



# Tropical Wings

*Newsletter*

Fall 2018 • Volume 2 • Issue 2

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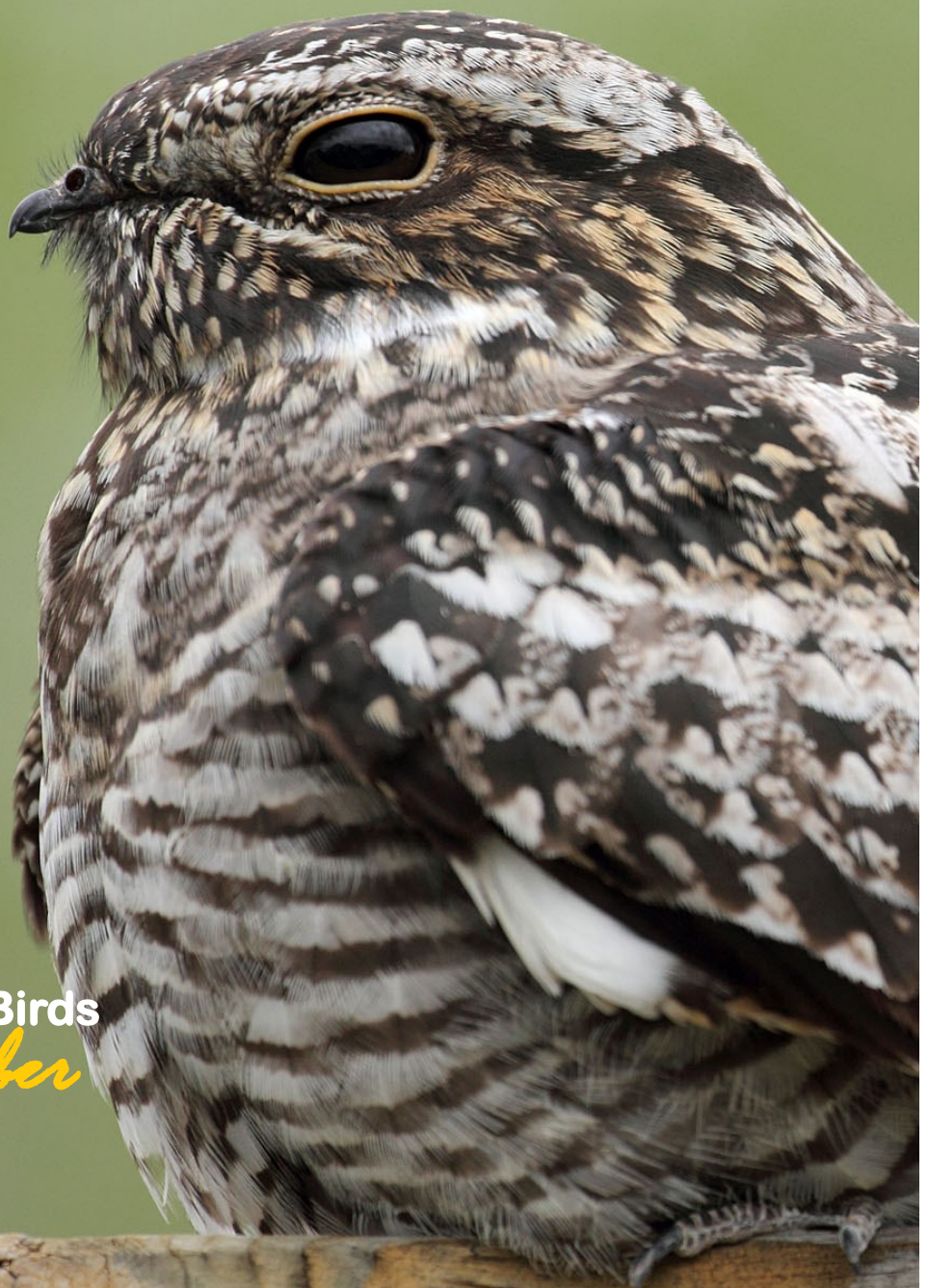
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# Tropical Wings



*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.*



# Tropical Wings

## Birding Journal

By Tropical Wings President, Patty Mueller



Top: Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve connects Corcovado National Park (light green) and Piedras Blancas (dark green). Middle: Golfo Dulce is a convergence of land, sea, and sky that supports a wide variety of plant and animal life. Bottom: Staff at the Forest Reserve display the puppets made for their 40th Anniversary Celebration.

Traveling to Costa Rica is an unforgettable experience, and one of the true gems of the country is the Osa Peninsula, an area of unsurpassed biodiversity with intact rainforest ecosystems offering abundant opportunities to observe the many plants and animals that call this region home. The Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve is located here, and is one of seven "Sister Parks" that together with 14 National Parks in the Upper Midwest, form a partnership centered on the neotropical migratory birds shared between our two countries.

The Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve is one of the wettest places in the world, with 150 - 200 inches of rain each year. It was established in 1978 to protect the lowland forest areas around the Golfo Dulce, a large bay on the Pacific Ocean side in southern Costa Rica. The Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve serves as an important biological corridor between two of our other Sister Parks, Corcovado National Park and Piedras Blancas National Park. Monkeys, sloths, anteaters, jaguars and coatis are among the diverse animal species found here. It is also home to rich diversity of birds, many of which are seen during Tropical Wing's annual Birdathon to Costa Rica.

The Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve just celebrated their 40th anniversary this past June. As part of the celebrations, park staff created a group of puppets, including one called "Alvarito", in honor of Don Alvaro Ugalde, founder of the National Parks of Costa Rica, and the puppet "Paco, the Passionate Botanist", inspired by the invaluable work of local botanist Reinaldo Aguilar. Visitors to the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve Arboretum are invited to take a self-guided tour on the new "Copaifera Camibar" interpretive trail, named after a tree whose camibar oil has medicinal properties. Juan Jose Jiménez Espinoza, administrator of the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve, invites everyone to visit this beautiful corner of the world, and works tirelessly to educate youth and conserve the ecosystems of the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve. Thank-you Juan Jose!

# Bird Biographies

## *Common Nighthawk* (*Chordeiles minor*)

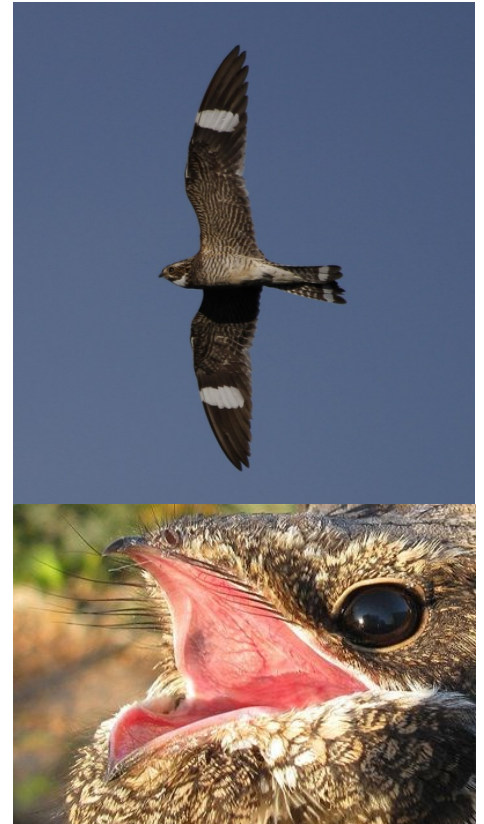
By TW Board Member, Lynette Anderson

Think about your last road trip. Do you remember how many miles you traveled? How often you stopped to eat? Where you spent the night? Were you able to get a good night's rest or were there disturbances? Was it easy to find fuel when you needed it? These are all concerns for the many birds that travel long distances to get from their summer nesting areas in North America and Canada to their wintering grounds in Central and South America.

One such bird is the Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*), which winters in Central and South America (including the Osa Peninsula) and spends summers nesting and raising young throughout North America and Canada. While not related to hawks, they get their name from their feeding behavior of "hawking" (catch in mid air) insects like moths and beetles. Nighthawks are crepuscular creatures which means they are out hunting at dawn and dusk.

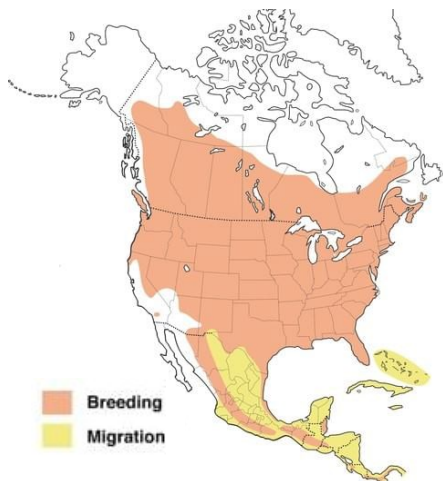
Nighthawks are streamlined and slender birds with a dark body and a contrasting white blaze near the wrist or bend in the wing. You will likely hear a distinctive, buzzy peent sound as they swoop and dive in graceful loops chasing their prey. Their tiny beaks open to reveal a cavernous mouth well suited to snapping up flying insects. They can be seen over streetlights, stadiums, and other bright lights as well as ponds, lakes and open natural areas. They can forage near the ground or water or more than 500 feet into the sky!

These birds and others in the Caprimulgidae family are also known as nightjars. Most have small feet, long, pointed wings and cryptically colored plumage that resembles bark or leaves. This last adaptation is what makes conservation of these species so challenging. They are extremely hard to locate and identify.



*Although Nighthawks are difficult to spot when roosting, they are easy to see and identify when in flight because of their white wing bars (top). Birds in the Nightjar family have small beaks but very large mouths. Their large mouth and whisker-like face feathers help them to catch insects (bottom).*

### Common Nighthawk Range Map



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Common Nighthawks face a multitude of challenges in their life cycle. These include reduction of mosquitos and other aerial insects due to pesticide use, nesting habitat loss including open woods in rural areas and flat gravel roofs in urban areas, car hits as they forage over roads or nest in the gravel road shoulders, and loss of Stopover Habitat.

*The Common Nighthawk and other migrants can use your help! Here is what you can do:*

- *Reduce the use of pesticides! Insect populations are a primary source of food for many birds, particularly the Common Nighthawk.*
- *Create new habitat in your yard! Native shrubs and berry trees provide much needed food, cover and nesting sites as well as stopover habitat for birds heading farther north. Look for plant species that support native insects!*
- *Support conservation efforts in your community! Be it a nature center, natural area or a local park, support by volunteering or donations.*
- *Buy shade-grown coffee! Many neo-tropical migrants, including the Common Nighthawk, are finding safe and healthy havens in coffee plantations on their wintering grounds. Better for you, and better for the birds!*



# 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.*

## St. Croix River Association

By TW Treasurer, Judith Freund

The St. Croix River Association has been around a long time – since 1911, to be exact! In the early part of the 20th century, and as tourists traveled to the St. Croix, purchasing summer homes along the river, communities and individuals joined efforts to protect the river. Tourism began to rival logging in terms of economic impact in the area, and the need to protect “the most beautiful river in the world” (Stillwater Messenger, 1909) became apparent. It was then that the St. Croix River Improvement Association was born.

In 2008 the American Rivers Association declared the St. Croix, which was one of the original eight “wild and scenic” rivers designated by Congress, to be one of the 10 most endangered and threatened rivers in the country. As a result, the St. Croix River Association, as we now know it, was born. In 2008, the community convened a gathering of the SCRA to re-organize and galvanize around the mission to “Protect, Restore, and Celebrate the St. Croix River and its Watershed.”

The current director, Deb Ryun, came to the SCRA in 2009, and immediately set about the task of implementing the strategic blueprint by visiting with stakeholders in the watershed. What she found was a large number of organizations and individuals who were focused on the same goal – protect the water quality of the river. Deb Ryun functioned then as a one-person office, but the group quickly grew as needs became apparent. Central to those needs was the protection of water quality, which remains the Association’s highest priority. The health of the river is fragile and is constantly under pressure from development, particularly given proximity to the metropolitan area.

The Association now employs numerous staff and interns working on four areas: 1) Water quality – now partnering with 50 entities and organizations, 2) Education, – including outreach efforts that bring adults and children ON the river, 3) Invasive species control, and 4) land conservation. Deb Ryun feels one of the strengths of the organization is its ability and commitment to collaborate with groups that are also involved in a common mission, often supporting those groups through resources and funding.

The St. Croix River Association is the voice of the river, and we couldn’t be more grateful for the work they do in the watershed!



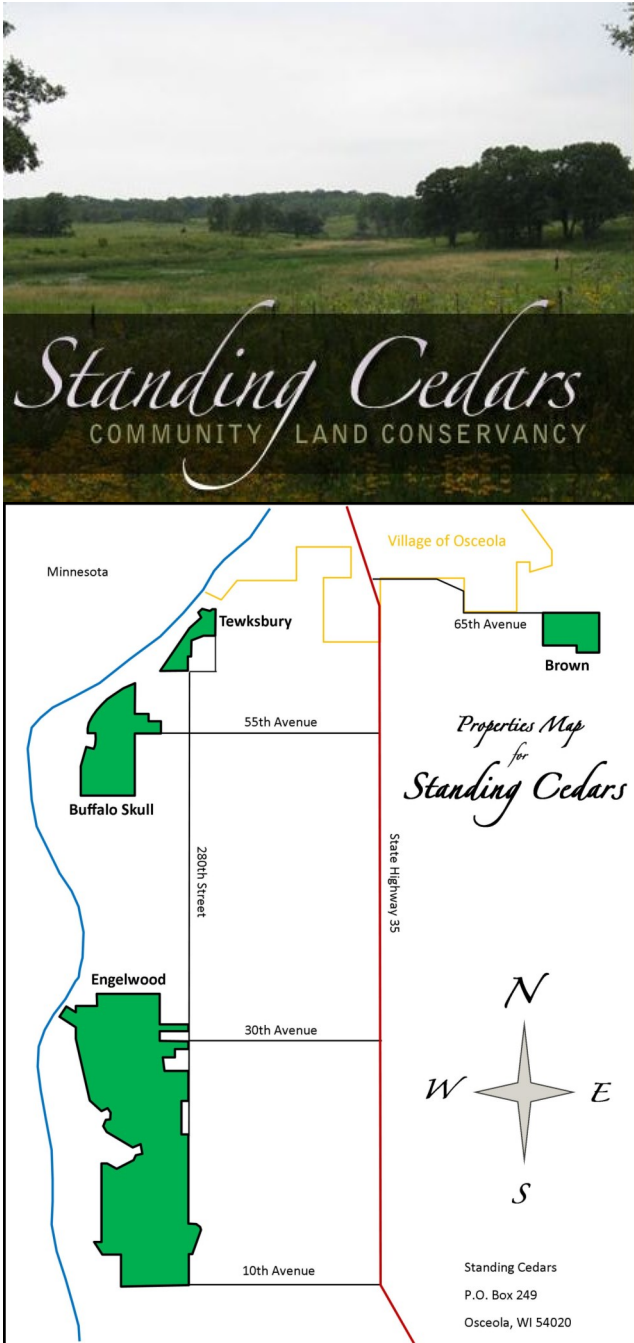
*At the turn of the century, the primary economic use of the river was transportation of lumber (top). Today, the St. Croix River Valley is a crossroad of nature, culture, and recreation. The St. Croix River Association plays a major role in conservation efforts in the watershed, and Director, Deb Ryun (middle) is a driving force in community partnerships that benefit the health of the river. Preserving the river is essential to ensuring the protection of threatened and endangered species that call the river home, such as the Winged Mapleaf Mussel (*Quadrula fragosa*) (bottom).*

# 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.*

The organization featured in this issue's Partner Profile was a recipient of the 2018 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.

## *Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy*



Standing Cedars is a non-profit that protects over 1,500 acres of land along the St. Croix River just south of Osceola, Wisconsin. There are four portions of land that compose the conservancy; 1) Tewksbury, 2) Buffalo Skull, 3) Englewood, and 4) Brown.

- 1) Tewksbury is a 50-acre property that offers beautiful views of the St. Croix River. Many wonderful prairie plants grow there, including leadplant, purple prairie clover, grama grass, and pasque flowers. Oak savanna follows the ridge between the upper and lower fields. Old growth forest can be found at the north end, in the ravine.
- 2) Buffalo Skull boasts many interesting areas to explore on the 245-acre property, including dry cliffs, oak savanna, a moist ravine, maple/basswood forest, and former farm fields. A 25-acre pasture on the north side of the property is full of prairie plants.
- 3) Englewood is 1,100 acres of deep, wooded ravines, rare native prairie, floodplain forest and wetlands, and was the largest single undeveloped parcel of land on the Lower St. Croix River when it was purchased by Standing Cedars in 1995. Home to a large stand of endangered kittentails, the land has been studied by naturalists who consider it to have potential as an "ark" to preserve rapidly-diminishing prairie species.
- 4) Brown is the newest property acquired by Standing Cedars.

As a Land Trust, Standing Cedars has a number of land protection tools that can be utilized depending on the circumstances. Most of Standing Cedars' work has been accomplished through either fee-title acquisition or conservation easements.

Each property protected by Standing Cedars is accessible for the public to enjoy, and there are many opportunities for the community to get involved with volunteering at the conservancy. Visit their website <https://www.standingcedars.org/> to learn more about the great work being accomplished by Standing Cedars!



# Sister Parks Updates

## *Sister Parks Update* By TW Secretary, Nina Koch



*Paul Labovitz (left) and his wife Sue (right).*

Meet our new liaison with the National Park Service! Paul Labovitz has been appointed as the National Park liaison with Tropical Wings. Paul is not a stranger to Tropical Wings and the Sister Park Agreement. Paul is currently the Superintendent of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Before taking the position in Indian, Paul was the Superintendent of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area in Minnesota. That park signed the Sister Park Agreement that aligns 14 National Parks in the Midwest with seven National Parks on the Osa Peninsula in Costa Rica. Paul was able to meet four Costa Rica National Park Superintendents in 2016 when they came to the United States to learn about our National Park System.

Three Tropical Wings Board Members migrated to Indiana to meet Paul and attend the Indiana Dunes Bird Festival this past May. They were delighted to spend time with both Paul and his wife, Sue. They were able to talk about further collaboration between the National Park Service and Tropical Wings. At the Bird Festival, they discovered that Paul had built 36 bluebird houses to decorate the tables at the festival's banquet. They were made from leftover cedar from a new boardwalk at the park. The three Tropical Wings members were impressed with Paul's commitment and enthusiasm for continued involvement in the Sister Park Agreement, his environmental stewardship, and personal touch to his job.

On a more personal note, Paul and Sue have 3 adult children, Sarah, now 36 is a Music Professor at Arkansas State University; Katie, 34, living in New York City where she works in the performing arts on the business side and Jason, 32, teaching in the Cleveland Public Schools.

Paul is currently working together with Guido Saborio (Director of the Department of Protected Areas at Osa Conservation Area) and SINAC (National System of Conservation Areas) and they have sent an official request to renew our Sister-Park Agreement for an additional five years. Paul is planning a visit to Costa Rica to meet face-to-face with Guido Saborio and other Costa Rica colleagues. The visit is being planned for January or February of 2019. Tropical Wings has offered to provide travel support for Paul's visit. We are all very excited to have Paul as part of the team and look forward to his creativity and strong environmental ethics!

## Acknowledgements

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# 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



### CONTRIBUTION LEVEL:

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

### 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): \_\_\_\_\_  
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- ☐ Please keep my name anonymous