

Chequamegon Chirps



December 19, 2022 Volume 40 Number 12

The December meeting/Christmas party will be Monday 19th 7:00 P.M. at the Medford Library. There may be a thing or two of business, but if so, it should be minor. More emphasis will be on a silent auction, trivia contest and seasonal treats. Members are encouraged to bring something chewable and officers will provide liquid refreshments. The Wisconsin Birds Field Checklist will be available for anyone to list all birds identified within Wisconsin during 2022. If you are not at the meeting, you could send your information to a club contact listed on page four. Silent auction items should be along bird and nature lines. Sales income will be used for potential club projects.

Speaking of dollars, a new year brings the need to renew memberships. Those are \$18 for an individual, couple, or family. It is a case of the more the merrier, at the same price. Send payment to Treasurer Betty Danen at 663 North 2nd street Medford, WI 54451.

I'm putting this issue together on Tuesday the 12 and plan to have it in the mail tomorrow. Predicted weather starting tomorrow could close things down and postponed the Owen count until the 19th or 20th. If weather conditions should make travel iffy on Monday the 19th, you will be contacted if the meeting is cancelled.

November meeting summary

At least 16 members participated in our last meeting either in person or via zoom. We will continue to have this option available thanks to the Stalheims. The meeting ID is 816 9573 6767. In new business, the members voted to suspend support for the Taylor County Bird City designation due to increased fees and because club members are spread across at least six counties. We learned about a Haiku Box which records and monitors bird songs and provides reports via the internet. Cost is \$249 plus a \$59 annual fee. Check haikubox.com/faq for more details. Roxane sold calendars highlighting local birds as a fundraiser for the Owen Library. Many of the beautiful pictures were taken at the Owen Watershed. Betty Danen arranged for a film that featured woodpeckers in The Hole Story. In January, Scott will have a presentation about bird brains. What's Around, in addition to

common feeder birds, listed snow buntings, rough-legged hawk, Red-tailed hawk, harrier, Cooper's hawk, grouse, tufted titmouse, turkey, bald eagle, barred owl, brown creeper, white-throated sparrow, tundra swan and shrike.

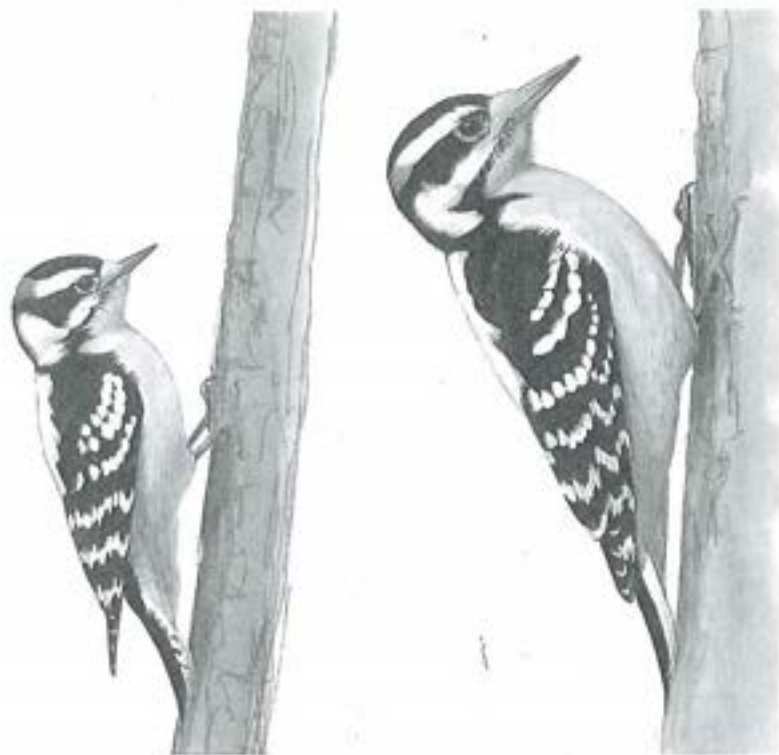
Did You Know?

There are seven different bird species listed in the song The Twelve Days of Christmas. One partridge, two turtle doves, three French hens, four colly birds (a onetime name for blackbirds), six geese a-laying and seven swans a-swimming. There, now you can sleep more restfully tonight.

Audubon Christmas Counts

The Chequamegon Bird Club may be unique in the number of Christmas counts members organize and participate in. This year there will be six counts again since Gayle Davis agreed to resurrect the Owen Count after it had been dormant for several years. "The tradition of counting birds at Christmas time started in 1900, 123 years ago. Before that, it was more common for hunters to go on shooting sprees to see how many birds they could bag in a day with no limits on anything. Fortunately, the National Audubon Society started the non-shooting version of "bagging" birds which continues to grow every year. Data, which is 100% volunteer-generated, has become a crucial part of the U.S. Government's monitoring database critical to understanding the health of bird populations. This work is vital in monitoring the status and health of resident and migratory birds across the Western Hemisphere." This quote was from the Country Today written by Anna Marie Hansen and Tom Nicholls.

Now, more than 2,000 counts take place from the Arctic Circle to the southern tip of South America by 70,000 volunteer bird counters. All this data is available through Audubon's website at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc Every chickadee, crow, robin or the most exotic bird is listed in that data. That's pretty neat. I don't know if it is feasible, but for this numbers geek, I think it would be interesting to know the totals these six counts have contributed to that mountain of information over the years they have been in action. Just last year 54 field counters (They weren't all different counters as many participated in more than one count) spent 218 hours IDing 14,530 birds in the Willard, Spencer, Medford, Gilman and Clam Lake counts. Each circle is 15 miles in diameter and all non-domestic birds are recorded during a 24 hour period. It is a great way to spend a memorable day. If you haven't yet participated, you are missing a unique opportunity.



Downy Woodpecker (left) is notably smaller than Hairy Woodpecker, and its bill is shorter. Downy also has small dark spots on its outer tail feathers, which Hairy lacks. In this column, David Sibley points out other differences to look for.

Pattern recognition

A close look at two common woodpeckers reveals subtle, yet variable, differences

Art and text by David Allen Sibley

ONE OF THE top bird-identification challenges in North America is the separation of Downy Woodpecker and Hairy Woodpecker. These two species are common almost everywhere, and they are regular visitors to backyard bird feeders, where everyone can see them.

Their overall appearance is amazingly similar, and the only practical way to identify them is to focus on overall size and bill size, both larger in Hairy Woodpecker. If you are lucky enough to see them together, it's easy to tell the two species apart because Hairy is unquestionably bigger and more powerful looking. Separately, though, it can be quite hard to determine whether a bird is large or small. The species also have a difference in tail pattern (Downy has small dark spots on its outer tail feathers), but this is difficult to see and not completely reliable.

For years, I have watched and searched, hoping to find some easily seen and objective detail that would allow anyone seeing one of these species for the first time to know which one it was. I have failed.

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I focused on the head pattern, as that's where most species' distinguishing features are found, and I discovered a lot of things that tend to be different, but they're all subtle and too variable to be the key that unlocks the identification.

That said, here are some of the details that differ. The black cheek patch is more parallel-sided all the way to the nape in Hairy, while in Downy, the width of the patch is distinctly uneven. The pale eyebrow (which includes the red patch on males) wraps around the back of the head a little lower in Hairy, higher in Downy. The dark malar stripe extends a little farther back on the side of the neck on Hairy, and then a black spur extends forward onto the side of the breast, while Downy has a black stripe that doesn't reach quite as far back onto the neck and no spur onto the breast.

The net result of all this is an overall impression of a more evenly striped head on Hairy Woodpecker, with a long straight black eye stripe bordered above and below by similar white stripes. On Downy, the impression is more of a black cheek patch and some other black and white patches, including a larger white oval on the back of the head.

This more striped look of Hairy Woodpecker can be somewhat helpful at a glance, but it's a subjective impression, and the details are small and hard to keep track of on a moving bird. So, I'm still using bill length and overall size to identify these woodpeckers, but the quest will continue. 🐦

editor

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Club contacts

Website: Chequamegonbirdclub.org

Information: Info@chequamegonbirdclub.org

Newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org

Birdsightings: connie1@charter.net

December and January Events:

Full moon--December 8: Cold Moon

Winter Solstice: December 22

Audubon Christmas Counts:

Completed: Spencer and Willard

Willard 12-20, Medford 12-31

Gilman January 1, 2023

