

# Membership

Tropical Wings is a non-profit 501c3 organization composed of volunteers supporting education and conservation for Neotropical Migratory birds through the Sister Parks Agreement between National Parks in the Upper Midwest and Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula.

Join our efforts today by making a contribution and becoming a Tropical Wings Member!

## Contribution Levels

*Hummingbird*

\$15 (Students & Seniors)



*Warbler*

\$35 (Individuals)



*Osprey*

\$50 (Households)



*Falcon*

Donations > \$50



## Membership Benefits

- Subscription to the bi-annual Tropical Wings Newsletter
- Advanced notice of birding and conservation events
- Priority registration for the Costa Rica Bird-a-thon Trip

To become a member, please complete the membership form and mail with payment to:

Tropical Wings, Inc.  
2107 Chestnut Dr.  
Hudson, Wisconsin, 54016

## Thank You to our Members

The following people have become new members to the Tropical Wings community. Your contributions help us achieve our mission. Thank you!

Tom Clark • Jim Freund • Kelsey Hans  
Craig Leiser • Tracy Maki • Mark Martell



# Tropical Wings Newsletter

Spring 2017 • Volume 1 • Issue 1

## Birding Journal

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Help Protect Migratory Birds  
*Become a Member*  
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### MEMBER INFORMATION:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode: \_\_\_\_\_

### PAYMENT OPTIONS:

☐ I would like to pay by check made payable to Tropical Wings, Inc.  
☐ I would like to pay by credit card Card Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ CSC #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Billing Address (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode: \_\_\_\_\_

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

☐ I would like to make this gift in honor of: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Please keep my name anonymous

### CONTRIBUTION LEVEL:

- ☐ Hummingbird—\$15  
(Students & Seniors)
- ☐ Warbler—\$35  
(Individuals)
- ☐ Osprey—\$50  
(Households)
- ☐ Falcon—Contributions > \$50  
Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_



# Tropical Wings

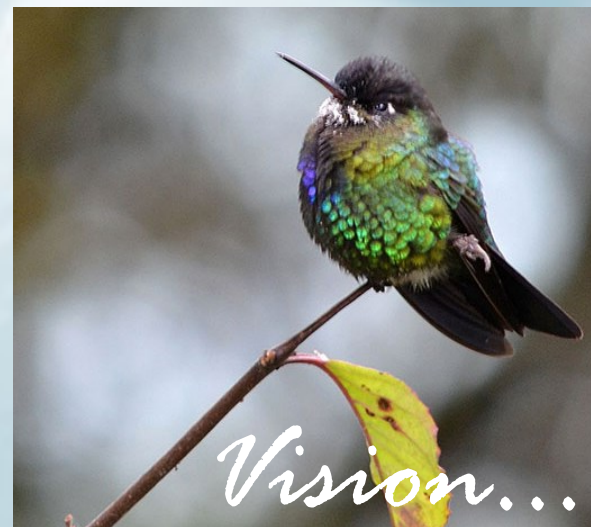


*The mission of Tropical Wings is to support the Sister Parks Agreement between the National Park Service in the Upper Midwest and national parks on the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica (SINAC/ACOSA) by promoting an awareness of Neotropical migratory birds and supporting habitat conservation through building relationships within and between communities at both ends of the migration.*

*Tropical Wings is a gathering of concerned citizens in the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway communities in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The focus of Tropical Wings is the welfare of migratory birds shared between the Upper Midwest and Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula.*

*As a shared resource these birds play a vital role in the web of life and depend on quality habitat along and at both ends of their migration to thrive.*

*Tropical Wings is committed to engaging citizens in celebrating and sustaining this natural phenomenon through education and habitat preservation both in Costa Rica and the Upper Midwest.*



*Tropical Wings facilitates many activities as part of our mission including:*

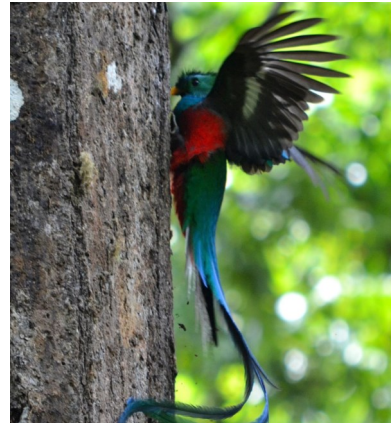
- *Engaging in habitat restoration*
- *Organizing an annual Bird Celebration in collaboration with local community groups*
- *Promoting the Sister Parks relationship and instilling an appreciation for the natural history and value of migratory birds by participating in existing community events throughout the St. Croix Watershed.*
- *Encouraging and organizing adult and student exchanges between the Upper Midwest and Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula for the purpose of education and service efforts.*



# Sister Parks Updates

## Costa Rica Bird-a-thon By TW Secretary, Nina Koch

It's a Quetzal!!! It may not be a neotropical migratory bird, but it is the Holy Grail of birds for the group who attended the **Tropical Wing's first annual Bird-A-Thon Conservation Trip to Costa Rica**. Besides seeing over 250 bird species, the ten travelers collected pledges for habitat conservation for the neotropical migratory birds that we share with the Osa Peninsula. Half of the donations will stay right here with Tropical Wings and the other half goes to OsaBirds in Costa Rica, an organization dedicated to conserving birds and their habitats on the Osa Peninsula through innovative science, education, conservation initiatives, and key partnerships that facilitate species protection.



Of the 250 species of birds spotted, 22 were familiar migrants that breed in Wisconsin and Minnesota and spend their winters in Costa Rica. Did you know that our feathered migrant friends, like this Baltimore Oriole, fly over 5,000 miles annually to go between their nesting grounds and their winter territories? The bird-a-thon trip is one way to help the birds by funding projects that work to promote healthy habitats at both ends of the migration routes.

We were able to see human birds too, in the form of children marching in the Migratory Bird Celebration parade, dressed as their favorite migratory bird. In its' fourth year, the event is held in Puerto Jimenez and begins early in the morning with birding trips to the local mangroves. The parade ends near the beach of Golfo Dulce where presentations, dancing, displays, a silent auction, and games take place until mid-afternoon. The highlight of the day was watching the kids in the parade having so much fun. Which bird would you choose to be?



## Acknowledgements

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### THANK YOU TO OUR PRINTER

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# Partner Profiles

*It takes cooperation of many organizations to protect migratory birds and conserve the ecosystems on which they rely. Tropical Wings partners with many entities throughout the St. Croix Watershed that perform vital conservation and education services for the animals and people of our community.*

Both of the organizations featured in this issue's Partner Profile were recipients of the 2016 Tropical Wings Habitat Restoration Grant. Each year, Tropical Wings awards grants of up to \$1000 to individuals, businesses and organizations in the St. Croix River Watershed to preserve and restore bird habitat.

## Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center



Nestled at the confluence of the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers near Hastings, Minnesota, Carpenter Nature Center (CNC) provides a unique opportunity to learn and explore the outdoors. With property on both the Minnesota and Wisconsin sides of the scenic St. Croix River, CNC is able to preserve wildlife habitat while also providing education experiences for community families.

CNC participates in many activities that help conserve migratory birds, including bird banding, public birding hikes, and reaching the next generation with classes for school groups of all ages.

Another way that CNC helps migratory birds is the control of invasive species. Invasive plants and animals harm migratory birds by out-competing native species on which the birds rely for shelter, nesting, and food. With the help of the Tropical Wings Restoration Grant, CNC is currently working to eradicate buckthorn on both their Hastings and Hudson campuses. Besides utilizing funds for the buckthorn removal, Carpenter is also engaging in teaching the public about the project and the dangers of buckthorn through the installation of educational signage. Thank you, CNC, for everything you do for the community and our feathered friends!

## Belwin Conservancy

Belwin and its members work together to protect the St. Croix Valley through land conservation, scientifically-based ecological restoration and building connections between people and the natural world. Belwin Conservancy's 1,364 acre preserve near Afton, Minnesota includes oak savanna, woodlands, tallgrass prairie, wetlands, and fens, and it is home to numerous rare and threatened plants and animals.

While Belwin does exemplary work restoring all habitat types, they are known especially for prairie restoration. Prior to European settlement, there were millions of acres of tallgrass prairie in Minnesota. Today, less than 0.1% of it remains, and Belwin protects some of the oldest restored prairie in the St. Croix Valley. Not only have they restored the prairie plant communities, but they have also reintroduced bison, and six other animal species considered rare by the Minnesota DNR thrive on Belwin land.

With the help of the Tropical Wings Restoration Grant, Belwin will be purchasing native plant materials as part of a habitat restoration at their Education Center. Thank you, Belwin, for being a model for habitat restoration!



# Tropical Wings

## Birding Journal

By Tropical Wings President, Patty Mueller

Imagine flying non-stop 500 miles across the Gulf of Mexico, twice a year, to travel between your summer and winter homes. This is the life of a Neotropical Migrant, a bird that spends the summer raising young in North America and Canada, and the winter months in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. These migratory birds are the inspiration and driving force behind Tropical Wings, a group of citizens committed to promoting the welfare of these critically important creatures who are an essential piece of myriad ecosystems including our own St. Croix Watershed and in our "Sister Parks" of Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula.

The focus of Tropical Wings is the welfare of migratory birds shared between the Upper Midwest and the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica, considered by National Geographic as "the most biologically intense place on earth". As a shared resource these birds play a vital role in the web of life and depend on quality habitat along and at both ends of their migration to thrive. Tropical Wings is committed to engaging citizens in celebrating and sustaining this natural phenomenon through education and habitat preservation both in Costa Rica and the Upper Midwest.

Much has been accomplished since citizens from the St. Croix Valley first gathered in 2011 to support the National Park Service's efforts to form a Sister Parks partnership with National Parks in Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula. Since the establishment of the Sister Parks Program in 2013, Tropical Wings has organized exchanges of Park



Rangers both to and from Costa Rica, a Bird Migration Celebration along the St. Croix River, Habitat Grants to restore and protect critical migratory bird habitat in the St. Croix Watershed, a Salsa Dance in Minnesota and a Birdathon Trip to Costa Rica to raise funds for bird conservation on both the Osa Peninsula and in the St. Croix Watershed.

The Bird Migration Celebration event on the second weekend of May brings together conservation organizations and offers educational opportunities to citizens across the St. Croix River Valley. Not only do participants receive lessons about birding and bird identification, they also get a chance to explore the prairies, wetlands, and woodlands throughout the watershed that support migratory birds. Participants also learn about other animals in the St. Croix River Valley ecosystems including mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates.



Photo Credit— TW Board Member, Brian Collins

Colorful songbirds such as warblers are often the focus of Neotropical Migrant discussions, but there are many other species of birds that travel from the St. Croix River Valley to the Osa Peninsula. This Black Tern is just one of dozens of species (including ducks, herons, raptors, sandpipers, terns, hummingbirds, flycatchers, swallows, and more) that spend time in both the Midwest and the Tropics.

I invite you to join us as we continue to educate people and protect habitat to ensure our birds have a place to live at both ends of their migration. Visit our website [www.tropicalwings.com](http://www.tropicalwings.com), follow us on Facebook, join us for birding and conservation events, and become a member of Tropical Wings to support neotropical migratory birds.



# Bird Biographies

## Wood Thrush *(Hylocichla mustelina)* By TW Board Member, Lynette Anderson

Perhaps one of the most beloved songs of the spring and summer season is that of the Wood Thrush *(Hylocichla mustelina)*. Their sweet and soulful *ee-oh-lay* is a glad reward for all who venture out at dawn or dusk during the breeding season. These songsters breed in mixed and deciduous woodlands throughout the eastern United States. They need large tracts of mature trees, a moderate understory of saplings and shrubs, water nearby and an open, moist forest floor with decaying leaf litter. It is under the leaf litter that they forage for invertebrates like beetles, caterpillars, and ants, as well as berries from the shrubs in which they build their nests.

These reclusive birds are a member of the Turdidae family, which includes the American Robin, Hermit Thrush, and Veery. Wood Thrush have a pot-bellied body, short tail, straight bill, big head and upright posture. The upper feathers are a warm cinnamon color while the under parts are white with bold black spots. Their profile is one of a scaled- down Robin. This particular family member, the Wood Thrush, has been the object of research by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center due to dramatic decreases in population over the past 50 years. This bird is an indicator species for other migratory and non-migratory birds that depend on eastern deciduous forests to breed successfully and raise their young.

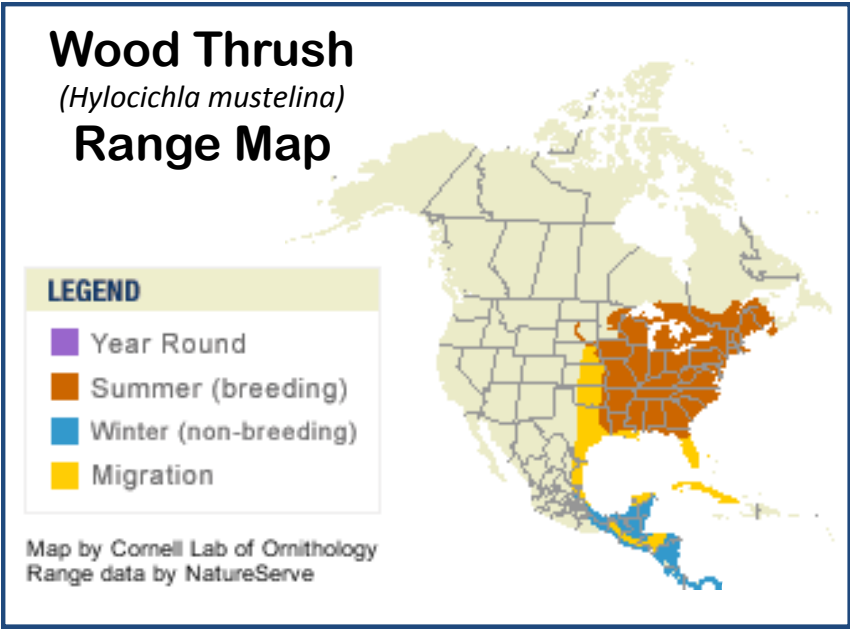
In July of 2014 and 2015, with funding provided by the St. Croix Valley Foundation’s Riverway Endowment Fund, Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center researchers put geo-locators on 25 adult Wood Thrush in Washington County MN. Over a two- year period, local bird banders recovered many of the tagged birds and analyzed the data from their trackers. The information retrieved allowed scientists to track the Wood Thrush movements on both legs of their epic migration and to pinpoint stopover sites for the first time. It was found that these nighttime migrators return within yards of their previous year’s breeding area, and that they overwinter throughout much of Central America and Mexico, sometimes in shade-grown coffee plantations.

The Wood Thrush population decline cannot be pinned to one thing, but as with other birds of concern, to a suite of problems. Habitat loss both in breeding and wintering grounds seems to be first on the list. This then leads to other threats. As habitats are fragmented, more edge becomes available which allows predators of all kinds, snakes, raccoons, and cats to find the nests and eat the eggs or nestlings. Habitat fragmentation also allows Brown-headed Cowbirds to find the nests and lay their eggs alongside the Wood Thrush eggs. The Brown-headed Cowbirds then leave and the Wood Thrush assumes all parenting duties for this larger, earlier hatching baby. Although their population is on the decline, Wood Thrush are still somewhat common through out the forests of eastern North America.



A backpack-like geo-locator was fixed to this Wood Thrush by Smithsonian PhD student Calandra Stanley in July 2014 at Lee & Rose Warner Nature Center.

- Here are a few things you can do to help Wood Thrush population growth:**
- Keep your cats indoors. Cats are ambush hunters, and they will stalk and attack birds on the ground.
  - Create new habitat in your yard by planting native shrubs and berry trees.
  - Reduce the use of pesticides that poison the food source of many ground- feeding birds.
  - Support efforts in your community to set aside habitat for birds and other native critters.
  - Buy shade-grown coffee! Many neotropical migrants, including the Wood Thrush, are finding safe and healthy havens in coffee plantations on their wintering grounds.
  - Go out and enjoy the sounds! Take a walk in your nearest woods and listen for the magical sound of the Wood Thrush.



# Habitat Heroes

*A Habitat Hero is a person or organization that has an extraordinary understanding of the importance of habitat protection, and a vision for implementing activities to raise awareness and build knowledge about conservation efforts.*

## National Park Service By TW Treasurer, Judith Freund

Our first Habitat Heroes are the individuals at the Park Service in the United States and in Costa Rica who put into motion habitat efforts when they formalized a Sister Park Agreement in June of 2013. We would like to give special recognition to then-superintendent of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Chris Stein. The Agreement united areas managed by the National Park Service, particularly the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, and parks in Costa Rica centered on and around the Osa Peninsula, including their crown jewel, Corcovado National Park. Professional exchanges, high school and college-level student trips, migratory bird celebrations, habitat restoration activities and numerous other efforts have been put into process as a result of this visionary agreement. And, of course, citizen stewards formed Tropical Wings to support efforts on behalf of the Sister Park Agreement. Finally we need to give a shout-out to Rotary District 5960. A Rotary grant paid for travel to Costa Rica for the Sister Park signing; no taxpayer funds were used. Congratulations to these Habitat Heroes!



Representatives from Costa Rica and the United States meet to sign the Sister Parks agreement. Osa Conservation Area Director, Etilma Morales (left), SINAC Executive Director, Rafael Guitierrez (center), Superintendent of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Christopher Stein (right).

## Sister Parks Agreement

The Sister Parks agreement is a partnership between 15 National Parks and Monuments and the Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network in the Upper Midwest, and 7 National Parks, Wetlands, Refuges and Reserves on the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica.

**United States National Parks Service participating areas:**

1. St. Croix National Scenic Riverway	5. Grand Portage National Monument	10. North Country National Scenic Trail
2. Mississippi National River and Recreation Area	6. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore	11. Effigy Mounds National Monument
3. Apostle Islands National Lakeshore	7. Isle Royale National Park	12. Ice Age National Scenic Trail
4. Voyageurs National Park	8. Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore	13. Keweenaw National Historical Park
	9. Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore	14. Pipestone National Monument

**Costa Rica’s National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC):**

1. Corcovado National Park	3. Piedras Blancas National Park	6. Isla del Caño Biologial Reserve
2. Marino Ballena National Park	4. Térraba Sierpe National Wetlands	7. Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve
	5. Golfito Wildlife Refuge	