



Chequamegon Chirps

Newsletter of the Chequamegon Bird Club

Medford, Wisconsin

January 2010

Volume 29 Number 1

NEXT MEETING:

Date: Monday, January 18, 2010

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Location: Medford Public Library
400 N Main St
Medford

Program: Monitoring Bird Populations in Wisconsin – Nightjars, Breeding Bird Surveys, Christmas Bird Counts, Great Backyard Bird Count
Gayle Davis, Connie Decker, Ken Luepke

Refreshments: Connie Decker

Please bring your own mug for beverages.



Great Backyard Bird Count

The annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will be held **February 12-14**. Everyone is invited to take part, and participating is easy. You don't even have to leave your home, but you may count in your yard, your neighborhood, a local park, or anywhere else you would like.

- 1) Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count.
- 2) Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time.
- 3) When you're finished, enter your results through the GBBC webpage (if you don't have access to the internet, contact Cathy Mauer for reporting forms).

For more information go to: www.birdsource.org/gbbc or contact Cathy (748-3160).



\$\$\$ Membership Dues \$\$\$

Membership dues are payable now. Dues remain at \$18 for single or household membership at one address and 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.

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Birder's Bookshelf – *Bringing Nature Home*

You have a plant with leaves full of holes or showing other insect damage – great! Your tree looks perfect with not a sign of insects – darn! Birds looking for food have a different perspective than many landowners.

Regular readers of the *Chirps* are aware that the “Birder's Bookshelf” and other media reviews usually take up a paragraph on the back page. However, *Bringing Nature Home* struck me as so important to our thinking about the role of plants and our selection of plants for our yards and gardens that a paragraph seemed too limited.

Author Douglas W. Tallamy, chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, promotes the use of native plants in landscaping. That is not all that unusual these days, but Tallamy advocates their use for different reasons than most advocates of native plants give. While recognizing the importance of biodiversity and the invasive nature of many non-native plants, he stresses the importance of native plants as food for native insects, which in turn become food for birds and other wildlife. Native insects evolved along with native plants and often will not feed on non-native (alien) plants. Using non-

native plants greatly decreases the number of insects available for birds and other insectivores.

A comparison of Lepidoptera (butterfly and moth) larvae produced on native vs. alien woody plants in Pennsylvania indicated that native plants supported 35 times more caterpillar biomass. Caterpillars are the preferred source of protein for many bird nestlings. Tallamy cites two studies that give an idea of the extent of the problem. In one study insectivorous birds were 32 percent more abundant on plots that had native plants vs. alien plants; in another study Chestnut-Collared Longspurs had slower-growing, smaller nestlings that were 17 percent more likely to die when reared in areas dominated by non-native wheatgrass vs. those reared in areas dominated by native plants.

The native landscape of over 95 percent of our country has been disturbed in some way. Using native plants in our home landscaping and encouraging their use in public landscaping can help offset some of the losses and help our struggling bird populations, and help humankind survive, as well..

Northern Sightings

We may think it is cold this winter, but some of our bird friends must not think it is too bad. In addition to several reports of Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks in this area, which have yet to be confirmed, there was a confirmed (see article to right) sighting in Vernon County. Bluebirds were reported in the Stevens Point area, and a record number of American Robins were tallied on the Medford Christmas Bird Count on January 2.

Although there are still doubters of climate change, and some northerly movement of birds is probably due to increased feeding and perhaps other habitat changes, reports keep coming in of species that are wintering further north than older records indicate. According to an Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count report, nearly 60% of the 305 species found in North America in winter are on the move, shifting their ranges northward by an average of 35 miles.

Did I Really See That?

While it is quite doubtful that I'll see a pink flamingo in my back yard, sometimes it seems almost any bird can show up in any place at any time of the year. But there are likely birds, unlikely birds, and the “could I really have seen that?” birds. There are also birds that are common in the state in one season but not in another. Because records of sightings are kept for historical and scientific purposes, it is important that sighting reports be as accurate as possible.

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology has two types of Rare Bird Report forms. What information is needed depends on how unlikely the bird is to occur. This is indicated on the WSO checklist. The short form is quite simple, asking for date, location, field marks, and vocalization, if any. The long form is



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Bird Reports (November - December 2009)

Checklist observers: *Rhoda Barber, Connie Decker, Hildegard and Loretta Kuse, Ken Luepke, Cathy Mauer, Gordy Ruesch, Doug and Willa Pledger, and Claire Romanak*

(Note: Only observers for rare or unusual sightings are included below.)

Total Number of Species Observed this month is: 70

- Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Tundra Swan, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck (Decker/Luepke), Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser
- Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey
- Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant (Decker/Luepke)
- Great Blue Heron
- Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk (Luepke/Romanak), Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel
- Sandhill Crane, Whooping Crane (Decker/Luepke)
- Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull
- Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove
- Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl
- Red-headed Woodpecker (Romanak), Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker
- Northern Shrike, Gray Jay (Luepke/Mauer/Ruesch), Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark
- Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet
- American Robin, European Starling
- Bohemian Waxwing (Decker/Luepke), Cedar Waxwing
- American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow (Decker/Luepke (late)), White-throated Sparrow (Kuse), Dark-eyed Junco, Snow Bunting, Northern Cardinal
- Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird
- Purple Finch, House Finch, Common Redpoll (Mauer/Ruesch), Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow

Did I Really See That? (cont.)

used for birds that have occurred very rarely in Wisconsin. It asks for very detailed information about the bird and the circumstances of the sighting. Even if you don't use the form, it provides good guidelines for documenting your observations of birds.

What kind of information do you need? In addition to the date, location, field marks, vocalization mentioned in the short form, the long form asks for distance to bird, how long you observed it, weather and light, type of optics, detailed description of the bird in your own words, behavior, habitat, what birds you decided it wasn't, what field guides you used, do you have experience with this species, did you make notes right away or from memory, did you get a photograph?

One hint for observing birds is to look at and note as many details as possible before looking at a field guide. We've all had the bird we're trying to identify

fly away while we're paging through the field guide and before we noticed if it had wing bars or not.

Here's a good observation example from the report of the Rose-Breasted Grosbeak sighting from Vernon County:

"I noticed right away the strong black/white contrast in the flight feathers as it flew to a tree and then saw the rosy breast. Got great looks out my car window from 15' and then went back home to fetch my point-and-shoot camera and binos. I took about 50 pictures, most of them really poor, but a few capture the bird well enough to identify. Bird looked healthy overall - no vocalization."

Practice, especially noting field marks, on common birds that you see regularly. It's fun and will help your powers of observation. As for me, if a flamingo shows up, I'll be ready!

Editor, Chequamegon Chirps
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Medford WI 54451-9376



«FIRST_NAME» «LAST_NAME»
«STREET_ADDRESS»
«CITY» «STATE» «ZIP_CODE»

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

January – February Outdoors

- Full moon – January 30
- Red fox, wolves, beaver, lynx, fox and gray squirrels begin mating
- Great-horned owls begin courtship activities
- Time to make American Kestrel, Wood Duck and Bluebird boxes
- Coyotes begin mating
- Horned Larks begin migrating north
- Northern Cardinals begin singing spring songs
- Great Backyard Bird Count – February 12-15

Greater Sage Grouse



Most of you probably remember Tracy Swedlund's excellent presentation about Sage Grouse. The Sage Grouse are now in the news due to protection measures that may limit windpower development in their range area, particularly in Wyoming. The Greater Sage Grouse may be listed under the Endangered Species Act and, whether listed or not, is likely to come under some type of increased protection. Fortunately, the Obama administration appears to take science seriously and is likely to properly consider the evidence in this situation rather than only considering oil, gas, and other power interests as was often done in the past. The case points out the complexity of environmental regulation and "green" issues as we need to increase the use of alternative energies and at the same time protect wildlife habitats.