



# Spring Review 2024

Anton Treuer Headlines Spring Gala  
Fungi Forays & Avian Explorations  
Krueger's Christmas Tree Farm



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# Anton Treuer Headlines 2024 Minnesota Made Gala

The Minnesota Land Trust is excited and honored to welcome Dr. Anton Treuer as our featured speaker at this year's Minnesota Made Gala. An accomplished academic, trainer, storyteller and speaker, Dr. Treuer has appeared across the United States, Canada and abroad addressing topics including "Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid to Ask" (also the title of one of his books), "Cultural Competency, Racial Equity, Strategies for Addressing the 'Achievement' Gap," and "Tribal Sovereignty, History, Language, and Culture." He obtained his B.A. from Princeton University and M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Treuer is Professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji State University; the author of numerous books; editor of the Oshkaabewis Native Journal (the only academic journal of the Ojibwe language); and the owner of a beautiful, Land Trust-protected property located near the Chippewa National Forest.

The Treuer family protected their 160-acre property in Beltrami County in 1998 with a conservation easement. The protected property provides important habitat for various ecologically and culturally significant wildlife species such as the grey wolf, black bear, river otter, bald eagle and porcupine. Over a half mile of Mississippi River



Dr. Anton Treuer,  
Minnesota  
Made Gala  
2024 featured  
speaker, author,  
and professor

shoreline is also protected under the easement.

Land and nature stories live within each one of us. Dr. Treuer will invite us to consider our sometimes-complex connections to land and history while sharing his personal story at the 2024 Minnesota Made Gala. What legacy are we leaving for future generations? And will it be enough?

The 13th annual Minnesota Made Gala is returning to Nicollet Island Pavilion. Based on attendee feedback last year, we're starting an hour earlier so that guests have more time to socialize during the cocktail reception. The seated dinner, presentation, and live auction return, as does Twin Cities meteorologist Sven Sundgaard as event emcee and Land Trust CEO Kris Larson. 🌲

  
**MINNESOTA  
MADE GALA**

**NICOLLET ISLAND  
PAVILION—MINNEAPOLIS  
WED. MAY 15, 2024  
5 TO 9 PM**

Reception | Dinner | Program | Auction

Don't miss featured speaker Dr. Anton Treuer,  
meteorologist and event emcee Sven Sundgaard, and  
Minnesota Land Trust CEO Kris Larson

**GET YOUR TICKETS NOW**  
[mnland.org/mnmade](https://mnland.org/mnmade)

Early Bird Ticket: \$150  
After April 15: \$175  
Tables of 10 available at a discounted rate





# The Power of Planned Giving

## Transformational Gift for Conservation and Stewardship

In 2009, David and Leslie Gardner protected 31 acres of beautiful forestland along the shores of Gem Lake in what is today a heavily developed portion of Ramsey County. But their generosity didn't stop there. They also planned ahead and generously made a transformational gift of their entire property to the Minnesota Land Trust through a retained life estate.

How did this work? After donating the retained life estate, the Gardners were able to live on their property, much like they always had, for the remainder of David's lifetime. However, upon his passing, the property became fully owned by the Minnesota Land Trust to be used in furthering our conservation mission.

**“These types of legacy gifts are truly transformational. We can't thank the Gardners enough for their vision and generosity.”**

—KRIS LARSON

The Land Trust recently sold this lovingly tended home and property to new stewards. The proceeds from the sale will support the Land Trust's critical conservation and stewardship work for years to come. “These types of legacy gifts are truly transformational,” said Land Trust CEO Kris Larson. “We can't thank the Gardners enough for their vision and generosity—their love for wild places will be carried on for generations.”



This gift will allow the Land Trust to continue to fulfill our promise of permanent land protection through annual visits to protected properties and partnering with landowners to promote natural, healthy and diverse habitat.

Leaving a gift of assets or property through a will is an impactful way to support clean water and wildlife protection and engage the next generations of conservationists across Minnesota. 🌲

**It's never too early to think about the kind of legacy you want to leave. To find out if including the Land Trust in your will or trust is right for you, or to advise us that you've named us in your will, please contact Beth Westerback, Associate Director of Development at [bwesterback@mnland.org](mailto:bwesterback@mnland.org).**

# Fungi Forays & Avian Explorations

BIPOC Affinity Group Events Promote Learning, Connection, Healing



Participants admire cedar trees along the riverbank.

Coats are zipped, lip balm applied, mushroom identification guides are pulled out. It's a bright, crisp November day at Jay Cooke State Park where people have gathered for a BIPOC affinity (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) mushroom foraging event, a collaboration between BIPOC Outdoors Twin Ports and the Minnesota Land Trust. The event was part of the Land Trust's Meet Minnesota pilot program.

Guided by BIPOC Outdoors Twin Ports founder Sam Armacost and mushroom expert Ameera Khan, the group set out to enjoy the natural landscape, de-stress, and identify the frost-hardy fungi of the Northland.

Participants—who brought with them a wide range of foraging experience—hiked along the St. Louis River and were pleasantly surprised by the array of mushrooms they were still able to find on snags, fallen logs, or protected under a blanket of leaves, despite a recent frost. Some fan-favorite finds included turkey tails, orange jelly fungi and resinous polypores.

## Health, Healing Found in Affinity Spaces

Nature-based BIPOC affinity events like this one are not just fun and educational, but necessary for individual

and community health and wellbeing. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), People of Color experience higher levels of stress from constant exposure to racism and discrimination.

“Research has shown that spending time in nature can dramatically decrease physiological stress responses and improve mental health so it is extremely valuable to cultivate spaces where BIPOC folks know that they can explore that relationship and resource—in community,” Armacost said.

**“In a racial affinity group we strive to hold space for the history of exclusion, survival, and removal that many of our ancestors faced...while also redefining what it means to find refuge in nature and our sense of belonging within it again.”**

—SAM ARMACOST

“In a racial affinity group, we strive to hold space for the history of exclusion, survival, and removal that many of our ancestors faced in this country, recognize generational trauma and its many repercussions, while also redefining what it means to find refuge in nature and our sense of belonging within it again.”

## Belonging in Nature

Normalizing diversity in nature, addressing biases and expanding perceptions about what “type” of person spends time there is also critical for the physical safety of BIPOC outdoor recreationalists who along with womxn

and LGBTQIA2S+ folx experience a disproportionate level of hostility and violence directed at them when spending time in nature.

“It would be normal for anyone to feel anxious about being in unfamiliar environments, elements or activities,” said Armacost, “but when that feeling is paired with a sense that we simply don’t belong there or we’ve been actively warned against it by well-meaning family or friends, that is going to be a dynamic that will take time and intention to deconstruct.”

## Connecting Groups to Nature Experiences

The Minnesota Land Trust is continuing to expand its work connecting groups to nature-based experiences. “The role the Land Trust plays here is to use our connections to build relationships between land managers, including private landowners, and groups that are underrepresented in outdoor recreation,” said Hansi Johnson, the Minnesota Land Trust’s conservation engagement director. “The Land Trust strives to uplift BIPOC leaders and groups by providing logistical support or financial resources to help mitigate experiences of fear, stress, or worry when planning and leading these events.”

The fall mushroom foraging event was one of two outdoor excursions in collaboration with BIPOC Outdoors Twin Ports. The first event was a birding walk led by photographer, author, filmmaker and expert birder Dudley Edmondson in October at Maji ya Chai Land Sanctuary near Two Harbors, Minnesota.

## Building Relationships to Land, Each Other

Back at Jay Cooke, group members reconvened at the visitor’s center to share reflections and a satisfying meal of



Participants discover resinous polypore on a fallen log.

(not foraged) mushroom fried rice generously prepared by seasoned guide and fellow event participant Amir Najam.

“Our ancestors maintained an intimate and reciprocal relationship with Nature for thousands of years,” said Armacost. “And yet, it only takes one or two generations for that sense of interdependence to change. Despite all our modern advancements, we’ve found ourselves disconnected as ever; if there was ever a time to invest in community-building, promote diverse perspectives in the outdoors, and strengthen our relationship to land, water and each other in the process—I think the time is now!” 🌲



Rebeka Ndosi, Maji ya Chai Land Sanctuary’s “Keeper of the Vision”



Participants practice spotting and identifying birds overhead.

PHOTOS: SAM ARMACOST

# Krueger's Christmas Tree Farm Gives the Gift of Permanent Habitat Protection



MINNESOTA LAND TRUST

A portion of the permanently protected land at Krueger's Christmas Tree Farm.

**K**rueger's Christmas Tree Farm has been a community and landscape mainstay in Lake Elmo, Minnesota, since 1954. At the end of 2023, the Kruegers protected 36 acres of their property and generously donated the full value of the conservation easement to the Minnesota Land Trust, ensuring that the site would remain a green space forever.

## Building on Nearby Protected Lands

"Besides being a beautiful property, Krueger's Christmas Tree Farm is an immense community asset and resource," said Wayne Ostlie, director of land protection at the Minnesota Land Trust.

"The property includes ecologically significant natural forest, wetland and shoreland habitat, and connects to several other properties protected by the Minnesota Land Trust and other groups," said Ostlie. The tree farm adds to approximately 3,386 acres of nearby conservation lands, including Lake Elmo Park Reserve and 22 conservation easements held by the Minnesota Land Trust.

According to Ostlie, "Protecting a parcel of land here or there is nice, and that's how we approached conservation for a long time. But it's not enough today. Land corridors like the one in Lake Elmo are essential as remaining natural lands face increased pressure from both climate change and development."

**“It’s hard to describe the sense of peace we feel knowing we’ve preserved our family’s legacy and protected the land forever.”**

—NEIL KRUEGER



The Krueger family from left to right: Deb, Neil, Andrea and John

KRUEGER'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

John Krueger, third generation owner of Krueger’s Christmas Tree Farm, agrees: “Over the generations our family has been here, we’ve witnessed a lot of changes. It’s exciting to see the energy and life brought by all the new families and businesses moving into the community. We’re also glad we can help balance some of that growth with open space and habitat preservation.”

### St. Croix Valley Family Legacy

The Krueger family’s connection to the St. Croix Valley began in the 1890s when Fred and Augustana Krueger arrived from Indiana in ox-drawn wagons and established a successful dairy farm on 30 acres of land in Lake Elmo. Sixty years later, Al Krueger, Fred and Augustana’s son, and his wife Elaine were facing a problem as years of drought and over-farming had eroded the soil at their farm in neighboring Stillwater.

Al, Elaine, and their five kids planted trees in the affected areas to protect the soil. In the process of adding pine and fir trees to the landscape, a lifelong conservation ethos was seeded within several of their children and eventually a tree business also grew.

### Conservation-Minded, Sustainably Farmed

In 1993, Krueger’s Christmas Tree Farm opened on the Lake Elmo farm property. The balsams, Frasers, Scotch and Norway pines (among others) that the family grows take around 10 years until they’re ready to harvest as Christmas trees, providing environmental benefits to wildlife and the soil during their growing period. The family’s conservation values are also evident in the sustainable agricultural practices they deploy including mulching, mowing and the use of cover crops to avoid herbicides.

“We’ve always prioritized environmentally conscious practices as land stewards and business owners,” said



KRUEGER'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

John Krueger. The permanent conservation easement is an extension of that ethic and a critical step in preserving the landscape as metro area expansion pushes further into the St. Croix Valley. Recent zoning changes increased the risk that if sold the land could face subdivision and development, as has happened to neighboring farms.

Neil Krueger, one of the five siblings who planted those first trees in Stillwater, and wife Deb are happy that won’t be the fate for the Lake Elmo tree farm land. Said Krueger, “It’s hard to describe the sense of peace we feel knowing we’ve preserved our family’s legacy and protected the land forever.” 🌲



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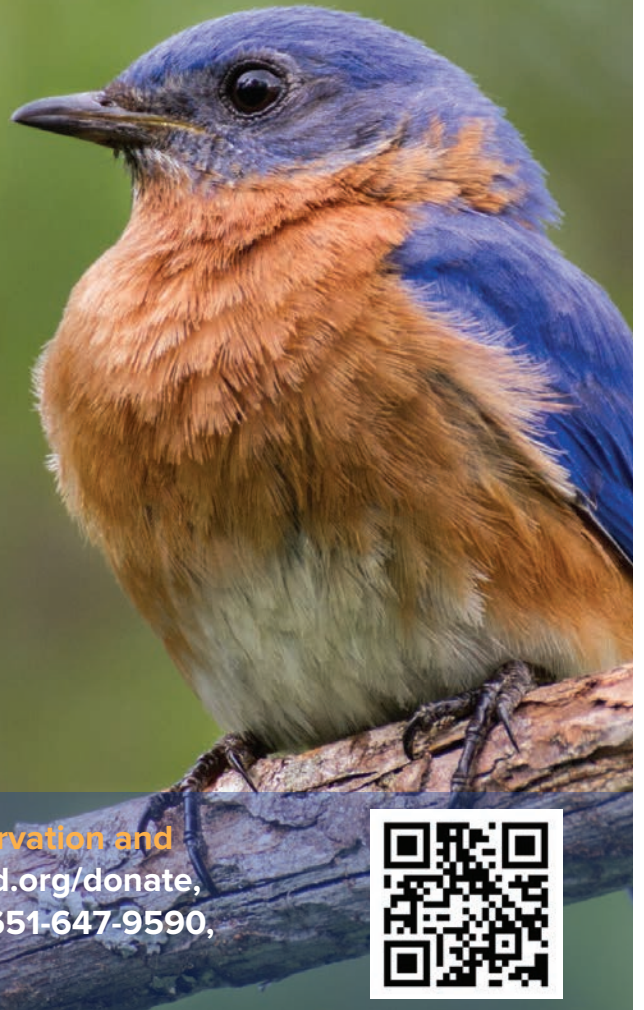
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