



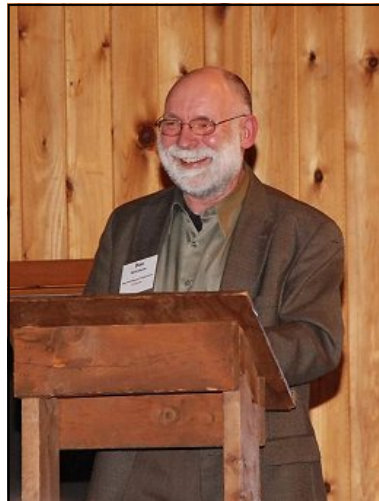
## Dan McGuiness: Knowing, Understanding, and Loving Natural Places

By Jodi Gustafson

In the cozy, wood paneled Weyerhaeuser Lodge on a hillside overlooking the St. Croix River, Dan McGuiness, an early member of MNA, kicked off the 2010 MNA Conference with a thoughtful keynote address titled "Conservation is about people taking care of the places they love." With insight drawn from his own experiences, Dan took us on a journey from his life growing up on a farm to his professional life working on rivers and streams.

Dan was born on a 160-acre prairie farm, near the headwaters of the Cedar River. This land supported eight children, his parents, and a set of grandparents, growing a variety crops and raising different types of animals. And then, one year, he remembers a neighbor digging a big trench one year, to convert fifteen acres of oak savanna into a corn field. Soon, ten acres that had been too wet to farm was drained to produce more corn. Eventually, the family got rid of the animals, except for the pigs. Although these choices were made for economic reasons, land that once supported

a large family, today barely supports two people. Water quality suffered. Farms turned their creeks into ditches, so water drains to large rivers more quickly. "Bad enough to happen to one family farm," he said, "but this happened to 74 million acres across the United States."



In 1968, he landed a dream job banding wood ducks on the Mississippi River. Later, as an Urban and Regional Planner at the Wilder Forest for the Science Museum and at the Minnesota Wisconsin Boundary Commission, he used his people skills, to accomplish his conservation goals. He helped set aside land along the St. Croix River during his career, as well as in his own neighborhood in St. Paul. "Conservation can be as intimate as our own backyards," he said.

"Life is a continuum," Dan said. "On one side are the most selfish behaviors. On the other side is the most unselfish. We are all in the middle. Each day, we should work to move away from one side, and towards the other."

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# The President's Letter

by April Rust, MNA President

As I'm writing this intro to the December newsletter, the 2010 MNA Conference has just come to a close and the conference committee is breathing a big sigh of relief. We've made it through all the planning and logistics before and during the conference and managed with the rest of you that attended to learn some new things, listen to new ideas and suggestions, and enjoy each other's company. 2010 was a successful conference and year for MNA. One hundred and seven people registered for the conference and I was excited to see all who were there! It was great to see some past members join us again this year after a long hiatus and bring some fond memories of MNA with them to share with current members. As always, I was glad to see new names on the registration list – interns and members joining us for their first MNA conference to learn what we have to offer as an organization. Overall, I was very energized that a variety of people at different stages of their careers, from different locations and different educational positions around the state all attended. We had center directors, program directors, full time and seasonal naturalists, volunteers, state park naturalists, national park service and fish and wildlife refuge naturalists, volunteer master naturalists and lots of others too busy and varied to easily categorize.

Despite celebrating all those that attended this year, I found myself at times thinking about who wasn't at the conference or renewing their memberships this year. I've been wondering who has attended the conference in the past that we haven't seen for a while and want to invite back. As I mentioned during our membership meeting, I've also been wondering about who has never joined us that we'd like to see as MNA members. The new membership committee



met this year to talk about planning a membership management infrastructure and will continue working together in 2011 to figure out how to best meet your needs, and attract others to join MNA. Please send all suggestions our way about membership support and recruitment - let us know what you want to see from the MNA membership committee and board this year.

In my tenure as President, I want to build and grow MNA and our membership to be more diverse and even more energized than we are today. I hope to hand off the reins to Hallie at the end of next year with a clear path of where our organization is headed and who we are recruiting to join us in our work and mission.

We're now at the point of the year when programming starts to slow down a little, meetings and conference planning aren't filling up MNA member calendars, and celebrations with family and friends start to win out over work schedules. As the holiday season takes over, may you find time to be with those you love and a little time to yourself to relax... at least for a few weeks until we start planning for the 2011 combined MNA and NAI conference.

Thank you for being an MNA member.  
Happy Holidays.

- April

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addresses and  
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website:  
**www.mnnaturalists.org**

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## *2010 Scholarship Recipient Report*

*Each year, the Minnesota Naturalists Association awards scholarships to members who want to attend our annual Conference, but who cannot afford the full expense. Recipients agree to write an article for the newsletter. Scholarship winner Andrea Doerr records her experience as follows.*

Thank you for helping me attend this conference! It provided an opportunity to step into a larger world of naturalists beyond Wolf Ridge and to exchange ideas and stories with people I might not have encountered otherwise. I felt welcomed into the conference immediately; the comfortable atmosphere and familiarity between naturalists was contagious and made it easy to approach anyone and everyone.

I think one of the best parts about attending the conference was the ample amount of social time to converse and meet new people. It has energized me to share what I experienced with the community back at Wolf Ridge. I can't wait to keep in touch with many of the people I met here and to see those relationships grow.

*Andrea Doerr is an apprentice naturalist at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center.*

**FREE MNA Naturalist and Volunteer  
Training  
SOS – Save Outdoor Science  
Valley Branch ELC  
January 10, 2011**

Do your nature center's K-12 programs meet academic standards? School districts are looking for field trips that do. Math, English and Science are measured by the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in grades 3, 5, 8 and high school. With shrinking budgets and increasing pressure from state testing, school districts are less likely to invest in field trips that don't meet Minnesota State Academic Standards. Learn how your programs at your nature center could already meet state science standards, or how they could be easily 'tweaked' to more effectively meet those standards.

- **Teacher Q&A** – Elementary and middle school teachers talk and exchange ideas

- **Benchmarks 101**: Learn what the Minnesota State Academic Science standards are, how they are organized and what they mean for naturalists.
- **Walk the Talk**: Hear from nature centers that regularly meet standards for elementary and secondary classes
- **Meet a benchmark!** Experience how an orienteering class was changed to meet the new Minnesota State Academic Science standards.

**RSVP by Wednesday January 5, 2011**

LIMITED space: Please register early.

Space is limited to 75 people.

Valley Branch ELC at Belwin

1553 Stagecoach Trail South

Afton, MN 55001

651-436-5243

Joshua.leonard@spps.org

## Valley Branch Environmental Learning Center

Valley Branch ELC was established by a cooperative agreement between the Belwin Conservancy and the St. Paul Public Schools in 1971. The agreement calls for the Belwin Conservancy to provide facilities on the 225 acres dedicated to the program and to the maintenance of those facilities. At the same time, the St. Paul Public Schools provide the education staff and transportation for the students to the facility. Other districts may participate in the program when invited by the St. Paul Public School District.

The facilities are made up of a 5,000 square foot main classroom building, and additional classroom that serves as the hub for the special education programs. The natural area includes eight miles of trails through a terrain of prairie, oak savanna, pine forest, oak forest, a marsh, and stream. Approximately two miles of this is hard surfaced specifically to allow ease of access by wheelchairs. Since 1971, approximately 10,000 students per year visit Valley Branch ELC.

*The mission of Valley Branch ELC is to provide a meaningful outdoor learning experience which promotes life-long awareness toward the care and respect of our world.*

Classes taught at Valley Branch are specifically geared to the appropriate grade level. Third graders can participate in classes such as "Name It," where students hike the trails to search for plants and animals. They record what they find and devise a system to sort their data in a logical order. In "Nature's Way," students learn that plants and animals have certain features that allow them to grow, survive, and reproduce.

Fifth graders learn more advanced skills. They take classes on orienteering, habitats at Valley Branch, and learn about aquatic life. Classes are also geared toward specific seasons, with birding classes taking advantage of the fall migration, and cross-country skiing on snow trails in the winter.

For each class, the staff at Valley Branch specifically points out the Minnesota Science Standard that the class fulfills. This allows teachers to know that they are following the requirements of No Child Left Behind.

## A Snapshot of Hartley Nature Center in Duluth, MN

In 1987 Hartley Nature Center became an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to environmental education and stewardship for all people, focusing on school-aged youth from the surrounding region. The first instructors worked out of the trunks of their cars to satisfy a growing appetite for outdoor based experiential learning in the Duluth area. Hartley Park, a 660 acre park owned by the city of Duluth, was chosen as a base because of its unique size, diversity of ecosystems, and access to important environmental teaching locations. The park had five kilometers of groomed cross country ski trails, over five miles of multi-use trails, and now contains a section of the Superior Hiking Trail. Before it became a city park in 1941, the land had been part of the Allendale dairy farm and the Hartley family vegetable farm.

In 2003, after years of planning, a new 7500 square-foot state-of-the-art "green" building was completed. It features four classrooms, office space, a library/meeting room, restrooms, an exhibit hall, with green building elements throughout. The building is partially powered by a grid-tied solar energy system and is used as a teaching tool to illustrate low impact building techniques and living. Hartley Nature Center has a 20 year lease with the city of Duluth to operate and occupy the building in exchange for raising the funds to build it.

Hartley Nature Center is a year round facility that saw a record of 24,000 visitors served in 2009-2010. A majority of those visitors are connected with on and offsite school programming, monthly on-site homeschool classes, summer and winter weeklong day camps, and early childhood programming. Along with providing educational programs, HNC also rents snowshoes, cross country skis, and canoes for use in the park. In addition to

providing restrooms, shelter, and interesting exhibits for visitors, the center also dispenses general park information, park maps, coordinates park stewardship volunteer projects and offers programs for adults and families.

Hartley Nature Center receives no government operating funds; HNC relies on income from program fees, membership dues, project grants, and donor gifts to continue operations.

### **FREE Naturalist and Volunteer Training Green Building Technology and Winter Recreation**

**Saturday January 22, 2011  
9:30 am to 3:00 pm**

#### **Hartley Nature Center**

Session A: 10am -12 noon  
Lunch: Noon-1pm  
Session B: 1pm-3pm

The same session topics will be offered each time. People will divide evenly into each session and alternate after lunch.

Hartley staff will be leading the sessions

- 1) Green Building Technology, Pete Gravett, Executive Director
- 2) Winter Recreation (Snowshoes and XC Skiing), Hartley AmeriCorps/Intern staff

\*A Third topic will be offered if registration numbers warrant it.

BYO Winter recreation equipment  
Hartley's equipment included if needed  
BYO Lunch, Map of lunch locations on site

**RSVP: 218-724-6735 through January 19th**

Looking for Lodging? Check [www.visitduluth.com](http://www.visitduluth.com)

Questions:  
Brett Amundson  
Public Program Coordinator  
218-724-6735

Hartley Nature Center  
3001 Woodland Ave  
Duluth, MN 55803  
[www.hartleynature.org](http://www.hartleynature.org)

# River Crest Elementary: A Leader in Designing Space For Learning

By Samantha Weatherston

If you could design an ideal elementary school building, what would it be like? As naturalists we'd probably want the most energy efficient building possible, but with clean indoor air too. We might say we want a "green" building. We would probably want access to natural woodlots, fields, and water. At the MNA conference in November, members had a chance to tour the River Crest Elementary School in Hudson, Wisconsin, a LEED Gold certified school. River Crest was built in 2008.

Architect Catherine Cruickshank, one of the representatives from Hoffman Architects in Appleton, WI, and principal Travis Barringer explained to MNA members that an elementary school conducive to learning includes satisfying indoor spaces. Funded by a city referendum, the school district not only wanted a new elementary school but one with a "wow" factor that met school district and community expectations of an extremely attractive building. They wanted the architects to design a 21st century school with flexible and adaptable learning spaces. The district wanted to provide a highly-sustainable school that offers healthy spaces, energy and water-efficiency, operational savings, and environmental education.



MNA Conference attendees had the chance to visit River Crest Elementary, an elementary school in Hudson Wisconsin that is LEED Gold certified.

Including enough windows, incorporating multiuse spaces, saving water, and saving energy were several of the factors that contributed to River Crest's LEED Gold designation. The designers incorporated lots of windows to maximize daylight. These windows have low visual transmittance glass to control glare and solar heat gain without requiring internal shades. Natural daylight not only saves energy for a school but also connects people to the outdoors. Urinals are waterless and outdoor landscaping does not need irrigation.

Another conscious choice has been the reduction of possible light pollution by interior and exterior lighting that does not extend extensively into the night sky. One of the most innovative features is the drop off/bus zone which does not stay vacant after the morning rush. This impervious surface serves more than one purpose than for cars and buses—it's a basketball and play court during the school day.

The parking lot includes spaces for carpoolers and fuel efficient cars. These designations have not been without controversy. Principal Barringer said some individuals have vocalized their displeasure about

this to him. The few opponents feel the parking restrictions are going too far towards the green end.

Saving energy was one of the biggest advantages gained by the Hudson School District. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recognized River Crest as an Energy Star Leader for improving its energy efficiency by 10 percent as compared to a 2008 baseline. The Hudson Board of Education stated that the improved energy efficiency represents a savings of approximately \$135,000 per year for the district. The district is reducing greenhouse gas emissions by more than 1,500 metric tons per year, the equivalent of planting more than 350 acres of trees.

While bicycle transportation is not used right now due to the location of River Crest on busy Highway F, bicycle racks and showers are available to potential users. The location of River Crest does provide easy access to YMCA Camp St. Croix. Students can walk with their teachers to use the extensive woods and fields for an outdoor classroom. They can also access the St. Croix River for lessons on water quality and river ecology. A tunnel lets students walk safely under the busy highway.

There are four categories in the LEED rating system: Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. Construction projects receive points, and the higher the number of points, the higher the certification. A project gains points from the quality of the energy efficiency of the heating and air conditioning systems, window quality, roof materials, alternative energy sources, and sustainable (preferably native) landscaping.

*LEED is an internationally recognized green building certification system, providing third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance across all the metrics that matter most: energy savings, water efficiency, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.*

*Developed by the [U.S. Green Building Council \(USGBC\)](http://www.usgbc.org), LEED provides building owners and operators a concise framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions. (<http://www.usgbc.org>)*

Hudson School District Superintendent Mary Bowen-Eggebraaten said, "We wanted the school to be green... Hoffman, through its design of River Crest, has set a new standard for construction in the Hudson community and given the District the proud distinction of being a leader in sustainability—and more importantly— a leader in designing space for learning."



# My Life as a Seasonal Naturalist

By Cristina Palmisano

It all began in the fall of 2002 when I landed my first gig as a seasonal naturalist at Harriet Alexander Nature Center in Roseville. Eight years later, although no longer at HANC, I still carry the title of seasonal naturalist. I have had many stops along the way: Como, the DNR, Springbrook, and Minneapolis Parks to name a few. In fact, there's a pretty good chance I've worked with you at some point.

We all know permanent naturalist jobs are few and far between. I probably know this better than anyone. While this used to frustrate me to no end, I've now come to cherish the incredible perks that come with being a seasonal employee. For example, if I want to take two weeks off during the holidays to spend time in Chicago with my family, all it takes is an email. Also, do you know how many meetings I'm required to go to? About ten a year. How many do you go to? The best part: I choose my schedule. I can work as much or as little as I want, which is pretty convenient since work is not the only thing in my life. Right now, I work two days a week and use the other days to raise my daughter and write my master's thesis.

I have to admit, though, I am one of the lucky ones. My seasonal naturalist salary doesn't have to support my family. I don't *need* benefits. At least, not anymore. There was a time when paying the bills was an adventure. I used to work four jobs to keep my hope of being a naturalist alive. You probably know someone who is doing this now, or maybe that person is you. When I married my husband, life got a lot less stressful. I started having days off. His support allowed me to scrutinize my career and pursue new, productive opportunities. I found other ways to be involved in environmental education outside of work. I was elected to the MNA board and also serve on the Minnesota Association for

Environmental Education (MAEE) conference planning committee. I received my teaching license through Hamline and found out more about how kids learn. I am even writing my graduate thesis on the three things I am most passionate about: kids, teaching, and nature. All of these efforts are helping me become well-rounded in environmental education. Likewise, my personal interests, motherhood and running, have contributed enormously to making me a better naturalist.

I am not a very religious person, but I do believe everything happens for a reason. I still hope to have a permanent naturalist job someday, but it's not my time yet. I've accomplished other things, like continuing my education, raising my beautiful baby girl, and running a marathon. It would have been challenging to train for that marathon had I been working full time. It would have meant a lot of time away from my kid. Luckily, I didn't have to choose between the two thanks to my flexible seasonal naturalist schedule. I was able to finish the race successfully, without guilt, and I'm a better person for it. It's opened the door to many new and exciting opportunities that a full-time naturalist would have probably missed out on.

My advice for you seasonals out there: Keep an open mind! You are in a unique situation and you have so many choices available to you. If you have the resources, find something new to try in the name of professional development, even if it's joining a ski club. That counts! Take advantage of your flexibility and consider whether there's anything more you'd like to be doing now. Don't just sit around waiting for that job that's two years or ten years down the road. Make your own opportunities. If you're like me, you will find other ways to satisfy your professional desires.

# Conference Scholarship Reflections

*By Tim Boyle*

One of the stipulations for the lucky recipients of an MNA conference scholarship is that they are required to write an article describing their impressions of the conference as “part of the deal.”

I’ve been looking forward to writing this as I really enjoyed my time at the MNA annual conference this year. I am currently serving on the MNA board as the Information Committee Chair (I’ll be giving up my seat after the first of the year). I lived in Minneapolis for most of my life and naturalist career, however in the middle of my two-year MNA term, our family packed up and moved to Milwaukee, WI.

So I’d also like to use this article as an opportunity to thank everyone that made it possible for me to get scholarship funds to attend the conference. I really didn’t want to miss this year’s event, both because I am an out-going board member and it would be a chance to ‘see everyone off’, and because this year it would be in Wisconsin, my “new old” home state! (I grew up in Ashland, WI.)

I also applied for a scholarship application the very first year I attended an MNA conference, back in 2007. I remember I didn’t get my application in on time as I hemmed and hawed about going to the conference, I was nervous about not knowing anyone there. Finally Mara Koenig from the Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge talked me into applying, but it was too late, the funds had already been handed out. However, when my father-in-law got wind of my situation, he generously stepped forward to sponsor my trip to the Audubon Center where the conference was being held that year.

When I first arrived there in 2007, I

checked in by the huge fireplace and was swallowed up by a sea of people I didn’t know. All were experienced professional naturalists; I was a fledgling greenhorn that barely knew what a naturalist was. There were only two people I knew in what seemed like such a vast crowd – Mara, and Jamie McBride, who was then the president of MNA, whom I had met very briefly through a job interview. It was pretty intimidating.

As I orbited around the edge of the crowd in the large conference hall, I found some Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteers that I recognized from their events (I was also a MN Master Naturalist Volunteer) and we chatted like old friends as they didn’t know many folks either.

As the event proceeded and more people arrived, I found myself recognizing a face here and a face there. I remembered Dianne Rowse from Lowry Nature Center, who led a program on river ecology during one of the MN Master Nat Volunteer field trips. I later became involved in volunteering with the Solstice program at Lowry, where I enjoyed being inside the giant “Old Man Winter” puppet, photographing things, tending the fires, and telling stories.

There were people from Three Rivers Parks that I recognized from skiing and from their own outdoor programs, and I gradually began to get into conversations with them. I found that everyone at the MNA conference was a real person, easy to talk to and very approachable, and that they were all interested in what I was doing and how I came to be there.

Before the opening presentation, I sat at the dinner table next to a gentleman and we talked at length, until he got up and headed for

*Continued next page*

the podium. He was the keynote speaker! A person next to me asked me if I knew who he was, I said no. They said oh, he's Jim Fitzpatrick, you'll probably be hearing his name again someday. Jim was the director of Carpenter Nature Center, in Hastings, MN, and is now the Midwest regional coordinator for the National Association of Interpretation, amongst all of the other titles he's held during his lifetime of naturalist vocation.

I still maintain that the best place at ANY conference or convention to network with people, purposely or not, is in the food line. Everyone is always gregarious, anticipatory, and "sharing a common goal." I think that more genuine conversations have started in the food line than have with any clever ice-breaker or social function combined.

Actually it was in the food line at one of the conferences that I first talked to the naturalists from Wood Lake Nature Center in Richfield, MN, and through that conversation ended up garnering an internship at Wood Lake. This ultimately laid the foundation for the naturalist work I would be doing in the Twin Cities for the following years.

Gradually I became so interested and motivated about MNA that I ran for a board position. Over time I've come to realize that the things that are the most difficult and unlikely for me to do are usually the things I need to do the most to improve as a person.

For myself, not being a born extrovert, but enjoying photography and writing, I thought that a place on the info committee would help force me to re-socialize after too many years of working in specialized jobs, and give me a feel for the bigger picture of the "naturalist scene" in the Twin Cities. Most definitely, it has. I've come to realize that always carrying a camera does draw some amount of attention to you, but I find that

it also is a great thing to hide behind. It gets you into places you might not normally go, and most importantly, it can tell the story and capture the memories of an event long after the feeling and spontaneity of the moment are gone.

After this year's conference, I spent a couple days in Minneapolis. It was the first time I had visited since we'd moved to Milwaukee nearly nine months before.

On the drive into town from Hudson, I thought about all the things that had happened during my time with MNA; how things had changed for me, how the town looked to me now, how we had accomplished some of the things I had written on my pad at our very first MNA board retreat, and how we had not accomplished others.

Most importantly, I thought about how many great people I have met through the MNA, and how they have influenced me. These are people that have literally changed my path in life and influenced my knowledge, my objectivity, and my creativity. Most of them probably don't even realize they have made a difference in my path. However, I would like to thank everyone involved with MNA, past and present, for all the work and inspiration they have put into getting it to where it is today, and how it's rubbed off on me.

Many thanks to the scholarship program, and to all the individuals for the time, work, and thought that go into providing the conferences, workshops, and events. Most of all, thanks to the group for creating a structure which combines us into something much bigger than our individual members. This is really an accomplishment. Few states have such an organization with this much involvement and yet so much candor.

Thanks, everyone.

# Conference Snapshots

By Tim Boyle



"Burrito" the burro was everyone's friend at the Philadelphia Farm and Cedar Bend Folk School during the field trip on Friday. She welcomed us all with loud braying, then tried to eat my coat.

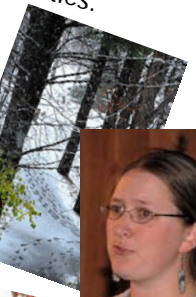
Many talents were showcased.



Both the Eelpout Stringers (above) and the Lickin' Toads engaged the crowd and the dance floor during the Saturday night festivities.



Willow River State Park was stately.



More conference pics at: <http://www.ttboyle.com/School/Minnesota-Naturalist>



MNA Conferences are always a roller-coaster ride, but they are ALWAYS fun. They still follow the laws of nature though, no one wants to sit in the front of the auditorium. Even after three days together, you guys are still the best. - 7.

MINNESOTA NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION  
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St. Paul, MN 55175  
<http://mnnaturalists.org/>  
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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 Jensen, 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."*