express

Choreographer Jennifer Monson

connects with
nature by
performing along
the migratory
path of birds.

BY MATT PEIKEN

Jennifer Monson's dances hang on a wing and prayer. "They've always been about what's wild and uncontrolled and mysterious and uncontainable," Monson says.

Her troupe, aptly named Bird Brain, has spent the past seven weeks performing along a northern migratory path of ducks and geese, starting in Texas and shadowing the Mississippi River. Bird Brain is in the Twin Cities this weekend, performing at a former ammunition depot tonight, the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden on Saturday and outside the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum on Sunday. Bird Brain then heads north to Duluth on its way to Canada's Whiteshell Provincial Park.

Monson, who lives outside New York City, debuted Bird Brain four years ago with the "Pigeon Project," whose rooftop performances in Brooklyn were drawn from noticing swallows and hummingbirds thriving in an urban environment near the Hudson River. In the years since, she

Admission: Free
 Call: 612-375-7622



FROM PAGE 1E

Flights of fancy

(continued)

Bird Brain's current tour has taken other unintended turns, such as starting in Corpus Christi rather than Houston -"They have red-headed ducks that winter there, so it worked out," Monson says — dictated in large part by arts institutions ready to receive them. Walker Art Center is-sponsoring Bird Brain's weekend in the Twin Cities.

"Like the ducks on their path, I based my tour on the routes where we were likely to get resources," Monson says.

Like many who perform out-

doors, Monson roots herself in the abstraction that comes with improvisation, but there's a cumulative quality to her work and larger purpose fueling Bird Brain's flight.

The Sierra Club has helped Monson identify open spaces and urban centers vital to endangered species. Monson spends several days in every community in which she performs, meeting people and soaking up the environments that will become her stages.

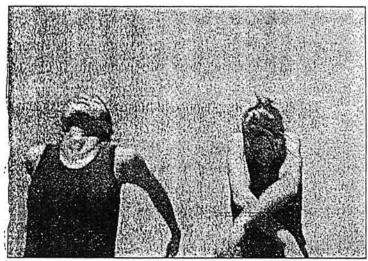
guides for elementary school- press.com.

children, and many classes respond by creating "flocking dances" for Bird Brain performances.

"It's taken me a really long time to understand dancing outdoors and I'm still not sure I really do," she says. "I'm taking in so much information, and every single ounce of energy disperses everywhere, so it's difficult to contain.

But there's something about allowing myself to become completely ambient and blend into the landscape, and I consider myself successful if people. begin thinking of their own con-. nections to nature."

Matt Peiken can be reached at She has created educational 651-228-5440 or mpeiken@pioneer



ANJA HITZENBERGER

Says choreographer Jennifer Monson about her work: "I consider myself successful if people begin thinking of their own connections to nature.".