

Prairie Rapids Audubon Society

General Meeting Minutes

January 11, 2022

Submitted by Kris Rash

After a long holiday break, the Prairie Rapids Audubon Society held its first meeting of 2022 on January 11. Many of us were glad to remain in the comfort of our own homes on this cold winter evening as 42 people zoomed in from 34 devices. President Tom Schilke called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with an update on membership dues. If you are a local PRAS member only dues should be paid on Jan. 1st of each year. Those who joined the National Audubon Society (this includes membership in your local chapter, as well) should pay their dues on the anniversary of the date you joined. If you don't recall exactly when that is call chapter services at 800-542-2748 for assistance. While you have their attention you can also ask them to reduce the frequency of the mailings arriving in your mailbox. Help save a tree!

Treasurer, Frances Moore, reported a healthy balance of \$16,125.84 in our bank account. This money will allow us to fund grants in our six-county service area in the next few months. Projects will be announced later. The bird feed fund shows a balance of \$455.13. Donations are welcome especially with the higher cost of seed this winter.

Members were reporting winter bird visitors in greater numbers. Recent sightings to these parts have included Snowy Owls, Common Redpolls, Rough-legged Hawks and Snow Buntings. Be vigilant. A surprise avian species may show up where you least expect it.

The PRAS board has decided that our meetings will be virtual through April with Covid numbers remaining high. We are hoping for an outdoor gathering in May. Stay tuned...

It is our good fortune to have Candace Havely, library director Hawkeye Community College, on our board. Not only does she do an extraordinary job of maintaining our web site she also discovers excellent topics for our monthly programs. Tonight, she introduced our speaker, Sara Dykman, author of the book "Bicycling with Butterflies". Candace had become acquainted with both the book and Sara through her work with the library.

In 2017 Sara decided to hit the road in Central Mexico from the mountainous forest where Monarchs gather to spend the winter. Her mode of transportation was an old bike laden with all the supplies she would need to live along her route. She took nothing fancy so the desire to steal her gear by others was minimized.

Sara had designed her path to take her more than 10,000 miles through the middle of the U.S. into Canada and across to the east down into New England. As she traveled, she would follow the 3 to 5 generations of Monarchs as they carried out their life cycles here before returning the last generation to Mexico.

Her roadside observations included the wide variety of blooming plants the adult Monarchs use for nectaring. However, the larval phase of the Monarchs will only feed on milkweeds of which there are many species. Unfortunately, abundant patches of milkweeds have been wiped out with increased agricultural spraying and mowing and the monoculture of our field crops.

Sara noticed areas on her travels that met all the Monarchs needs while others only partially fulfilled their needs. She encouraged the establishment of Monarch Waystations as a way to supplement natural areas along the Monarchs migration routes. To find out how easy it is to have your own Waystation Google **monarchwatch.org** and give the Monarchs a wing up.

Nearly as impressive as the journey that the butterflies take each year was how Sara accomplished a trip of over 10,000 miles. Taking her time and stopping whenever she noticed something of interest allowed her to observe other creatures and plants along with the monarchs. Noting that female Monarchs lay approximately 500 eggs each, other insects and birds benefit from some of them as food.

Sara never paid to camp and set her tent up in protected sites along her way. Her motto was to say “yes” as much as possible which garnered invitations from families to enjoy meals and a room for the night as well as getting to know people around the country. She estimates she spoke with about 9,000 people during her travels and particularly enjoyed sharing her story with school children.

We, too, loved hearing about her adventures zoomed to us from her parent’s home in Kansas City. You can read more about it on her web site **beyondabook.org**. If you missed her January 11th presentation, click onto the **gopras.org** web site to watch a recording.