



Minnesota Naturalists' Association

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Fundraising—Life Outside the Box

by Tara Rogness, Springbrook Nature Center

Back when I was in college (insert old person joke here) I tried to determine where I would go after I left the safety and security of collegiate life. Being logical, I looked at the things I like to do in my life, and how I could use them in an actual paying job. The checklist read something like this:

- Like the outdoors. Check.
- Like working with kids. Check.
- Like to be creative. Check.

Notice, there is no mention of liking to sit at a desk, type on a computer, testify at local governmental hearings, fill out grant applications, or ask people for money.

Off I went to seasonal and internship positions with quality organizations around the state. I was doing what I loved to do—teaching programs, learning new skills like taxidermy and exhibit care and maintenance. Still, there was no mention of fundraising, at least not to me.

All that changed as I landed my first full time position. As many of you may know, Springbrook Nature Center was on the endangered species list of nature centers during 2004. With our jobs on the line, and the fate of the nature center at hand, it was up to the staff to raise our operating budget that year. With a long list of fundraising programs donor lists, and more, we successfully raised more than \$100,000 in revenue.

Fundraising is important. It keeps our organizations alive, letting us do the things in our jobs that we truly enjoy doing. Without the money to

pay the staff, the electric bill, and the heat, it is difficult to teach a group of kids about the importance of recycling, or how to survive in the woods. Fundraising is how we survive in the woods.

Fundraising is also important for MNA. It allows us to work towards fulfilling our mission. It helps secure quality speakers at our annual conference, sustains the naturalist training opportunities throughout the state, and allows us to offer field trip opportunities.

It's time we merged the things we like about our day to day jobs with the task of fundraising. I know, with a membership of people who are insanely creative, we can make this task—which for most people is at the bottom of the like to do list—something enjoyable. Maybe we can even change the face of fundraising for the future!

When you tell someone you are a naturalist, they will not think of you being behind a desk—even if they don't know what a naturalist is. More likely, they will picture you hiking the trails, binoculars in hand, life list in the other. Or maybe they'll think of you chained to a tree, with a menacing chainsaw in your future. But soon, they might think of you coming up with a fantastically clever way to raise funds without taking a break from your birding hike or your life list.

And now it is time for the commercial part of this article. Join me on the Fundraising Committee, where we will be looking for ways to fundraise with a focus on the fun.

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The President's Letter

by April Rust, MNA President

In the last newsletter, I asked questions about MNA—*Who are we? What are our goals? How can we improve and grow?* One way the board is beginning to answer those questions is by getting to know all of you better. Last month the board started looking more closely at our membership list, last year's conference registration list and our naturalist and volunteer training attendee lists. From a practical standpoint, we are looking to make sure the information is correct and combined into one member tracking system to make sure we stay in contact with you consistently. We know we've had some hiccups in our transition from last year to this year - (thanks for your patience if that has affected you!) From a planning standpoint, we are looking to see who our current members are, and what types of work they do based on their job and location throughout the state.

So who are our MNA members? In reviewing our current member database, you might be an education director, like Sara Sturgis at Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center in Lanesboro. You might be an intern naturalist like Laura Sorensen at the MN Zoo. You might be a student like Jenny Benson at the University of MN. You might be a long-time member like Lee Ann Landstrom at Eastman Nature Center in Dayton. You might be a brand new member like Clay Steele from the Prairie Ecology Bus Center in Lakefield. You might be a naturalist at a day-use nature center like Mark Horlocker at Harley Nature Center in Duluth. You might work for a school district, like Josh Leonard at Valley Branch Environmental Learning Center in the St. Paul Public School District. You might work for federal, state or local government, like Mara Koenig at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. You might be a part time or seasonal naturalist, (at more than one location!) like way too many members to list. You might not be a current naturalist at all. You might be looking for your next job. You might be consulting as a naturalist/educator. You might be working in another field but find your passion in volunteering as a naturalist. The more I look over our current member list, the more the variety shows up. This variety makes it both challenging and exciting to serve all of you consistently as a board of directors.

For me, being an MNA member is a way to keep in touch with naturalists and educators throughout Minnesota—to meet new naturalists and keep in touch with others I've known for years. I first attended MNA events in college as an intern seasonal naturalist and then let my membership and participation slide as my job and



school schedules changed over time. I attended events sporadically since then, but finally found my way back seven years ago and plan on staying as a member when I'm done with my term on the Board. I am one of the unusual members that isn't an active naturalist in my current job, but I find MNA's offerings interesting, professionally rewarding, and fun.

Why are you a member? Did you become a member because you wanted to attend the conference and it was part of the registration? Did you join because you found the field trips, events, networking opportunities or newsletter interesting and useful? Did you join to hang out with friends in the field and have a good time with others that are passionate about the outdoors and education? Have you been a member for years or just started up recently? Or have you, like me, been an "on again, off again" member over the years?

You should have received an email request from a board member in early March, asking for your feedback on one of our main programming offerings—Naturalist and Volunteer Trainings. This is a small part of our ongoing effort this year to get to know you and your needs better. You may have noticed that most of this article is filled with unanswered questions. No matter how much the board looks at our membership lists and attendance records from events, we won't have excellent information about all of you, your work, your needs and who you are, without asking you questions, listening to you and most of all having you let us know who you are and what you need. We'll keep asking you questions, but please get in touch with board members to let us know what you need from us and from MNA.

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For mailing addresses and
more information visit the
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www.mnnaturalists.org

Environmental Stewardship Fund Update

By Melanie Sorenson, Minnesota Zoo

Do you or your organization have a project, and the only thing in your way is funding? Each year, the MNA provides funding to worthy nature-based programs in Minnesota. Only so many dollars are set aside each year though, so if you have an idea, apply now!

Last year, the Stewardship Fund awarded a number of worthy projects. MNA member, and Minnesota Zoo employee, Melanie Sorenson wrote the following to describe her award. MNA provides funds to allow Melanie to attend a course called Conservation Education: Effective Program Design. The course was developed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, with the goal of helping educators design, implement, and evaluate programs.

Laughter, Learning, Chocolate and Networking

This was the theme of my experience at the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) professional training course entitled *Conservation Education: Effective Program Design*. I arrived in Wheeling, West Virginia during one of the largest snow storms on record. The week's training included the following themes:

- What is conservation education?
- Effective team communication
- Audiences and visitor learning
- Program animals
- Grant writing

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The Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas

By Ron Windingstad, Audubon Minnesota

Want to learn more about the birds that breed in your area, **AND** help contribute to bird conservation efforts in Minnesota. You can do both by becoming a volunteer surveyor for the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA).

The breeding bird atlas is a comprehensive, systematic field survey of the occurrence and distribution of breeding birds. Surveyors record evidence of breeding status for each species observed. Quite simply, a breeding bird atlas is a “snapshot” of all species in a specific region during a specific time period.

Beginning in 2009, volunteers throughout Minnesota began surveying the northeast quadrant (3mi x 3mi) of every township in the state. This means we have until 2013 to complete surveys in 2,352 Priority Blocks. Participants select a Priority Block and survey the habitat types within that block during the breeding season, recording the breeding status of each species seen. The goal of the survey is to identify as many different species as the surveyor finds within a block and record the strongest breeding evidence for each species (e.g. adult carrying nesting material).



Last year volunteer surveyors documented 228 species including 188 confirmed breeding species reported. We are just beginning to see the pictures emerge of current, confirmed breeding distributions in Minnesota. With each year of the project we will cover more survey areas so more complete pictures will emerge as new pieces are added to the species distribution puzzle.

The second year of the five year survey is now underway as March and April bring opportunities for volunteers to get outdoors and begin documenting breeding evidence of early breeding species and to explore new survey areas for the atlas survey.



Photos by Rebecca Field

Volunteer bird watchers with all levels of experience can contribute. There are many opportunities for you to participate, whether you want to document breeding birds in your own backyard or neighborhood, or survey a Priority Block in a geographical area of special interest. By participating you can as improve your identification and observational skills, learn about bird behavior, explore new birding sites, as well as have fun **AND** contribute to bird conservation.

The Minnesota BBA is a great way for anyone to enjoy, share, and increase your interest in birds and contribute to bird conservation. Participating in the Atlas is an opportunity to contribute to something important, to ‘bird with a purpose’.

Our goal for 2010 is to complete surveys in 500 Priority Blocks; to make that happen we need the help of all interested bird watchers.

Check out www.mnbba.org for more information or contact the Project Coordinator, Bonnie Sample, at 651-739-9332, or bsample@audubon.org and get connected to an Atlas Coordinator in your area. Please join us!

Environmental Education in Minnesota Needs Your Help!

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Eliminates Environmental Education Unit

By Cristina Palmisano

Last week, the Commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) cut its environmental education unit, eliminating the jobs of the department's three full-time staffers. In addition, the Commissioner announced that the Environmental Education Advisory Task Force (EEATF), which the MPCA has been financially supporting, will be disbanding in June of this year. Until now, state-level environmental education has been concentrated within the MPCA, developing programs such as *A Green-Print for Minnesota: State Plan for Environmental Education and Environmental Literacy Scope and Sequence*. These programs provide the infrastructure of EE in our state. It is unclear, at this point, what will happen to these programs.

Minnesota leads the nation in environmental education efforts. However, the action taken by the

MPCA Commissioner is a big step backwards and will likely have a trickle-down effect that reaches schools, nature centers, and park districts. All of us will feel the impact of this decision.

Environmental education is being constricted in our state. We need to let the Commissioner know that EE is still very important to us. Please join MNA in a campaign to get these decisions reversed and to keep environmental education a priority in Minnesota.

What you can do:

Contact MPCA Commissioner:

Paul Eger at 651-757-2016 or paul.eger@state.mn.us

You can also write a letter and send it to him at: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 520 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4194

Find your local state senator and representatives at

www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/faq/faqtoc.asp?id=47

Tell these individuals why environmental education is important to you and why you are disappointed in what has happened. The EEATF was formerly a state-mandated board and would play a much stronger role if it could be once again.

Continued on page 6

Stewardship Fund

From page 3

Our instructors, zoo professionals from such venerable institutions as the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago and Disney's Animal Kingdom, delivered these topics through skits, interactive activities, and laughter.

During each of these sessions, I took away a tool I could use at the Minnesota Zoo. To determine how to effectively communicate as a team, we used the SWOT method (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). We discussed ways to effectively hold meetings, work on group projects, developing programs, and ways to utilize team player's skills and abilities.

Throughout the entire week we discussed ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation). This was a critical evaluation tool that should be a part of every program development process. Front end evaluation and understanding the needs of your audience before you develop a program was a key theme for the week.

Each day, piles of various chocolate treats

covered our tables. For eight hours of sitting with an audience of zoo educators who are usually on their feet all day, chocolate serves as a great motivator.

Each instructor shared a few real-world examples from their institutions of ways that ADDIE and SWOT help them develop programs. Such inspirational voices in educational curriculum development helped to get my creative juices flowing for discovering ways to improve and develop new programs to meet audience needs at the Minnesota Zoo.

Overall, the biggest lesson learned was that my zoo does not function on an island. The thirty zoo education departments represented at the training were a resource for me as well as a sounding board for program successes and challenges. This was a reminder to tap into these contacts throughout my zoo career for advice, problem solving and creative ideas. I hope my words serve as a reminder to you to utilize the valuable resources of the MNA network to help make your facility and programming a success. We all share the goal of MNA to "advance interpretation for the purpose of fostering wise stewardship of all resources."

Oh, and don't forget to give each other chocolate!

Conference Planning Committee Update

by Hallie Wunsch, MNA Vice President

It seems like a long way off, but planning has begun for the November 12-14, 2010 MNA Conference. At the first meeting of the Conference Planning Committee, held February 12, 2010 at the Green Mill on Grand Avenue in St. Paul, we discussed who would take lead roles in organizing the various aspects of that conference.

Here are the groups, the leaders, and their contact emails. Feel free to email them with suggestions, to express interest, or even to offer your help.

- **Field Trips:** Help investigate field trip options, decide, and plan the field trips for the conference.
Katie Hoeschen Pata
(Katie.pata@co.dakota.mn.us)
Lynette Anderson (lynette.anderson@spps.org)
- **Calls for Presenters:** Seek out individuals to share their talents and passions, organize the logistics of concurrent sessions.
Beth Beutch (blbeuch@netscape.net)
- **Entertainment:** Book bands, determine other entertainment options.
Crystal Wold
(cwold@threeriversparkdistrict.org)
- **Donations/Silent Auction:** The silent auction is always a blast – see Tara’s article about fundraising for more information!
Tara Rogness (rogness@ci.fridley.mn.us)
- **Scholarships:** Help organize scholarship details and provide input about potential recipients.
Brett Sieberer
(bsieberer@threeriversparkdistrict.org)
- **Budget:** This is the oil between the cogs of the conference. Pretty self explanatory
Pam Welisevich
(pwelisevich@dodgenaturecenter.org)
- **Conference Program Pamphlet:** Design the pamphlet for the Conference.
Jodi Gustafson (Jodi_gustaf@yahoo.com)
- **Share Fair:** Help MNA members share and learn from each other.
Missy Stein(mstine@stdavidscenter.org)
- **Speakers:** This is the aspect around which the conference revolves. Priority: High.

President April Rust is willing to help, but lots of input, suggestions, and leadership is needed.

April Rust (April.Rust@state.mn.us)
Hallie Wunsch (hallie.wunsch@gmail.com)

- **Registration:** Greet attendees as they arrive at the Conference, determines and confirms their registration status.

Brett Sieberer
bsieberer@threeriversparkdistrict.org

The Conference Planning Committee is up and running!

Please join us at one of our monthly meetings.
April’s meeting place has yet to be determined.
Contact Hallie Wunsch for future meeting dates!

Conference planning meetings are held monthly, and there is still time to get involved. Many committee members would love help with their assignments. The search for keynote speakers and presenters is a big task, and if you have any ideas for keynote speakers or concurrent session presenters, please get in touch with April, Hallie, or Beth. Remember, the theme for the Conference is **Life in the River Valley**, and if this topic inspires you, then perhaps you too would be willing to be a presenter. Presenters get a discount on attendance at the Conference. Please, contact Conference Committee Chair Hallie Wunsch (hallie.wunsch@gmail.com) if you would like to join the Conference Planning Committee, attend meetings, or get added to the committee e-mail list.

Environmental Ed Cuts, from page 5

You can also help by spreading the word to others you know who may be affected, such as the staff and volunteers at your center, teachers and students in the schools you work with, friends and family, visitors to your facility, and the media.

For more information about what the MPCA Environmental Education Department has been responsible for, visit:

www.pca.state.mn.us/oea/ee/overview.cfm

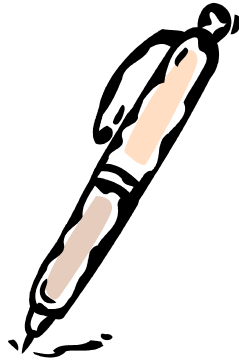
MNA Bulletin Board

Do You Have News?

We welcome authors who have a story to share. Write an article and have your byline seen by naturalists throughout Minnesota.

The MNA Newsletter editors and Board of Directors are always looking for your feedback!

Getting in touch with us is easy—just email us at MNANewsletter@gmail.com




2010 Naturalist and Volunteer Trainings

By Crystal Wold, Three Rivers Park District

The Minnesota Naturalists' Association offers Naturalist and Volunteer Trainings (formerly known as the Metro Naturalist Trainings) to provide professional development and networking opportunities. We currently offer three trainings in the Twin Cities and two trainings in greater MN each year at environmental education centers. Trainings are always free and are especially welcoming to interns and volunteers. Topics range from fungus to sustainability and everything in between. The trainings allow members and non-members to strengthen their career skills and network with colleagues.

MNA is looking for future topics and locations for the Naturalist and Volunteer Trainings. Past NVTs have averaged 70 people in attendance, and so locations must be able to accommodate a large number of people. MNA provides \$150 towards the purchase of refreshments for all training site hosts and has some guest speaker funds if needed. If you are a site wanting to invite colleagues for a networking and professional development opportunity by hosting a training in 2011 or if you have a topic idea, partnering idea, or would like to volunteer your expertise in one of the topics outlines below, or for general questions, please contact Crystal Wold (763-694-7700) for more information.

MNA Annual Fall Conference
Life in the River Valley
November 12-14 

Camp St. Croix, Wisconsin
20 Minutes East of St. Paul

Now accepting Proposals for
Speakers and
Concurrent Session Leaders
Contact Hallie Wunsch
Hallie.wunsch@gmail.com

Upcoming Naturalist and Volunteer Trainings:

In the Metro Area

Monday, June 14, 2010

Topic: Technology in Interpretation

Location: Lowry Nature Center

Monday September 13, 2010

Topic: Rain Gardens and Storm Water

Location: Maplewood Nature Center

In Greater Minnesota

Monday, June 7, 2010

Topic: Ecosystem Restorations and Plant ID

Location: St. John's Arboretum in St. Cloud

Monday, September 20, 2010

Topic: Water

Location: Ney Nature Center in Henderson

Naturalist and Volunteer Trainings are FREE and supported by MNA. Your MNA membership fees make these trainings possible. Tell your friends to join MNA and keep Naturalist Trainings alive and healthy!

MINNESOTA NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION
PO Box 75127
St. Paul, MN 55175



This newsletter was printed on recycled paper materials.

MNA Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone (hm) () _____

(wk) () _____

Fax _____

E-mail _____

Organization _____

(This information will appear in the membership directory, unless otherwise noted)

How did you hear about MNA?

How long have you been a member?

Membership runs one year from payment of dues.

Please make checks payable to MNA and mail to:

**MNA Membership, c/o Krista Prokosch, Lebanon Hills
Visitor Center, 860 Cliff Road, Eagan, MN 55123**

I am a:

- NEW MEMBER
- RENEWAL
- MAEE MEMBER

Membership Level:

- \$25 Professional
- \$20 MAEE Member (Prof.)

Please check if applicable:

- Please do NOT include me in the membership directory
- Please do NOT include me on mailing lists

Our Mission:

"The Minnesota Naturalists' Association exists to advance natural and cultural resource interpretation for the purpose of fostering wise stewardship of all resources.

The MNA offers its members growth opportunities in skill and career development and serves as a forum for interpreters to pool knowledge, share ideas, and establish contacts with colleagues."