



# Friends of Minnesota Scientific & Natural Areas

June 3, 2021

Dear Save the Rookery and Friends,

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas (FMSNA) is a Minnesota non-profit “501(c)(3)” corporation, established to advocate and support the establishment, management, perpetuation of Minnesota’s Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs), statewide, in an undisturbed natural state.

As such, FMSNA offers its support and assistance, to the extent possible, to see the great blue heron rookery - located in Rochester Township, Olmsted County, Minnesota - protected and preserved as an SNA.

This rookery, in our opinion, clearly qualifies as a site of statewide significance in that it is a one-of-a-kind great blue heron rookery in Minnesota.

Based on communications with knowledgeable local residents, this heron colony has been in existence since the 1950’s. This is unusual. Unlike other heron rookeries, this rookery occurs on a slope in an upland hardwood forest - as opposed to the lake regions of the state, on major rivers and or in beaver ponds. Experts in ornithology are of the opinion that rookeries, in the latter situations, have abundant food resources that allow for the attainment of great numbers of nesting birds. This rookery, though smaller, has remained stable, with birds foraging along small streams, meadows and ephemeral forest pools for decades.

Unlike most other rookeries in Minnesota, this rookery’s forest canopy has remained intact. Most other rookeries in Minnesota generally decline or no longer exist, because the tree canopy dies out due to the acidity from the deposition of the birds’ fecal material that accumulates over the years - unless subject to regular flooding events that flush the fecal acidity out. It appears this rookery, that occurs on a steep slope, has continued to maintain a forest canopy for decades due to the flushing of the acidic fecal material downslope by rainfall events.

Such an example of a stable rookery, still in existence for this many decades - relying almost entirely on a foraging scenario comprised of small streams, meadows, and ephemeral pools - offers significant opportunities for scientific research, education and interpretation for the citizens of not only the Rochester area, but all Minnesotans.

Therefore, it is our opinion the rookery site warrants protection as an SNA.

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas stands ready to support your efforts to see the site protected as an SNA.

Very truly yours,

*Thomas E. Casey*

Thomas E. Casey, Board Chair  
Friends of MN Scientific and Natural Areas

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