaimed today, Oct. 8, as "Steve Sutter Day," recognizing some of the efforts our organization's founder Steve Sutter did to help bring Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends to where it is today as an organization. Congratulations, Steve,

and to borrow one of your famous lines: Thanks for all you have done and DO for our Refuge!

- The Refuge is the first-time host of the Bloomington Cultural Festival on Oct. 12.
- We are also going batty (in a good way!) as we get ready to host the Minnesota Bat Festival on Oct. 26.
- We also hear from one of the Refuge's biologist technicians on our declining bird populations and how Refuges like ours are here to help our feathered friends.

With these events and the extended hours at our Bloomington and Carver visitor and education centers, we're especially in need of volunteers to serve in our Nature Store and front desks. Please consider learning more and signing up to be a Refuge volunteer.

Thank you and happy October!

Sara N. Blood
Interim Executive Director
Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends

Wildlife watch:

How bird populations are boosted by our Refuge

By Cooper Crose, USFWS

If you haven't heard the news by now, you may have noticed on your backyard feeders or weekly nature walks: overall bird numbers are declining. A new study published last month in the journal [Science](#) estimates that overall bird populations are down by 3 billion birds across North America since 1970. If you've been on Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge lately though, you might have guessed the opposite.

The study doesn't point to one or two specific culprits to this decline, but rather a whole slew of things, including habitat loss and fragmentation, pesticide and chemical use, climate change, and declining insect populations, among others. Many of these are culprits that the Refuge has been actively mitigating since its establishment back in 1976, which makes it so much more important for bird populations in this day of development and human population growth. In fact, National Audubon lists the Lower Minnesota River Valley as an Important Bird Area due to its vast unbroken swath of lands and its wide range of habitats.

Since 1970, [populations](#) of grassland bird species have dropped by nearly 720 million, and generalist species have dropped by almost 417 million. But if you go out to Rapids Lake or Louisville Swamp, you will see that the Refuge has been actively acquiring adjacent lands and restoring savanna and prairie habitats to attract species such as the Red-headed Woodpecker

and the Bobolink. You can also see the results of wetland and riparian restoration efforts here on the Refuge and District. The study reports that wetland habitats have gained around 34 million birds, and raptor species have gained around 15 million individuals. If you take a walk down the Long Meadow Lake Trail, you are sure to spot at least four Bald Eagle nests, something that was unthinkable 50 years ago and as of this year, the [Wetland Management District](#) reached 10,000 acres managed since its inception.

In addition to the habitat restorations, Minnesota Valley also contributes to the national datasets that were used in this study, such as yearly fall waterfowl migration counts and waterfowl and songbird banding, and we are host to many more citizen science studies including the Christmas Bird Count, all of which I have participated in or led in some way.

The Refuge has always been a birding hot spot. In the springtime, birders flock to the Hillside Trail and the Bass Ponds to check off multiple warbler species in an afternoon. I myself have counted 11 different warbler species alone in an hour during the height of spring migration. In the fall, you can now take a walk across the Old Cedar Bridge to get a view of the wetland and the large flocks of waterfowl using Long Meadow Lake as a stopover site (when it's not flooded). Likewise, the Refuge provides access to watch and learn about these species and fosters the next generation of bird watchers, naturalists, and conservation-minded citizens through education programs and bird walks, which one can argue are just as important as the habitat itself. So while it may sound doom and gloom, Minnesota Valley has been actively working on maintaining at least one safe haven for our feathered neighbors within the Twin Cities for the last 43 years.

Visit the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's [birding webpage](#) for a list by unit of the birds that have been seen here over the past 30 days.



From left: Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Board President Randy Petzel, Bloomington Mayor Gene Winstead, Refuge Manager Sarena Selbo, Pat Sutter, Steve Sutter, and Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Executive Director Sara Blood.

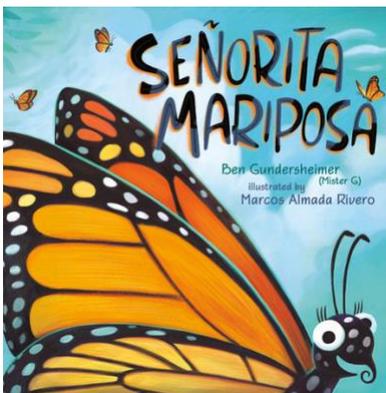
City of Bloomington celebrates Steve Sutter Day Oct. 8

Congratulations to Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends founder Steve Sutter for being recognized by the city of Bloomington for serving many, many years as president and day-to-day administrator, as well as volunteering

thousands of hours at the Refuge. After 13 years, Steve is stepping back to spend more time with his family, but we'll continue to see him around the Refuge as he has graciously agreed to continue to serve on the board. Read the entire proclamation on our website [here](#).

What's new at the Nature Store

October 31 is Halloween and we have an assortment of accessories for children who want to be a naturalist or a biologist that are as educational as they are entertaining.



[SEÑORITA MARIPOSA](#), a captivating bilingual children's book that explores the extraordinary journey that Monarch butterflies make each year from Canada to Mexico will be landing on Nature Store shelves soon!

Look for specialty sweatshirts and t-shirts for the bat festival as well.

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 federal holidays and days when the center is closed to the public.

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends members receive a 10% discount on items purchased in the Nature Store.

Volunteer action alert

Wanted: Front Desk Volunteers

With the expanded hours of our visitor centers, we're in desperate 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 both here and throughout the metro. For more information, please contact Joel Vos at joel_vos@fws.gov.

October 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.

Bloomington Culture Fest

Saturday, Oct. 12, 1-4 p.m.

Join us for this free inaugural event! Multicultural food, crafts, face painting, henna tattoos, activities, performances, wildlife education, nature walks and more. Learn more [here](#).

Third Annual Minnesota Bat Festival

Saturday, Oct. 26, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Learn about some of Minnesota's smallest animals, bats, and the need to preserve their habitat during this festival that includes fun activities throughout the day, including Be a Bat Scientist, partner booths, explore the cave, bat trivia, face painting, bat crafts, a bat-themed reading corner, and bat house building demonstrations. Learn more [here](#).

Bird Walks at Bass Ponds

Saturday, Oct. 19, 8-10:30 a.m.

Meet at Bass Ponds Trailhead, 2501 86th Street East, Bloomington, MN 55425. Learn about some of the 220 species of birds that stop during their migration south. Birders of all levels are welcome to join! Bring along binoculars and a field guide. Please dress for the weather. Walks are led by Refuge volunteer naturalist Craig Mandel. Learn more [here](#).

Puppet show series

Saturday, Oct. 26, 10:30-11:15 a.m. & 2-2:30 p.m. - Little Brown Bat (English with Spanish subtitles)

Saturday, Nov. 2, 2 p.m. - Skeletons in the Closet (Spanish and English)

Movie of the month

Battle for Bats: Surviving White-Nose Syndrome will be shown in the auditorium. This 12-minute film explores how bats are captivating and often misunderstood animals that are vital to the environment and our economies. Discover how scientists from around the world are working together to understand how the deadly White-Nose Syndrome works and ways to stop it.



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 by clicking on the "Donate Now" button or by mailing your donation today. Thank you!

Our Contact Information

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