

# From swans to falcons—to hummingbirds—ecologist Carrol Henderson has been ‘best friend’ to wild things great and small

## Conservation ‘legend’ guest speaker at Fair Hills Bird Festival event

Only one of these special feathered friends visits Minnesota every year. But it is among the most intriguing winged characters in the large cast of birds.

The hummingbird. With the possible exception of the bald eagle or the state bird, the loon, the ruby-throated hummingbird is one of the most observed birds—if it hovers long enough to be detected.

Amazingly, there are 377 species of hummingbirds—and they all live in the Western Hemisphere—from Alaska to the southern tip of Chile in South America. But only one has a range that includes Minnesota—the one with the ruby throat.

When Europeans arrived to the New World, they were baffled by these feathered “unidentified flying objects.”

“Pollinators of Paradise,” was the program May 20 at Fair Hills Resort on Pelican Lake, as Carrol Henderson displayed his photos and discussed the hummingbirds of the Americas.

The crowd of nearly 100 was fascinated by famous ecologist Carrol Henderson’s talk. It was one of the highlight events of the 25th annual “Festival of Birds.”

In a DNR career dating from 1974 to 2018, Henderson is arguably one of the greatest DNR conservationists of the past half-century. He helped arrange the DNR’s acquisition of 3,400 acres of wildlife land during his career.

Hummingbirds have been basically a sidelight “hobby” for Henderson—but you wouldn’t know it from the volume of photos and wealth of information he has amassed on these amazing creatures. Henderson’s incredible productivity has drawn parallels to the “Energizer Bunny” or “Busy Bee,” but maybe the hard-working hummingbird is Henderson’s real soulmate in the natural world.

### Hundreds of hummingbird species call Latin America home

A tropical bird, for the most part, Columbia alone has 166 different hummingbirds; Mexico has 48; while the U.S. has 24 hummingbird visitors. Five species of hummingbirds fly as far as Alaska.

Even the largest hummingbird is barely the size of a sparrow. The smallest, two inches, can perch on the top of a pencil, said Henderson, who is also an expert photographer—capturing hundreds of images of the fast-moving birds with his camera gear. Their wings beat at a rate of 500 to 2,000 times per second, said Henderson.

Very colorful, often with folkloric names inspired by fairies and nymphs, “it’s hard to get bored with hummingbirds,” said Henderson—which was evident from the awe-struck audience.

Because of their unusual beauty, as many as 5 million hummingbirds—of all species—were killed annually for the exclusive millineries of Paris. Those feathers went into the fashionable hats worn by European elites.

Henderson’s fascination with hummingbirds dates back 53 years, to Costa Rica, where he was doing graduate work—and met his wife. Together, and with groups, Henderson has led “hummingbird” trips to nearly every South American nation.

### A DNR career like no other

The Fair Hills program was all about hummingbirds, but Henderson’s resume is long and varied—and he may be one of the most recognized Minnesota DNR officials ever.

His book “Landscaping for Wildlife” has been a favorite for farm, woodlot, and lake lot owners for about four decades. He’s been something of a “rock star” on the conservation and wildlife speaking circuit.

Many will remember the so-called “chickadee check-off,” a legislative initiative that created a box on Minnesota tax forms—earmarked specifically for “non-game” wildlife. Henderson was a leading force behind the “non-game wildfire” check-off.

Over the past 44 years, the DNR’s non-game budget has increased from \$25,000 to \$3 million. Since 1981, the check-off has raised more than \$30 million to protect at-risk wildlife.

“Non-game” means critters that aren’t fished, trapped, or hunted—from loons to wood frogs to tortoises to pelicans. So, wild creatures great and small, and the Minnesotans that enjoy them, owe a debt of gratitude to Henderson’s work over the past half-century.

Including hummingbirds.

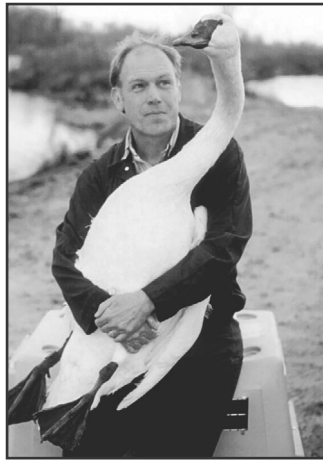
## From My VIEW POINT

by Louis Hoglund,  
 Managing Editor



“The Hummingbirds of America” program was a crowd-pleaser at Fair Hills Resort, presented by retired DNR scientist Carrol Henderson—often described as a “conservation legend” in Minnesota. He shares much of the credit for reviving wildlife species of all kinds, including trumpeter swans and Peregrine falcons.

But the May 20 program, as part of the annual lakes area “Festival of Birds,” was all about hummingbirds, a species Henderson has photographed and chronicled in his “spare time.”



Conservationist Carrol Henderson, who retired in 2018 after a remarkable career with the DNR, holding a trumpeter swan as a younger man in the 1980s.

From 1987 to 1994, Henderson oversaw the reintroduction of 217 swans in Minnesota—where the bird hardly existed any longer. Today, Minnesota’s population tops 30,000.

# Urges county officials, citizens to take proactive view of gravel mining

They say a picture is worth a thousand words.

Go on Google Earth and key the area about 5 miles south and east of Rollag. You can see the impact that large gravel mining operations can have on an area. Or...during the week, you can take a drive through the area and see it firsthand. You can smell the dust and stagnant water. You can hear the Thump-Thump of rock crushers and the Beep-Beep of heavy machinery. And you may want to check out the road wear that heavy vehicle traffic does to road surfaces.

If not properly regulated ahead of time, this is what some areas of Heart O’ Lakes country can look forward to.

Maybe check out Vergas.

When it gets busy, the local citizens can enjoy a constant stream of trucks through downtown and hear the steady thump-thump of crushers. Ask them what they think about it.

People come to this area from miles around to enjoy the peace and quiet; the easy access to the area lakes, and the scenic views. These people also bring MONEY!

If regulations aren’t put in ahead of time, these same people can also add “Thump-Thump” and “Beep- Beep” to their nature sounds—and heavy traffic can interrupt their relaxation.

Places like Pelican Rapids—the Stoney Bar area on Hwy 108 and Hwy 4 on the north side of Lake Lida can look forward to a constantly increasing flow of heavy traffic over the next 5 to 15 years.

NOTE: Highway 108 is considered a Scenic Byway—so not much can be done to improve access or visibility. Hwy 108 is also the main access to Maplewood State Park.

Otter Tail County can impose regulations to control a lot of this. The county can also impose curfews and bonding regulations to limit impacts on local areas and enforce cleanup procedures.

If this issue is not addressed ahead of time, the money from the gravel will have left—and the cleanup and repair bill will be left behind.

Gravel is a natural resource—the same as coal, oil, or iron ore. When it’s gone—it’s gone! In wooded country—so are the trees.

The Gravel Tax isn’t “just another tax”—It is a fund set aside to help pay for some of the damage left behind by “strip mining.” Properly worded, it’s an “Export Tax” on material leaving the county.

It’s time to talk to your county commissioners and see how they are addressing this issue.

It’s also time to petition your state legislators and give the commissioners support. The permits and authority start at the state capital.

It would be interesting to show the Fargo news mezdia a few gravel pits in their weekend recreation areas.

**Dave Damlo,  
 Star Lake area**

# Pelican Class of 1922 was 21 students; discovery of ‘Minnesota Woman’ recounted

## 100 years ago, May 28, 1922

### • Graduating Exercises Mark Close of School Year

The present school year will draw to a close with the usual exercises. The Baccalaureate Sermon will be preached this year by Rev. Nickerson in the Pelican Valley church on Sunday, May 28th at 8 o’clock. This church is larger and can seat a considerable number more than can the Congregational church. Miss Effie Knudson will sing a solo, and the High School Girls’ Glee Club will sing.

Rev. Stout of Fergus Falls will deliver the Commencement Address at the Graduating Exercises. These Exercises will be held at the Orpheum Theatre on Friday, June the 2nd at 8 o’clock. There is a class of 21 high school seniors who will take their examinations this week and next and expect to graduate in the Class of 1922.

The Eighth Grade Exercises will take place in the Eighth Grade room in the Grade Building on the afternoon of Friday, June 2nd. The pupils of the Graduating Class will render a short program to which parents and friends are invited. Mrs. Nysven, principal of the grades, will present the diplomas.

## 75 years ago, May 22, 1947

### • Moorhead Man Drowns When Boat Capsizes

One man was drowned, and two of his companions narrowly escaped death while fishing on Crystal Lake Saturday afternoon. The man who lost his life was Henry Olson, 36, owner of an auto repair shop in Moorhead, and his companions were Alfred Rieniets, 29, who worked for Olson, and Jesse Schuck, 24, a driver for Kost Bros., a Moorhead trucking company.

The men went fishing at about 4:30 in the afternoon, and as the lake was quite rough, they decided to pull for shore at about six o’clock. In trying to start the motor, the boat capsized, and all three were thrown into the water, which was 35 feet deep at that place.

Rieniets and Schuck had the presence of mind enough to cling to the boat and tried to hold up Olson, who seemed helpless in the water but could not retain their hold, and he finally went down. The others called for help, and James

Renner of this place, who was fishing, heard their cries and went to their assistance. His motor refused to start, so he had to use the oars to reach the men who, when rescued, had been in the water about 45 minutes and were very much exhausted. They searched for Olson, but no trace of him could be found. The two men were brought to the Pelican Valley hospital for treatment, and they were able to return home Sunday.

Olson was married and leaves a wife and three children.

When the accident was reported, the siren in the village was blown, and a crew of firemen and others went to the lake to search for Olson’s body. Sheriff Henkes and Deputy Sheriff Lee of Fergus Falls came to assist in the search Saturday and Sunday, but up to yesterday, the body had not been recovered.

## 50 years ago, May 25, 1972

### • Wallace Bank 90 Years Old

May 22 was the 90th anniversary of the founding of the local bank, but the anniversary observance will not be held until next month when the bank moves to its new location.

It was on May 22, 1882, that the Bank of Pelican Rapids opened for business in a small frame building at the same location where the new bank building is being completed. After 90 years, the bank will be returning to its original site.

The first location was only temporary, however, serving as the banking office until a new bank building was ready later the same year. This building is now used as the pool hall and Masonic Lodge. It was also in 1882 that the railroad came to Pelican Rapids.

The first name change for the bank came in 1896 when it became the J. P. Wallace Bank. Eight years later, the bank received a state charter from the Minnesota Banking Department, and it became the J. P. Wallace State Bank. Mr. J. P. Wallace served as its president from 1904 until his death in 1930.

While changes over the past years have been many, one, in particular, indicates the growth of Pelican Rapids as a thriving community: bank assets have increased from

# Looking BACK

by Paul Gubrud,  
 Columnist



\$400,000 in 1936 to more than \$8 million in 1972.

The bank will move into its new quarters next month and, at the same time, will have a new name: Pelican Valley State Bank. The 90th-anniversary observance will be tied in with an open house at the new building.

## 25 years ago, May 28, 1997

### • Bones in Highway Construction Site Were a Major Find (by Roger Pinckney)

The scenario was right out of an archeologist’s nightmare -- the road repair crew in a hurry inadvertently turned up, then disturbed, a find of the greatest importance. But it wasn’t just a bad dream. It happened three miles north of Pelican Rapids, on what is now Trunk Highway 59.

It was June 16, 1931, and the crew out of the Highway Department’s Detroit Lakes Regional Office was at work leveling what engineers had labeled “frost boil five” when the grader blade suddenly bit into soft earth. Crew member Carl Steffen, who was following the machine, thought he saw something odd. Stooping for a closer look, he was shocked to see the empty eye sockets of a human skull peering up at him.

Today, such an unintentional discovery of human remains would stop a project cold while experts were hustled in to make a thorough evaluation of the undisturbed site and lawyers set to work on a flurry of paperwork. But that was sixty-odd years ago. Steffen laid the bones out in anatomical order in the ditch, along with a conch shell pendant and an elk horn dagger found nearby. Interestingly enough, the bones lay there overnight until retrieved by the district supervisor, who eventually got them to A.E. Jenks from the University of Minnesota -- while the roadwork continued.

Sixty-six years later, those old bones found just beneath U.S. 59 remain an enigma -- a rock in the shoe of science, a drowning victim in the middle of a highway, bones of an Indian before there were Indians, bones of an ancient yet young girl -- a girl known for years as a man.

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