



Chequamegon Chirps

Newsletter of the Chequamegon Bird Club

Medford, Wisconsin

February 2010

Volume 29 Number 2

NEXT MEETING:

Date: **Monday, February 15, 2010**

Time: **7:00 p.m.**

Location: **Medford Public Library**
400 N Main St
Medford

Program: **Did You See an Eyring? How about Wingbars? – Bird I.D. For and With Everyone**
Led by Cathy Mauer

Refreshments: ??????

Please bring your own mug for beverages.



Reminders

- Membership dues: \$18 for single or household membership at one address. Dues can be paid at the next meeting or mailed to the CBC Treasurer:

Cam Scott
N3566 Grover Drive
Withee WI 54498

Make check payable to:

Chequamegon Bird Club

We'd like to update our records, so please include name (or names - if household membership), address, phone number and e-mail address if you have one. Also indicate if you would like the *Chirps* emailed to you or if you prefer a paper copy – or both.

- Great Backyard Bird Count: **February 12-15**
 - www.birdsource.org/gbbc
 - or call Cathy (748-3160)
 - see January *Chirps* for more info
- Bring aluminum for recycling.
- Ideas for programs and articles for the *Chirps* are always appreciated. Contact Cathy.

February Program – Bird I.D.

If you had never seen one before, how would you know that cute little bird with a black cap is a Chickadee? How do you recognize a Downy Woodpecker? Or was it a Hairy?



Using photos and input from everyone, we will look at different bird characteristics and learn what features separate one species from another. A bit of practice and we'll all be ready for the spring migration – or at least better at identifying some of those birds.

Bring your favorite field guides. We will also have some extras so you can try out different ones.

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Black-backed Woodpecker

A recent excursion to Vilas County in search of Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadees, and Black-backed Woodpeckers came up short on the first two species but yielded a nice sighting of a female Black-backed Woodpecker. The solid black back is distinctive among the smaller woodpeckers in the eastern part of the United States. The much larger Pileated is the only other Wisconsin woodpecker with a solid black back.

The Black-backed is one of two species of three-toed woodpeckers in Wisconsin. The other is the even less common American Three-toed Woodpecker, which has a barred back. Both occupy similar habitats (boreal and montane coniferous forests), especially areas with trees that have died from insect damage, fires, or other causes, and both have similar feeding habits, tending to flake bark off trees in search of insects rather than pounding holes. Wood-boring beetles are their major food. The Black-backed that we saw was working on a tamarack tree in an area where many naked tamaracks could be seen. Bark chips were strewn all over the snow under the trees.

The male has a yellow crown, as does the American Three-toed (and an occasional Hairy). Except for the crown, the female is similar.

Burned over areas are a favorite habitat, and they often show up within a few months of a burn. They may then stay in the area for a few years before

Teddy Roosevelt and Birding

Ron Shiffler was kind enough to give me copies of some material that he found in *The Elson Readers – Book VII*. These readers were popular in the early 1900s; they are available as reprints today and at least part of the books are on line. One section of this volume deals with birds, as part of a natural history segment. Among the poems and essays is “A Famous Bird Club” by Ernest Harold Baynes, who also wrote *Wild Bird Guests*, a book that advocated forming bird clubs and included information on bird feeding and building nest boxes. The “famous bird club” in Baynes essay is the Bird Club of Long Island, which was started by Theodore Roosevelt, following a lecture by Baynes, who traveled the country encouraging the formation of bird clubs.

Baynes quotes Roosevelt: “Entirely apart from their usefulness we should understand that the mere presence of birds, the chance of observing their habits



Louis Agassiz Fuertes

moving on when sufficient food is no longer available for rearing young. Fire suppression and logging practices that remove dead or dying trees limit available habitat and probably reduce the population of these woodpeckers.

and listening to their singing ought to give us the pleasure that we get from looking at beautiful pictures or listening to good music.”

According to Baynes, Roosevelt “spoke of the domestic cat as an inveterate enemy of those birds which it is most desirable to save, and expressed regret that there was not a license for cats. . . . He told his neighbors how birds might be attracted to the home grounds by means of baths and drinking places in summer, food in winter, and bird houses and shelves during the nesting season.”

As he does in his book, Baynes goes on in this essay to encourage pupils to organize bird clubs or to make existing clubs successful.

Bird poems from the Elson Reader and excerpts from Baynes’ book will be included in future *Chirps*.



Bird Reports (December 2009 – January 2010)

Checklist observers: *Gayle Davis , Connie Decker , Ken Luepke , Gordy Ruesch , Cathy Mauer , Claire Romanak , Larry Ruhde , and Cam Scott.*

Total Number of Species Observed this month is: 49

- Canada Goose, American Black Duck (Davis/Mauer), Mallard, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser
- Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey
- Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel, Merlin (Decker/Luepke), Black-legged Kittiwake ******(Romanak)
- Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove
- Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl
- Red-headed Woodpecker (Decker/Luepke), Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker
- Northern Shrike
- Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven
- Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse (Decker/Luepke), Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet (Davis/Mauer)
- American Robin, Varied Thrush (Decker/Luepke), European Starling, Cedar Waxwing
- American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Snow Bunting, Northern Cardinal
- Purple Finch, House Finch, Pine Siskin (Davis/Mauer/Ruesch/Romanak), American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak (Decker/Luepke), House Sparrow

(Note: Only observers for rare or unusual sightings are included in the species list.

Bird Surveys – Reports and Advanced Notices

- We have enclosed a summary of the Christmas Bird Counts for which the Bird Club provides sponsorship.
- The **Annual Midwest Crane Count** will be conducted on **Saturday, April 17** from 5:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. The Crane Count dates back to 1976. It is one of the largest citizen-based inventories in the world. One of the primary purposes of the Crane Count is to allow the International Crane Foundation to monitor the abundance and distribution of cranes in the Upper Midwest. In the 1930s, an estimated 25 pairs of Sandhill Cranes resided in Wisconsin. The year 2000 Count tallied more than 13,000. Each year, the Count involves over 3,000 volunteer participants that spread over 100 counties in five states. Find out more about Crane Count and plan on participating. If you have been a counter for years, you may also want to explore the Crane Count website: cranecount@savingcranes.org or contact the International Crane Foundation at (608) 356-9462 x 142
- The **Ottawa National Forest Breeding Bird Census** will be held **June 4-6**. More details later or contact Steve Babler, Wildlife Biologist, Ottawa National Forest, 906-265-5998 x25
- This year's **Nicolet National Forest Bird Survey** will be held **June 11-13**, at a new headquarters, Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River. Check the NNF Bird Survey website (www.uwgb.edu/birds/nnf) for details (not yet posted as of 2/9/2010). Everyone with an interest in birds and a desire for adventure is invited to participate in the Bird Survey. Volunteers work in small groups led by at least one expert in bird song identification. Computerized results are used to guide forest management policies and have been the subject of numerous scientific research articles and master's theses. Results also provide visitors with information about habitat preferences and "hot-spots" for northern Wisconsin's bird species. For more information, or to be included on the annual mailing list, contact: Robert Howe hower@uwgb.edu

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Club Officers 2009-2010

President – Claire Romanak

Vice-president – Connie Decker

Secretary – Hildegard Kuse

Treasurer – Cam Scott

Other Club Contacts

Web site: www.chequamegonbirdclub.org

Email: info@chequamegonbirdclub.org

Newsletter Email: newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org

Bird sightings: Connie Decker

February – March Outdoors

- Full (Snow) moon – February 28
- White-tailed deer shedding antlers
- Great-horned owls begin nesting
- Bobcats, mink, snowshoe hares begin mating
- Canada Geese begin arriving
- Maple sap starts flowing
- Sandhill Cranes begin arriving
- Tom Turkeys start gobbling
- Gray squirrel young are born
- American Robins, Eastern Bluebirds, and Red-winged Blackbirds begin arriving.
- Chipmunks emerge from hibernation
- Red fox pups are born



Birder's Bookshelf

The Birdwatching Answer Book
by Laura Erickson

This handy little guide, written in a question/answer format, covers feeding; birdwatching, including equipment; problems people have with birds; protection of birds; and the natural history of birds, including behavior, vocalizations, migration, reproduction, and activities. Erickson writes in a casual easy-to-read fashion, using a lot of anecdotes as she answers the many questions that are included. One thing I don't like is the physical format of the book. It is about 4.5" x 6.5" x 1" with stiff covers and is hard to open and handle. Since it is not a field guide, I'm not sure why the publisher chose such an odd format. The binding may soften with use, which might improve the handling. Right now, I hope they come out with a different edition in a better format.

Published by Storey Publishing.