

Carver Current

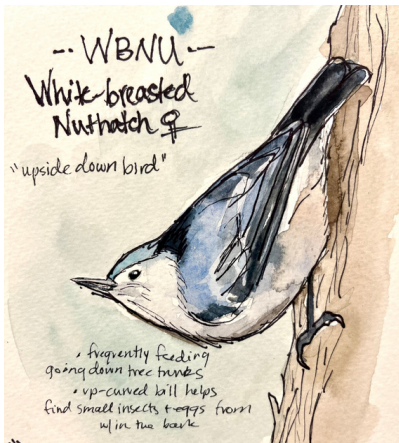
Volunteer Newsletter of Lowry Nature Center



Winter 2023-24

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The **mission** of Three Rivers Park District is to promote environmental stewardship through recreation and education in a natural resources-based park system.



Artwork by Laurel Sundberg

Birds Who Brave Winter

Laurel Sundberg

Winter is a great time to get more familiar with birds because there aren't so many to choose from! Seriously, if you have felt a bit overwhelmed at getting started, winter is the time to jump in. The number of songbirds that stay in winter drops closer to 20, vs hundreds during peak migration. And I'm going to give you my top 10! These are birds that are common, visit feeders, and will get you well on your way to becoming a "birder", if you're so inclined!

Let's start family Paridae, our very own Black-capped chickadee! If I could only pick one, this would be my bird. Weighing in at a whooping 10 grams, about 10 large paper clips, chickadees are champions of winter survival. Sporting a black cap and chin, gray and white markings, chickadees accumulate fat feeding during the day and burn off up to 40% of their body weight on frigid nights! You can listen for it's cheerful "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" call throughout winter.

Next family Sittidae member, the White-breasted nuthatch or "upside down bird." Plug your nose and say "yank". Congrats, you just spoke Nuthatch! Now go outside and say "yank yank!" and watch the trees for surprisingly colorful gray-blue chickadee-sized birds hopping down the bark. It's turned-up beak helps it find frozen insects in bark crevices.

Onto a member of the finch group. My winter finch pick is American goldfinch. Goldfinches have a wardrobe change between winter and summer. In summer they sport bright gold and black (males) and camouflaged yellow-green (females) with black and white wing markings. In winter, all are camouflaged to blend in with a subdued landscape. Goldfinches love small seeds and will grab thistle from feeders or plants.

Northern cardinal belongs to cardinals, buntings, and grosbeaks group. Males are bright scarlet red in the wintery landscape. Watch for the more subdued olive brown females. Cardinals are often out before sunrise and after sunset, calling and searching for food. Sounds range from "chip chip" to a melodic "what-cheer what-cheer".

Onto Dark-eyed junco, a sparrow that migrates to balmy Minnesota for winter. Yes, juncos come here from Canada to search for seeds on or near the ground. Juncos are slate gray with a flash of white on the tail, chickadee-sized, and signal the arrival of cold weather in late fall. They have a cheerful twitter used to keep close with the flock. Scatter millet or sunflower seeds on the snow to watch juncos and other sparrows up close.

Next, woodpeckers! I'm picking two, though there are many. Hairy and Downy woodpeckers are nearly doppelgangers of each other. Both sport black with white "polka-dots", and males have a small red spot on the back of the head. Side-by-side, Hairy is a little larger than Downy. But they rarely pose for you! Look closely at beak length. If its beak is the length of its head it's a Hairy. If its beak is shorter than its head, probably Downy. They are tree climbing specialists with stiff tail feathers and toes that grab like an X, providing grip needed to drill into trees like little jackhammers.

Time for a thrush, and one of the first birds many of us learn, American robin. Don't robins migrate? Sort of. Robins located here during summer will travel farther south. Robins wintering came from farther north. But gone are the days of robins leaving all winter. This gray and rosy-red bird will hunt for berries and seeds in talkative groups throughout the winter.

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Volunteer Excursions & Events

Please save the date for these upcoming volunteer gatherings.

- Winter – Jan. 25 – Full Moon Ski with Laurel, Lauren, Josh
- Spring – Wildflower & Photography Walk with Elise & Joe - May 9, 3pm-4:30
- Summer – Sept. 14 – Heirloom Apples with Zach Mohlis
- Fall – Volunteer Potluck – Brett, Kirk, Cristina (tbd)

Winter Volunteer Opportunities

Evening volunteers needed!

Lowry is bringing back the Lowry at Night series on the first Tuesday of each month and visitors can visit the nature center during late hours and/or sign up for a program. Two volunteers are needed from 5:30 – 8:00pm. Please contact naturalist Lauren Kitrell at lauren.kitrell@threeriversparks.org to sign up.

January 9: Moonlight Snowshoe

Duration: 5:30 – 8:00pm

Location: Lowry Nature Center

Types of Volunteer positions:

- Building Host (1 volunteer)- tend a fire indoors.
- Program Volunteer (1 volunteer) -assist the naturalist with program setup, cleanup, help participants put on/take off snowshoes and will accompany group for full duration of snowshoe excursion (outdoor).

February 6: Moonlight Kicksledding

Duration: 5:30 – 8:00pm

Location: Lowry Nature Center

Types of Volunteer positions:

- Building Host (1 volunteer)- tend a fire indoors.
- Program Volunteer (1 volunteer) -aid the naturalist with program setup, cleanup, help distribute kicksleds and tend the fire outdoors.

March 5: Lamplight Maple Syruping

Duration: 5:30 – 8:00pm

Location: Lowry Nature Center

Types of Volunteer positions:

- Building Host (1 volunteer)- tend a fire indoors.
- Program Volunteer (1 volunteer) -aid the naturalist with program setup, cleanup, light and distribute lanterns and accompany group for full duration of sugarbush excursion.

April 2: Canines of Carver Park

Duration: 5:30 – 8:00pm

Location: Lowry Nature Center

Types of Volunteer positions:

- Building Host (1 volunteer)- tend a fire indoors.
- Program Volunteer (1 volunteer) -aid the naturalist with program setup, cleanup, help set-up/take-down tables and supplies (indoors)

Birds continued from page 1

Lastly a couple of corvids, American crow and Blue jay. The American crow won't come to your feeder. But they are talkative, playful, and very common year-round. When crows begin forming groups in late winter, spring is right around the corner.

Blue jays are a splash of cool blue in the winter, ranging from bright cerulean to soft blue-gray, with black and white markings. They are similar to crows with rowdy behavior. They can be bullies at the feeder, but it's a bluff. When held in a bird bander's hand, they practically play dead!

Speaking of, I recommend you check out Bird Banding at Lowry to learn more about our feathered friends! Banding programs are the third Saturday each month, and they're free. Or grab a trail map, download the Merlin app and head out on your own! Share your findings on our phenology board. We look forward to seeing you, and happy birding this winter!

Enchanted Halloween Success

Thank you to everyone who volunteered for our Halloween Enchanted Forest. The weather probably scared a few folks away but we were still near our 800 guest capacity. While we had 12 staff working the event there were 25 volunteers. It takes double the number of volunteers to staff just to make this possible so it is clearly an example of an event where we could not do what we do without your help. From the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU for making a magical night for so many families. Thanks to Tom LeMay, Maddie Sullivan, Becca Campbell, Wayne Olson, Emily & Laura Pini-Fay, Ana Bartz and many folks from local high schools!



Visit the ChronoLog

When visiting the Lowry Nature Center, it's not unusual to be captivated by the beautiful scenery and wildlife. Even those of us who spend the majority of our week at LNC are consistently impressed by the ecology of the greater Carver Park Reserve. One of the most common ways people attempt to capture the beauty of the park is through photos, many times taken on one's smartphone. So why not put some of those photos to good use?

ChronoLog is a citizen science project that helps parks and other wildlife areas to monitor the landscape through crowdsourcing photos which then create a timelapse video. The videos created by ChronoLog stations can then help us to notice shifts in seasonal patterns, phenological records, changing environmental conditions and more.

In October, the very first ChronoLog station in a Three Rivers Park was installed at Crosby Lake at LNC. The images that we collect will be used to monitor data such as ice on and ice off dates, shoreline water levels, migratory birds, fall colors and more. So the next time you're out for a walk at Lowry, head over to Crosby Lake - pop your phone in the bracket, snap a photo, and email it to the address on the sign. You'll receive a reply from ChronoLog confirming your submission and also directing you to the ongoing timelapse which will now include your photo.

You can also view our ChronoLog video timelapse online at www.chronolog.io/site/LNC201.

More Winter Volunteer Opportunities

Kicksled Monitor

We will again be having our kicksled open rinks on the following dates:

January 6, 2:30 - 4:00pm

January 13, 12:30 - 2:00pm

January 27, 2:30 - 4:00pm

- help set up and possibly clear the rink,
- show the public how to use the sleds and be a friendly helper.

Go to Signup Genius at the link below to sign up.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090E4AA9AC2AAAF7-kicksled1>

Building Hosts (on snowy weekends)

Shifts : Saturday 10am - 12pm

Sundays: 12:30 - 2:30pm

Location: Lowry Nature Center

- Greet visitors & tend indoor fire
- Help pass out snowshoes to folks that rent them
- <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090E4AA9AC2AAAF7-44812621-winter#/>

Polar Party Event

Saturday, Feb. 3

Shifts: 12:30 - 4:30pm

Location: Lowry Nature Center

Types of Volunteer positions:

- Ice Golf & Snowshoes
- Fire Tender & Snowsnake Game

Indoor Greeter with hot chocolate

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090E4AA9AC2AAAF7-46627644-polar>

Winter Play Snow Day

Duration: 10:00am - 12:30 or 12:30 - 3:00pm (with a break) Saturday, Feb. 24

Location: Lowry Nature Center

Types of Volunteer positions:

- Help with open rink kicksleds
- Help fit snowshoes
- Tend the fire and pass out smores
- Help with a Nature Table with information about winter tracks and animals who are active in MN winters.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090E4AA9AC2AAAF7-46626471-winter>

school as a 16 yr. old. Driving however, was not the only thing on her mind. Even as a child, she marveled at butterflies' flight capabilities and vowed one day to fly on her own. After learning how to fly, her astigmatism kept her from reaching the skies.

She went on to become a professor at Mankato State University in the Psychology Department, specializing in traumatic brain injuries in children. She travelled the globe to share her findings and said that working with those children was some of the most rewarding moments of her life.

Marty wanted to be a part of the community and help others to be a part too. It was that attitude that had her returning to the butterflies and her love of nature after retirement. She taught classes on how to put together a pollinator garden and helped the Minnesota Horticultural Society develop their Garden-in-a-Box program for 25 years. She believes people need to realize we are all a part of nature and take care of it like we care for each other. When park guests find out that she's 82, they are often blown away given her energetic and positive demeanor.

Aside from pollinators, Marty sings in two groups, helps make beeswax candles for Ames Honey Farm and grows vegetables in her garden that she donates to the food shelves.

We at Lowry are honored to have Marty share her vast knowledge and time with us. Thank you Marty for all you do!

New Osprey Nesting Platform by the Lowry Sledding Hill



Carver Park has been the summer home to Osprey since a reintroduction program began in the mid-1980s. Osprey, a raptor who's population was affected by the use of DDT and human predation, had been extirpated from southern Minnesota for almost 100 years. Since the programs beginning, nesting towers have been visible around the park. The most famous probably being the one along the nature center driveway. Until recently, none had been in close enough proximity to the nature center to observe during programs with young children. This fall a new tower was installed just north of the sledding hill, a short walk from the building and parking lot. Along with it, a beautiful new interpretive sign designed by Lowry's own naturalist Joe Aliotto, was also installed. Make sure to stop by next spring as we wait in anticipation of the new tower's first residents!

Fall Family Fun Day

Thanks for helping with the Hopkins Fall Family Fun day, Saturday, October 4th! Families from Hopkins schools enjoyed a fun day at Lowry Nature Center. Thanks so much to Mark Vogel who helped with the forest walk, Michelle Cook who showed them our captive raptors and educated them about the birds. Thanks so much to Betty Magnusson who helped with the event as a greeter! This events continues to grow and it is exciting to see folks enjoying nature even during this somewhat rainy day!

Volunteer Spotlight - Marty Berglund

Over the past 10 + years volunteering at Lowry, Marty Berglund has been helping others chase monarchs and sharing her knowledge about planting for pollinators. Her love for the outdoors is apparent upon meeting her, but it started much before her time at Lowry.

Marty grew up on a dairy farm in North Carolina. As a child she loved staying active and being outdoors. She helped in the gardens and was always up for a new challenge, which led to her driving her own bus to

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Lowry Nature Center

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Winter Phenology

December

- Black bear cubs born in den. Nurse and snuggle by bare spot on mother bear's stomach. Now found in Elm Creek Park Reserve in Maple Grove.
- Bucks shed antlers. This can happen as early as late December or as late as March. Once shed, deer and moose antlers are chewed into oblivion by calcium craving animals such as mice, squirrels, and porcupines.
- Lake ice cracks and booms as temperatures drop.
- Raccoons sleep but come out on warm days.
- White-tailed deer eat 6 to 8 pounds of shrub and tree twigs every day.

January

- Coyote breeding season is from January into March. Tagged coyotes have shown up as far as 400 miles from where they were first tracked. They travel distances impossible for most other animals.
- Great horned owl pairs continue their duet hooting as they set up nesting territories in forest areas. Winter is the most challenging part of the year for Minnesota's birds.
- Eastern cottontail rabbits are feeding on the bark of sumac shrubs and other woody plants sticking up above the snow.
- Listen for downy woodpeckers drumming on resonant tree branches and other "signal posts." They do this to announce territories and establish pair bonds.

February

- The first migrating horned larks are returning; in southern and western Minnesota pairs and flocks of these small tan-to-brown birds are congregating along roadsides and in fields.
- Daytime high temperatures in the 40s F marked first maple sap flows in southern Minnesota
- Return of the first male red-winged blackbirds to the Twin Cities area at the end of the month.
- Both male and female house finches are singing a flowing, cheery, variable warbling song, repeated many times.