

Chequamegon Chirps



Medford, Wisconsin

February 2015

Volume 34 Number 2

FEBRUARY MEETING

Monday, February 16

7 p.m.

Medford Public Library

Program: *Winter Bird Comparisons*

House Finch vs Purple Finch; Pine Siskin vs Redpoll; Horned Lark vs Longspur vs Snow Bunting; Pine Grosbeak vs White-winged Crossbill vs Red Crossbill. We'll take a look at and discuss similarities and differences among some of our winter birds. Bring your field guides and a list of your "problem" winter birds.

Reminders:

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 13-16

Count all birds you see for one or all days, for 15 minutes or for a full day.

Count in your backyard, at work, at a park, or any other area you like.

For more information and to find links for submitting observations go to:

<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

Dues

If you haven't paid your 2015 dues, you may bring payment to the meeting or mail to Cam Scott, N3566 Grover Dr, Withee WI 54498.

Dues are \$18 per mailing address.

Bird of the Month - Pine Siskin

Willa Pledger

Our bird feeder in the Chequamegon National Forest attracts a number of species year-round. This winter we have been seeing numerous pine siskins.

Siskins respond to what seeds are available. They are better suited to clinging to branch tops than to hopping on the ground.

Siskins flash yellow wing markings as they flutter or explode into flight. You may hear their insistent wheezy twitters before you see them.

The pine siskin is about five inches long. They live in coniferous and mixed woodlands, alder thickets, and brushy pastures. Siskins lay three or four pale green eggs lightly speckled with dark brown and black.

The pine siskin is another of the northern finches whose winter visits to the United States occur mainly in years when the seed crop has failed in the boreal

forests. In some years large flocks may appear as far south as Florida. Their principal foods are the seeds of hemlocks, cedars, birches, and alders. Like most northern finches, they are also fond of salt, and can be found along highways salted to melt snow.



Cathy Mauer photo

Chequamegon Bird Club Checklist Committee Report for 2014

This is the year-end report for the 11th year of the checklist project. During the past year (2014), 13 club members submitted at least one monthly checklist. The number of checklists for the year was 73, with a high of 8 in April, and again in June. The species total for 2014 was 240, 6 species below the previous low number of 246 in 2005, and 16 species below the ten year average. The highest species total was 274 in 2010, and the 11 year average is 254. The scarcity of reports from either of the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River seems to be a major reason for the low number.

There were 5 species listed as rare (average 8 or fewer published sightings per year) by WSO (Wisconsin Society for Ornithology). They were Ross's Goose (Decker, Luepke), Yellow-crowned Night Heron (Decker, Luepke), Piping Plover (Decker), American Avocet (Decker, Luepke) and Lesser Black-backed Gull (Luepke).

There was only 1 species listed as casual (averaging 1 record every 3-5 years) by WSO. It was a Western Kingbird in Marathon Co. (1 Spring and 1 Fall record) (Luepke).

There were also 2 species not on the WSO checklist. They are a Whooping Crane in Marathon, Juneau, and Taylor Counties (Decker, Luepke, Mauer, Ruesch, and J. Scott), and a White-winged Dove in Marathon Co. (Decker, Luepke).

Highlights by family were : 27 species of waterfowl were reported including Greater White-fronted Goose, Ross's Goose, Cackling Goose, Trumpeter Swan, and Greater Scaup. The Galliformes included Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater Prairie Chicken, and Northern Bobwhite. A Red-necked Grebe was reported and the 7 herons, including Least Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and Yellow-Crowned Night-Heron. Diurnal Raptors included Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Golden Eagle, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon. Among the 24 species of shorebirds were Black-bellied Plover, American Golden Plover, Piping Plover, American Avocet, Upland Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, and Long-billed Dowitcher. Of the 8 gulls and terns, Lesser-Black-backed Gull and Caspian Tern were noteworthy. There were 6 species of owls including Eastern Screech, Snowy, Long-eared, and Northern Saw-whet. Flycatchers had 11 species with Olive-sided, Yellow-bellied, Acadian,

and Western Kingbird included. There were 3 doves including White-winged Dove (Wisconsin's 19th record). The warbler group had 26 species including Black-throated Blue. Sparrows had 18 species with Henslow's, Lincoln's and Harris's. All of the blackbirds were found including Western Meadowlark and Orchard Oriole.

Other reports of interest were Tufted Titmouse, Bohemian Waxwing, and Varied Thrush.

Of course, with the low species total, there were many missed species in 2014. Some of the more regular ones were: Mute Swan, Snowy Egret, Common Gallinule, Willet, Sanderling, Red-necked Phalarope, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Gray Jay, Prothonotary Warbler, Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak.

This year there were 5 new species added to the all-time list. They were: Piping Plover, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Lesser Black-backed Gull, White-winged Dove, and Western Kingbird. This brings the total for the years 2004 – 2014 to 320 species!

Again, to repeat the requirements as in previous years, the birds must be seen in Wisconsin and must have been identified by a club member. Second-hand reports are not acceptable. The time frame for reports is from one meeting to the next. Checklists are available at all meetings from Connie Decker, or can be printed off from our bird club website www.chequamegonbirdclub.org.

Thanks to all who participated in 2014 : Ellen Becker, Gayle Davis, Connie Decker, Hildegard and Loretta Kuse, Ken Luepke, Cathy Mauer, Joan and Joe Rickert, Claire Romanak, Gordy Ruesch, Cam Scott and Joe Scott.

A special note to members and non-members alike:

The WSO is embarking this year (2015) on the 2nd Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas. This project is going to run for the next 5 years. Everyone can help to document the breeding birds of our state. Every species is included and every record is important.

Information required: date, location, and type of breeding activity observed. Some examples would be: nest with eggs, carrying food for nestlings, nest building, or distraction displays, etc.

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Much more information will soon be available from WSO on their website. If you choose to do serious atlas work, or just casual observations, it can prove to be both challenging and very rewarding.

[Breeding Bird Atlas county coordinators for this area include: Chippewa County - Janine Polk; Clark County - Scott Wester; Rusk County - Aaron Stutz;

Taylor County - Rory Cameron and Cathy Mauer. I don't know Price County.]

The Atlas website is: <http://wsobirds.org/atlas>

Here's hoping everyone has a great birding year in 2015 !

The checklist committee : Ken Luepke, Cam Scott, and Connie Decker

Bird Reports: December 16, 2014 - January 19, 2015

Participants this month were *Gayle Davis, Connie Decker, Ken Luepke, Joan Rickert, Cam Scott, and Joe Scott.*

Total Number of Species Observed this month is: 52

- Canada Goose, Wood Duck (C. Cott/J. Scott), Mallard, Long-tailed Duck (Decker/Luepke), Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser
- Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey
- Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk (Luepke/J. Scott/C. Scott), Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel
- Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove
- Eastern Screech Owl (Decker), Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Northern Hawk-Owl ** (Davis/Decker/Luepke), Barred Owl
- Red-headed Woodpecker (Luepke), Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker
- Northern Shrike, Gray Jay (Decker/Luepke), Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark
- Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet
- American Robin (Decker/Luepke), European Starling
- Cedar Waxwing
- American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow (Decker/Luepke), Dark-eyed Junco, Snow Bunting
- Northern Cardinal
- Purple Finch, House Finch, Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow

Please note that some families may be grouped together.

Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative Annual Meeting - March 19-21 ***"Making Our Private Lands Count for Birds"***

Thursday evening - informal Birds & Beers get-together; Friday - full-day of presentations and discussions; Saturday morning - see practices in real life from landowners. Choose from wetland, grassland, or forest land field trips. Explore opportunities, challenges, and successes of bird conservation on private lands!

Held in Chippewa Falls. Register by March 13. \$45 for Friday & Saturday, includes Friday lunch.

For more information, agenda, and registration form, go to <http://www.wisconsinbirds.org/annualmeeting-2015.htm>

Microbeads - a danger to birds, other wildlife, and maybe humans

As in many other states, Wisconsin's legislature has a bill before it to ban the use of plastic microbeads in health care products such as skin cleaners and toothpaste. Many manufacturers are already phasing out the beads. Meanwhile, please don't purchase products containing microbeads. The tiny beads do not dissolve but rather wash into our lakes and streams where fish and birds may mistake them for food.

Chequamegon Chirps
N4416 Crane Dr
Medford WI 54451

Officers

President — Claire Romanak
Vice-President — Connie Decker
Secretary — Joe Scott
Treasurer — Cam Scott

Other Club Contacts

Website: chequamegonbirdclub.org
Information: info@chequamegonbirdclub.org
Newsletter: newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org
(Cathy Mauer, editor)
Bird Sightings: Connie Decker

February - March Outdoors

- Full Moon - March 5
- Watch for seeds lying on top of the snow - both yellow and white birch and alder may be especially noticeable. In addition to seeds, you are likely to find three lobed scales, that look a bit like tiny bird feet. The seeds and scales are often knocked from the tree as birds search for food.
- Great Horned Owls begin nesting.
- Bobcat, mink, and snowshoe hares begin mating.
- Early bird migrants begin arriving - Belted Kingfisher, Song Sparrows, Wood Duck, American Woodcock, Red-winged Blackbirds



Bird of the Month Series

The article on page one about Pine Siskins is the first of what we hope will be a monthly feature. Many thanks to Willa Pledger for the idea and for the article. If you would like to contribute an article or an idea for the *Chirps*, please contact one of the club officers.

Willa is still collecting commemorative stamps, which are sold by a Florida group and the proceeds go to a bird habitat organization there. Please cut them from the envelope with a 1/4" of envelope around the stamp. You may bring them to any Bird Club meeting.

We are still looking for a person or several people for writing, laying out, printing, and/or mailing the *Chirps*. Contact one of the club officers if you would like to help.