

Flying off the Endangered Species List

BY ERIKA SOUKUP

THE SMALLEST OF AMERICAN TERNS, with tapered and pointed wings, currently escaping the cold in its migration to Central and South America, is the least tern. After 34 years on the endangered species list, the tiny and scrappy Midwestern bird is finally able to fly away from that distinction.

The least tern was hunted to near extinction for its feathers in the 19th century. Construction of dams around waterside beaches (necessary for the bird habitats) caused necessary concern over their survival. "Once hurt by the damming of major rivers like the Missouri and before that diminished by hunting for feathers for hats, the interior least tern population has increased tenfold since 1985, to more than 18,000. The number of nests has jumped from 48 to 480, said the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service" says USA Today.

There is always a concern when a species is taken off the endangered species list that the situation could revert to what it was. Thankfully, there are many protections set up for the least tern. According to the USFWS, "The Interior least tern will continue to be protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which protects the bird and its parts, nests, and eggs from "take" and trade."

As well as having laws set in place to protect these birds, dozens of conservation groups, businesses, tribes, agencies, and states have worked together to recover these birds. According to Wildlife.org, these watchful groups will continue to monitor the status, as the USFWS will develop and implement a post-delisting monitoring plan for the tern and track its status for at least five years after delisting to ensure that the population remains stable.

Watching the growth of the population goes to show how people banding together can change the environment and an entire species. USA Today stated: "Greenwald, of the Center for Biological Diversity, said the least tern is a good example of how the endangered species law can work even as scientists warn of 1 million species going extinct in coming decades. "We should be proud of ourselves for caring for it and protecting it," Greenwald said. "That shows that if we put our mind to it, we can stop the extinction crisis."

Concordia Chicago Cutbacks

BY ERIKA SOUKUP

DUE TO BUDGET CONCERNS heightened and accelerated by the pandemic, Concordia University Chicago is letting go of 51 faculty and staff members and closing 15 academic programs. Concordia Chicago is joining universities such as The University of Vermont, Marquette University, the University of Evansville, and College of St. Rose in New York as they all have announced plans for drastic cuts. The decision

was finalized December 11th, and the programs slated to be cut include graphic arts, theater, women's and gender studies, emergency medical services, English as a Second Language, and several programs from the College of Business. Students currently enrolled in these programs may still finish their degree; however, they will possibly have to involve adjunct faculty or nearby universities. As far as new students go, they will not be able to enroll in the programs that were cut.

"During an online forum with students Monday night, Concordia-Chicago President Russell Dawn said that they follow a two-year "prioritization" process that evaluated academic programs and the allocation of resources. "It was a long and challenging process," Dawn said during the event. "It involved people from a variety of areas across the institution. It involved a great deal of data. We actually had consultants come in and help us put together the data we would need in order to do a really thorough job of it." These quotes from Dawn come courtesy of a reporter for the Chicago Tribune who was present at the forum.

The process did begin earlier than the pandemic; however, that did affect decision-making which forced Concordia Chicago to act quickly. According to the Chicago Tribune, Dawn stated that "Without making any changes, school leaders predicted a financial crisis in two to three years." Reportedly, some students felt blindsided by the sudden change as they weren't made aware of the process and plans to cut these programs. They were only notified after the decision was made via a university email. Students and faculty alike were shaken and dissatisfied with the actions of Concordia Chicago.

"The faculty senate raised three objections to the prioritization process, in a letter to university leadership that was obtained by the Tribune. They expressed concerns about 'the suspension of the institution's responsibility to uphold tenure, the termination of faculty during the height of a global pandemic, and the intermixing of finances with religious-based decisions of who to let go'" (Forbes). It appears the university will provide severance packages to staff and faculty who are departing, but those who are being let go and the terms of the severance packages have not been made public.

Storm Filomena Hits Spain - The Largest Snowfall in 50 Years Shuts Down Madrid

BY JAID PERRY

IN MINNESOTA, THIS TIME of the year always brings snow, some years in small quantities and other years in much larger quantities. In Madrid, Spain, that is not the case. There may be a snowfall or two, but with an average temperature of around 43°F in the winter season, it is not a common occurrence for the country to experience significant snowfall. When snow does fall in Madrid, it is usually just a light dusting. However, this year, Madrid had its biggest snowfall in over 50 years.

Storm Filomena started to drop snow in Madrid on January 8th and continued for many days until the city and the surrounding areas were covered in over a foot and a half of frozen precipitation. This unusual amount of snowfall caused rivers to burst their banks, which added insult to injury. The city of Madrid was on its heels as any city would be after a 20 inch snowfall. However, to make matters worse, Madrid was ill-prepared for this weather emergency. The functions of the capital city and daily life of its residents came to a halt. After the damage was assessed, government officials scrambled to ensure the safety of Madrid's residents.

Government officials deployed soldiers to clear off some of the major roads in the city (about 700 of them), but with 12,500 miles of roads closed due to snowfall, there was still a lot of work to be done. Several metric tons of salt were also used as an effort to melt the snow off city roads and sidewalks. Rescue services throughout the city helped some 2,500 people; however, due to Snowstorm Filomena, five people were found dead. In addition to these deaths, concerns for a spike in COVID numbers due to this storm are being talked about throughout Spain. Many people are out and about on foot to get necessities as well as to enjoy the unusual scenery. A large snowball fight even broke out in Callao Square. Additionally, around 300,000 doses of the vaccine were in transport when the snowstorm struck which caused a panic; however, the shipment safely arrived.

An encounter with a snowstorm of this magnitude is something that the people of Madrid will not forget. While the midwest states are used to snow days, the people of Madrid will be enjoying their time off because this great storm is not something that happens often for them.

Dining Hall Update!

WITH A NEW MONTH comes new food! Make sure to check out some of the dining hall's delicious offers this month. Here are some exciting highlights:

February 3rd: National Carrot Cake Day

February 4th: National Homemade Soup Day (Chicken Noodle)

February 10th: WICKED WING NIGHT (my favorite night pt. 1)

February 12th: Valentine's Day Lunch! (Chicken Mole Bowl)

February 16th: Mardi Gras! Jambalaya for lunch and blackened steak for dinner

February 17th: Ash Wednesday - Cod Florentine for lunch

February 23rd: National Banana Bread Day

February 24th: WICKED WING NIGHT (my favorite night pt. 2)

February 26th: The dining hall closes at 7pm for Spring Break! :)