

# **Minnesota River Crossings to New Prague Advisory Task Force**

**Advance Data for Field Review on March 12, 2009  
Provided to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Dolores Hagen and Henderson Feathers**

# Overview

**SPECIAL NOTE:** For quick reference, species listed as “**Greatest Conservation Need**” (DNR) and/or “**Audubon Minnesota Birds at Risk**” have been highlighted in **RED**.

This narrative was written by Art and Barb Straub: (From of a cursory examination of some of their field notes.) Video of most of the species also exists. Where Video exists of species not included in the narrative, italic note has been added. Bio information about Dolores Hagen has also been added in italics. What may be of **Special Interest** is noted in **GREEN**.

**March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

## **Background Information:**

Barbara and Art Straub, retired teachers residing at 222 \_ S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, LeSueur, Minnesota.

Our families came to Minnesota in 1857, prior to and during the Sioux Conflict. They obtained land in Tyrone Township, LeSueur County, settled and have been here since then. The land borders the east side of the Minnesota River, the property abuts the mouth of Rush River, is adjacent to the Bucks’ Lake Recovery Zone, is half-way between the cities of LeSueur in Henderson. About 50 years ago Barbara and I began purchasing the land of the early Straub, Luskey and Lynch properties (all relatives) with the purpose of restoring the same to its original use...prairie and remaining vestiges of the “Big Woods.” We are currently “stewarding” 350 acres.

We have had cabins on the bank of the Minnesota River for the last 40 years, and have kept notes of natural occurrences viewed from the property during that time....however, our best notes are from the years 1991 to the present. (See examples included.) During that time we have become more adept at identification of species, in addition to spending more time on the property and riverbank. We do not claim to be “experts.”

During our tenure on the property we have seen the rise and fall of a number of species of flora and fauna, and have attempted to keep a record of the same. The information which follows include our amateur observations:

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*Dolores Hagen is the retired publisher of “Closing The Gap,” a newspaper covering microcomputer technology and persons with disabilities. Her post publishing years have been dedicated to the education and public*

*awareness of the Minnesota River Valley and the resources inherent in those lands. The video documentation of her work is extensive and available to anyone interested in the protection and recovery of that most important natural resource.*

**GrammaWorks** is the Amateur Video production of Dolores Hagen. A library of over 15 years of videotape exists of the Bucks' Lake, Coachlight Pond and Minnesota River Valley known as the Le Sueur/Henderson Recovery Zone.

## BUCKS' LAKE RECOVERY ZONE BIRDS

**EAGLES:** We observed only one eagle during the 1940's - 1960! In the years that followed, the numbers gradually increased in our area. The first eagle nest appeared at the south end of Bucks' Lake on December 25<sup>th</sup> of 1997. The pair laid eggs and began nesting in February of 1998. The nest was struck by a hailstorm on March 29<sup>th</sup>; a week later a violent wind blew the nest to the ground, destroying the contents. A new nest appeared directly east from nest one, but was occupied for just one year.

A second nest appeared a half-mile downstream, and became known as the Kelm Nest. This nest remains to the present time. One-third of a mile east of the Kelm Nest, a second nest appeared. This nest became known as the Burns' Island Nest. A third nest was spotted and verified as occupied approximately five miles north on the Minnesota River, becoming the Jessenland Nest.

In 2008, a fourth nest appeared two miles north of Henderson, named the Feathers' Nest. A fifth nest became obvious in 2008 as well, on the Butch and Carol Ward property \_ mile south of LeSueur. We have named that the Ward nest. There is one additional nest about two miles south of LeSueur, two nests at Clear Lake in LeSueur County, and an additional two at Washington Lake in Sibley County.

Great numbers of eagles utilize the Bucks' Lake area in March and April due to the proximity of the Minnesota River, and winter-kill of fish on the LeSueur Water Treatment Ponds and Horseshoe and Bucks' Lake. We have counted as many as 72 Bald Eagles, mature and adults, on the ice surfaces and in the surrounding trees...and have many area residents who can testify to the same.

Golden Eagles pass through the area in spring and summer. Although ornithologists dispute this, in mid-February of 2009 a photo was taken of a golden eagle sailing above Bucks' Lake area.

The Minnesota River Valley in this area (along with the Mississippi River Valley) is one of the natural migratory paths for the eagles, yet we surely agree that the Mississippi receives more attention due to much greater eagle numbers.

*(“Eagle diary with pics.pdf” contains original notes and still photos taken from extensive video of the original eagle nest in 1998.. “Eagle Nest Pictures” file folder contains individual pictures (three from video) of the five Eagle nests currently founding the Le Sueur/Henderson Recovery Zone,*

### **COMMON LOONS:**

April of 2008 found more Common Loons on Bucks’ Lake than most people have ever experienced in this area. The large black and white birds of northern lakes disported themselves immediately to the east of the main auto parking area, allowing spectators to take photos and admire the beautiful creatures over the course of a week. Mixing with the Double-Crested Cormorants and White Pelicans, they were a major treat for hundreds of valley folk.

TURKEY VULTURE: A rarity in the valley sky but a few years ago, turkey vultures in large numbers may be observed between late March and mid-September. In fact, \_ mile east from Bucks’ Lake stands a radio transmission tower. Beginning about 4:00 each warm summer day, as many as 60+ of the large black birds with obvious red head and legs perch on the cross beams and atop the tower where they remain overnight, taking flight shortly after sunrise, sailing in many directions up and down the valley. We have discovered their tree roosts as well, but have not come upon nests thus far. Here again is a bird observed infrequently until the late 1900’s, their resurgence seemingly associated with the ban on DDT use.

OSPREY: In mid-March as the lake ice melts, Ospreys may be sighted on the trees of both Bucks’ and Horseshoe Lake. The Ney Center personnel have erected two Osprey nests on the property two miles downstream from the lakes; at this time have had NO interested pairs.

DOUBLE CRESTED CORMORANTS: Few numbers of these fish birds appear in our notes from 1991 on, but numbers increase dramatically after 2000. Currently, individual flocks of 25-30 are not uncommon during March, April, and September until freeze-up of the lakes, with three or four flocks at one time up and down the lake. Three hundred plus may be counted on the lakes, drying their shiny black feathers and fishing, at one time.

GREAT WHITE EGRETS: Numbers of this beautiful white bird will appear in late April, May, and especially again in late August and early September, even as late as September 19th. Our notes show flocks as large as 40 spending the night on Bucks' and Horseshoe Lake for weeks at a time, especially at dawn and dusk. Their numbers increase greatly during years when spring and summer flooding fills the bottomlands, ensuring food supplies of frogs and water insects.

Occasionally in April-May, Cattle Egrets migrate through the area. They have been observed in the floodplains near Bucks' Lake, and in roadside ditches bordering the valley during frog migration and frog egg-laying periods.

**WHITE PELICANS**: Pelicans will arrive in late April and May, spending a few weeks on Bucks' and Horseshoe, but the great infusion will be in early September into October. In 1995, 500 were observed on Bucks' Lake many times in August, this number has increased greatly, as in September of 2008, 500 to 1000 or more were quite common. A blue sky and a warm autumn day will find the pelicans spiraling on the thermals throughout the valley, attracted by the myriad varieties of small fish.

GREAT BLUE HERONS: The Great Blue Heronry appeared about 1995. The unique part about this rookery is that the cottonwood tree, in which the nests are built, spirals over a deep pond. Thus the feces from the birds drop into the water instead of on the land. This ensures that the trees will not be killed by feces contamination over time. Nests have numbered as many as 19, however, the 2007-2008 bridge project over Highway 169 north of LeSueur over Minnesota River at LeSueur reduced the number of nests to 15. At this date, 03/04/09, 12 tattered nests may be seen. We have observed as many as 19 young herons in the nests on a late June afternoon.

LITTLE GREEN HERONS: Numerous herons of this species may be found feeding in the Coachlight south and north ponds, plus along the edges of both Bucks' and Horseshoe Lakes, and in neighboring sloughs and bogs. Oddly enough, they tend to nest a mile and more away from the lakes in spruce trees. During nesting season, adults may be spotted flying from the lakes westward into the Sand Prairie area to their nesting areas.

An occasional **American Bittern or Black-crowned Night Heron** may be observed at Horseshoe Lake of an early summer's evening, but none are known to be nesting in the immediate area at this time. They do frequent the Faribault vicinity.

GULLS by the hundreds, especially **Franklin** and Ring-billed wheel above Bucks' and Horseshoe Lakes in spring and autumn, sometimes snatching

meals from the very beaks of their fellow travelers. **VIDEO: Common and Forester Gulls is available.**

DUCKS: At least a dozen species of ducks may be found in the Bucks' Lake-Horseshoe Lake during the spring migratory season. (See list included) The most common is the Woodduck. During July and early August afternoons, as many as 165 adult and "immature woodies" have been observed on the Coachlight Pond alone. However, on duck season opening day in October, most are hunted until the ducks decide to migrate. Both lakes are tremendous "duck hatcheries." A few teal will nest in the area, Mallards are rarely found nesting here. Hooded Mergansers have laid eggs in woodduck nests on Coachlight Pond, with Woodduck parents attempting to raise the misfits. Baby Woodducks are interested in insects and vegetation, mergansers pursue minnows and insects. **VIDEO: Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Northern Pintails during spring flood conditions in many years is available.**

**SWANS: Tundra Swans** migrate over the area, heading for the Mississippi feeding grounds from early through mid November. In late April and early May, tundras will be found in the ponded areas of Sand Prairie, as well as field ponds throughout the area, setting down on the lakes at night. They especially appreciate flooded cornfields.

**Trumpeter Swans** have become common visitors to both Bucks' and Horseshoe. They feed in harvested yet untilled cornfields north and south of the lakes, and in nearby marshes.

CANADA GEESE: In 1994, 250 geese caused great excitement at the Katzenmeyer Refuge southeast of LeSueur. The refuge lies directly in the path of the proposed CAPX2020 electrical line. In 2007 and 2008, as many as 2,500 could be found grazing with the cattle at the refuge and plying their way to the safety of the Minnesota River, Bucks' and Horseshoe Lakes to rest at nightfall.

SWALLOWS: Among the earliest arrivals, skimming above the surface of Bucks', Horseshoe, Coachlight Pond and the Minnesota River, will be the early arriving Tree Swallows. These will be followed by Barn, Rough-Winged, and finally Cliff Swallows. The Cliff Swallows are abundant in their mud-nests under the Highway 169, Hwy 8 bridges over the Minnesota River the Hwy 19 bridge at Henderson. Their numbers and nests have greatly increased during the past five years, mud-

Bank Swallows utilize almost every "high bank" between Henderson and LeSueur, having few enemies other than the occasional snake, mink and

high water. Tree swallows may be found in nest boxes and natural cavities near every permanent stand of marsh and pond water in the area.

GREBES: The Pied-billed Grebe will appear on the Minnesota River near Henderson in late March shortly after ice-out, and will remain until the river becomes polluted by silt. It then may be found in the Coachlight Pond and along the shores of both Bucks' and Horseshoe Lakes. We believe they nest in the area, but have not found a floating platform. **Western Grebes** have been spotted with some frequency in field ponds immediately west of Bucks' Lake on Sand Prairie during spring migration.

SNIPES and other SHOREBIRDS: With the exception of the Killdeer (Jacksnipe) and Common Snipe on the shores of Bucks' and Horseshoe, few others of this type of bird is often observed in that they frequent the LeSueur Water Treatment Ponds, which is off-limits to birders due to "No Trespassing" signs. Both Greater and **Lesser Yellowlegs** may be observed singly or in pairs in late July and early August on the sandbars of the nearby Minnesota River. Sora and **Virginia Rails** nest in smaller ponds near the lakes, we suspect they are nesting in the marshes near the lakes as well.

**AMERICAN WOODCOCK**: Due to the late melt-down of snow in March and early April of 2008, many Woodcock perished. They arrived on spring migration during a warm period. But snow and frozen earth soon followed. The birds were unable to penetrate the earth for earthworms for a two to three week period. We encountered NO WOODCOCK on the SINGING MEADOWS, no winnowing flight displays any evening on the hillsides and in the meadows during spring, 2008.

KINGFISHER: The belted kingfisher will remain in the lake area until freeze-up, move to the Minnesota River until the river freezes, will remain over winter if the river remains open, and will be among the earliest arrivals in March, leaving again as late as mid-December.

WILD TURKEYS: The first wild turkeys were released in the area more than twenty-five years ago. They have increased in number yearly, depending upon numbers of predators (especially coyotes), raccoons and skunks thinning their ranks. An avian disease has been present in the birds the past four years, taking its toll as well. During late autumn, congregations of 25 and more same-sexed birds will roam the area within 7.5 miles of the Ney Environmental Center. In mid-winter, a hundred birds in a flock are not uncommon in the immediate Bucks' Lake, Horseshoe Lake area. On December 2008, 344 of the forest birds were encountered

by area birders, all the while a blizzard was raging in the valley. Turkeys are having a detrimental effect on the forest landscape.

OWLS: According to our observations, the periods of December 2007 through the present date have been very difficult for the owls. In early December, 2007, rainfall on fresh snow coated the snow with an ice-crust which lasted well into spring. This same phenomena occurred in late November of 2008 and has continued to the present time (March 5<sup>th</sup> of 2009). During this period of two years, we have had reports of (and/or observed) six dead Barred Owls, six dead Great-Horned Owls, two dead Eastern Screech Owls. With one exception all were struck by vehicles within five miles of Bucks'/Horseshoe Lake. During the summer of 2008, we found one dead immature Barred Owl and an electrocuted Great Horned Owl.

In early February of 2009, a **Saw-Whet Owl** was observed and photographed over a period of weeks near Bucks' Lake, causing great excitement. In the winters of 2004-5, **Great Gray Owls** were encountered in the area, along with the occasional Snowy Owl. To the best of our knowledge, Barn Owls no longer exist in this area.

HAWKS: The most common hawks in the area include the Red-tailed, Kestrel, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's and Broad-winged. The newest (February, 2009) Red-tailed Hawk nest is immediately west of the Coachlight Pond, south of the Nagel gravel area. The Sharp-shinneds arrive in early November and remain through March, then follow the small bird migration north, while the Cooper's is with us year-round, snatching Rock-pigeons, Mourning Doves and smaller birds. Kestrels are found on electrical lines to the east and west of the valley along roadways.

#### CHANGES IN POPULATION, FOREST/WOOD BIRDS

**Redheaded Woodpeckers:** Perhaps the greatest change in numbers of birds in the last twenty years has been that of the Red-headed woodpecker. We have three specimens in the JR Brown collection, all road kills. With the elimination of wooden fence-posts, cutting of trees on the prairies to the east and west, and ascent of European Starlings, a few of these woodpeckers may be found on the Ney Property to the east, and the Wigand property to the west. Both areas have old growth oak trees and savannah.

European Starlings: Starlings may be found on every farmstead, in every village and town in the area. Their greatest population growth may be found in the area of large hog and cattle operations, where feed is stored out-of-doors or fed in large feed-bunkers. We have watched them drive Red-headed Woodpeckers from their tree nest cavities, and Eastern Bluebirds from their boxes. During the annual Migratory Bird Count each September, upwards of 3,000 cling to local electrical lines and trees.

Eastern/Western Meadowlarks: Rarities. A common spring and summer bird in the immediate area of Bucks' Lake...Sand Prairie, now rarely to be found. Due to their practice of nesting along field ditches, feral cats take a tremendous toll, along with skunks, marauding raccoons, and current field-to-ditch agricultural practices.

Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied Woodpecker populations are UP due to Dutch Elm destruction of the elm population. The elms were decimated thirty years ago, and a new outbreak of the disease is rampant again, 2007, 2008.

Video: **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** also exists.

Northern Cardinal and Mourning Dove populations are soaring. Whereas it was a rarity to find Mourning Doves overwintering even ten years ago, as many as seventy in a single flock survived the winter of 2008-2009.

It is difficult to take a census of deep forest birds unless one is in the forests daily during the breeding season. We know that Indigo Buntings returned in goodly numbers in 2008 in addition to Baltimore Orioles and **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**. More Orchard Orioles were reported in spring of 2008 than ever before. However, perhaps observers are more aware of the difference between Baltimore and Orchard orioles. Video of **White-throated Sparrow** exists.

After a slump when West-Nile Disease first became apparent, American Crow and Blue Jay numbers seem to be on the rise.

Without a complete population study, it appears **that Red-Winged Blackbird** numbers have plummeted in this area.

Gray Partridge and Ring-Necked Pheasants numbers are down in the Bucks' Lake region.

**+++++SPECIAL NOTE NEEDS TO BE TAKEN OF  
THE PASQUE FLOWER (Anemone patens)**

A large patch of this beautiful perennial pale blue-to-white flower with a yellow center survives on the Nagel pasture hillside immediately west of Bucks' Lake. From Hwy 93, take 316<sup>th</sup> Street to Sand Prairie Road. At the summit of the gravel road, one may view Bucks' Lake to the east with the Pasque Flower pasture at the parking area.

To the best of our knowledge, this is THE ONLY PATCH of its kind in the area!!!!!!!!!!!! Natives of the Sand Prairie countryside have been coming to view this brief spring growth since settlement of the area began.

### **TURTLES:**

You will observe Snapping Turtles, Spiny Softshells, Painted Turtles and the Common Map Turtle in the Bucks' Lake area. The softshells lay their eggs in the sandbars along Horseshoe Lake, it is there where the map turtle may be found as well. The Painted turtles prefer the western side of Bucks' Lake, while the snappers inhabit the mud and gunk of Coachlight Pond. (In June, they often lay their eggs off the gravel roadway of Highway 93.)

Turtle populations in this area are "down," as a result of raccoon and skunk depredation of the eggs, high water for extended periods of time, and we suspect a disease has struck the softshell turtles.

Snapping turtles have been observed taking their toll on the Woodduck hatchery of Coachlight Pond.

### **BLACK SQUIRRELS:**

An abundance of black squirrels may be observed on the western slopes above Bucks' Lake, from the Coachlight Pond north to Henderson. Introduced to Sand Prairie oak-savannah some ten years ago, they are often killed going from forest to Bucks' Lake. (Three such specimens may be found in the mammal collection at the JR Brown Center.)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	<b>Christmas Bird Count</b>												
2	PARTICIPANTS	49	58	67	55	72	70+	60+	60+	82	84	100+	125+
3	<b>Specie</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
4	Blue jay	47	104	74	112	89	126	125	83	207	129	224	179
5	Cardinal, northern	25	86	91	101	47	48	140	90	182	82	224	273
6	Cedar waxwing	0	90	45	12	111	9	55	56	59	81	24	26
7	Chickadee	116	166	167	110	154	144	127	112	212	274	357	301
8	Creeper, brown	3	3	3	2	3	4	2	2	1	7	3	0
9	Crow, American	123	96	339	117	157	101	84	55	92	101	58	138
10	Dove, Rock (pigeon)	15	39	77	80	112	138	185	113	112	134	237	166
11	Dove, Mourning	5	17	33	3	21	33	90	30	103	28	45	97
12	Duck, mallard	7	1	1	0	0	0	8	0	0	8	0	0
13	Eagle, bald	7	9	26	8	19	5	14	14	15	23	8	12
14	Finch, gold	84	51	133	126	127	102	93	127	89	173	235	506
15	Finch, house	9	25	105	44	53	60	92	63	88	86	172	148
16	Finch, purple	32	3	42	46	24	19	38	11	84	21	90	103
17	Flicker, northern	0	1	1	0	6	3	1	3	1	2	6	5
18	Goose, Canada	0	1050	392	1	117	804+	20	1200	912	2750	553	144
19	Goose, Snow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
20	Grackle	0	0	7	0	1	0	3	0	4	13	34	15
21	Gull, unknown	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	Hawk, American kestrel	1	1	1	0	0	3	7	4	6	5	2	0
23	Hawk, Cooper's	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
24	Hawk, red-tail	6	3	10	2	10	5	10	7	7	11	7	9
25	Hawk, rough-legged	0	5	8	2	1	1	4	4	4	3	5	1
26	Hawk, sharp-shinned	4	1	1	4	7	4	7	5	5	3	5	3
27	Hawks, unknown	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	Junco, darkeyed	82	270	266	333	113	220	170	357	574	28	602	653
29	Kingfisher, belted	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30	Nuthatch, white-breasted	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
31	Nuthatch, red-breasted	53	53	96	9	110	80	70	86	129	113	162	151
32	Osprey	19	11	6	4	14	12	5	8	15	24	17	7
33	Owl, barred	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
34	Owl, eastern screech	0	1	0	0	1	1	4	4	2	1	1	1



## BIRDS OF THE HENDERSON/SIBLEY COUNTY AREA

### DUCKS, GEESE, WATERBIRDS

Common Goldeneye	Spring Migration – Coachlight Pool, Buck’s Lake
Hooded Merganser	Spring Migration – Coachlight Pool, Buck’s Lake
Common Merganser	Spring Migration – Coachlight Pool, Buck’s Lake
Mallard	All seasons – unfrozen water areas
Northern pintail	Spring/Autumn migration, MN Rvr floodplain
Teal, blue winged	Spring/Autumn migration, MN Rvr floodplain
Teal, green winged	Spring/Autumn migration, MN Rvr floodplain
Northern shoveler	Spring Migration, MN Rvr floodplain, Scenic Byway route
Lesser Scaup (bluebills)	Spring migration, MN Rvr floodplain
Canvasback	Spring/Autumn migration, area lakes
Redhead	Spring/Autumn migration, area lakes
Common Goldeneye	Spring migration, Coachlight Pond
Bufflehead	Spring migration, Coachlight Pond
Woodduck	March – October, MN Rvr, Buck’s Lake, Lakes adjacent to MN Rvr
Canada Geese	All seasons Huge flocks autumn, winter Katzenmeyer Nature Area
Cackling Geese	Autumn, Winter Katzenmeyer Nature Area
Tundra Swan	Spring migration in area flooded fields
Trumpeter Swans	Nesting pair, undisclosed Sibley County Lakes
American Coot	Spring/Autumn migration, Sibley County Lakes
Western Grebe	Spring migration, Sibley County Lakes
Cormorants, Double-Crested	March-May/August-September, Buck’s Lake, Lake Titloe at Gaylord
American White Pelican	Spring/Autumn migration, buck’s Lake, Lake Titloe At Gaylord, Silver Lake, MN Rvr backwaters

### GULLS

Herring Gull	Spring/Autumn migration, Sibley County Lakes
Ring-billed Gull	Spring/Autumn migration, Sibley County Lakes
Franklin’s Gull	Spring/Autumn migration, Sibley County Lakes
Forster’s tern	Spring/Autumn migration, Sibley County Lakes
Common tern	Spring/Autumn migration, Sibley County Lakes

### BUTEOS

Red-tailed hawk	MN River Valley forests
Rough-legged hawk	November-March, Prevalent along Scenic Byway route, Summer/Autumn MN Rvr
Broad-winged hawk	Area marshes, summer months

## **OSPREY/EAGLES/HARRIERS/ACCIPITERS/VULTURES**

Osprey	April/May – August/September, MN Rvr, Buck's Lake
Bald Eagle	All seasons, especially March-April and while MN Rvr Remains unfrozen
Golden Eagle	March/April – sporadic sightings
Northern Harrier (Marsh Hawk)	April-September area marshes, prairies
Turkey Vulture	March-October Throughout MN Rvr valley area
Sharp-shinned Hawk	All season but especially Nov-April, area cities-feeders
Cooper's Hawk	March-October Forested areas, MN Rvr area
American Kestrel	March-October Area electrical wires, especially prairie Areas

## **OWLS**

The following owls can be found in the forested areas of the valley throughout the year:

Great Horned, Long-eared, Eastern Screech and Barred Owl.

The Great Gray Owl irruption occurred during the winters of 2005-2006. The Snowy Owl appears intermittently dependent upon food shortages in the north.

## **QUAIL/PARTRIDGES**

Northern Bobwhite Quail	Sporadic appearances, prairie, shallow woodland areas
Gray Partridge	Rather common in west Henderson cropland
Chukar	Introduced, sporadic sightings
Ring-necked Pheasants	Increasingly common area fields 2006-7
Wild Turkeys	Common all area fields and forests, Male displays March, April and May

## **LARGE ADING BIRDS**

Great Blue heron	common all shallow water areas Heronry established south end, Buck's Lake
Sandhill Crane	passes spring/autumn migration – nesting pair east LeSueur
Great White Egrets	Sporadic appearances summers on shallow waters, Large flocks in MN Rvr Valley each September
Cattle Egret	Sporadic appearances, spring migration, floodplain
Little Green Heron	Common May-Sept all area shallow lakes, ponds
Black-Crowned Night Heron	Sporadic, Buck's Lake area
American Bittern	Sporadic appearances, Sibley County Lakes

## **RAILS**

Sora Rail	Area shallow ponds
Virginia Rail	Area shallow ponds

## **PLOVERS**

Killdeer Common, March-September, shallow area lakes, ponds,  
MN Rvr beaches

## **SANDPIPERS**

Yellow-billed cuckoo Area deep forests and ravines, May-September  
Black-billed cuckoo Area deep forests and ravines, May-September

## **NIGHTHAWKS/WHIPPOORWILLS**

Common nighthawk Frequent above area small towns at dusk and dawn  
Whippoorwill May, Rush River Wayside Park calling during night

## **KINGFISHER**

Kingfish, belted All seasons if MN Rvr remains unfrozen  
Nests along bluffs adjacent to MN Rvr

## **WOODPECKERS**

The following woodpeckers are found with frequency in area forests and towns:  
Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy and Pileated

Red-Headed Becoming increasingly rare but continues to be found  
West of City of Henderson close to forested areas  
Yellow-bellied sapsucker April-September, Area forests, especially near fruit trees, elms  
Northern flicker March-October Farmland ditches, trees throughout  
Valley

## **HUMMINGBIRDS**

Ruby-throated hummingbird May-September Area woodlands/sugar feeders

## **THRUSHES**

Eastern bluebird Common, bluebird trails throughout Sibley County  
Veery MN River Valley forested areas  
Wood thrush Uncommon, deep woods, MN Riv Valley  
Varied thrush very uncommon yet has been observed  
American robin Abundant  
  
Brown thrasher Becoming very uncommon, area forests



## **VIREOS**

Warbling and red-eyed vireos            May-August area forests

### **The following are birds common to the Henderson/Sibley County area**

American robin, Eastern bluebird, hermit thrush, veery, wood thrush, brown thrasher, gray catbird, NORTHERN SHRIKE (November-February) cedar waxwing, Horned lark, (November and February), blue jay, American crow, black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, house wren, march wren, ruby and golden-crowned kinglets.

May-July visitors often include the yellow warbler, PROTHONOTARY WARBLER, Northern Parula, Myrtle warbler, Cape May Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, yellow rumped Warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, blackburnian warbler, yellow-throated warbler, oven bird, northern waterthrush, common yellowthroat, AMERICAN REDSTART, SCARLET TANAGER, WESTERN TANAGER, eastern towhee

Additional common birds include the starling, red-winged blackbird, yellow-headed blackbird.

With the additional areas of CRP, the bobolink, eastern meadowlark and dickcissel are Experienced with some frequency.

Starlings, grackles, cowbirds are pesky common sightings.

We welcome the northern oriole and orchard oriole along with the rose-breasted grosbeak and Indigo bunting late April-September

Juncos are with us from October through April. The snow buntings whisk through in January And February

House finches spend the entire year, while the purple finches and pine siskins may visit in December, along with the common redpoll in January and February.

Goldfinches, cedar waxwings, northern cardinals all spend twelve months in the area.