



Chequamegon Chirps

Newsletter of the Chequamegon Bird Club

Medford, Wisconsin

January 2014

Volume 33 Number 1

NEXT MEETING:

Date: Monday, January 20, 2014

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: Medford Public Library

Program: **This Winter's Birds**
*The Christmas Bird Counts and
Other Winter Bird Observations*

Owl Viewing Ethics

From the Winter 2013 issue of *The Passenger Pigeon* compiled by Randy Hoffman:

- Sleeping owls are happy; if you notice open eyes on a species such as Long-eared, Saw-whet, Boreal, or Screech Owl, back away.
- If you notice these same species becoming slimmed down, looking skinny or branch-like, they are trying to hide - back off.
- Be a steward of a roost. Take care in whom you let know about the roost. Supply data to eBird after the roost is abandoned.
- Do your best to educate others about the stress that can affect owls.
- If you cause an owl to fly, do not pursue it.
- Do not bait owls with rodents.
- No flash photography.
- Stay on trails and road shoulders and ditches. Do not block traffic.
- No sound devices.
- Do not report owl sightings on the internet or bird hotlines.
- Speak in soft tones or whispers.

January Program: This Winter's Birds

We are extending a special invitation to non-members who took part in the Christmas Bird Counts, either in the field or as feeder watchers, to join us for this meeting and would like to thank them for their help.

The Christmas Bird Counts are over, and there were some surprising results. One that stands out is the lack of winter finches such as siskins, redpolls, and crossbills, thanks, evidently, to good seed crops in Canada. We'll take a look at this phenomenon and other count results as well as looking at some other winter observations.

Although few were seen on our counts, this is another irruption year for Snowy Owls, including in this part of the state. While the reasons for these irruptions are not certain, a very large lemming and mouse population in their breeding grounds this past summer is thought to have resulted in high survival rates of young Snowy Owls and this forces the owls south in search of food in the winter.

Plan on sharing your favorite birding stories of 2013.

- Do not linger in front of an owl for more than a couple of minutes.
- Keep a minimum distance. [100' is one guideline.] It's best to observe with a scope.

[Most of these suggestions are equally applicable to viewing most other birds, as well. – CM]

Great Backyard Bird Count – February 14-17

The Christmas Bird Counts are behind us, but there are still opportunities to be involved in “citizen science” bird studies. The 17th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) starts Friday, February 14, and ends Monday, February 17. Count birds at your feeders or other favorite area for fifteen minutes, a whole day, or all four days. Last year the GBBC integrated its data collection with eBird, and you can now enter your data on the eBird site. If you have not participated before, you will need to set up an account, which is free.

Data from the GBBC and other counts helps to answer questions such as:

- How does weather influence bird populations?
- Where are winter finches and other “irruptive” species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- How does the timing of birds’ migrations compare in different years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

The GBBC is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon. Other opportunities for contributing data are Project FeederWatch, which uses a different counting protocol and runs November – April (\$15 fee includes materials) and eBird.

Birds in the News from Around the World

- In South Africa, tigerfish leap into the air to catch barn swallows. This has now been caught in a video.
- The Black Robin, a New Zealand bird once reduced to only one breeding pair no thanks to cats and rats, is now up to 280 birds. But recovery efforts were not without problems. The birds sometimes lay “rim eggs”, i.e. they lay eggs on the outer edge of the nest where they do not get incubated. In an effort to increase the number of eggs hatched, these eggs were moved to the middle of the nest. While this did increase the number of offspring, it also preserved the rim-egg laying trait, which is a dominant trait carried by the male though it is not expressed since he doesn’t lay eggs. Fortunately, some of

GBBC Photo Contest Information

(info from the GBBC website)

Photos must be taken during the GBBC and entered by March 1, preferably in .jpg format with as high resolution as possible.

Photos are evaluated based on both technical skill and artistic ability. Winning photos are those that show the photographer’s skill in composing an image and using a camera. Some of the factors the judges consider when choosing photos include use of light, depth of field, sharpness of focus, color balance, composition, framing, camera angle, originality, choice of subject matter, and the amount of patience (or luck!) required to get a shot.

Images will be judged in six categories:

- Overall
- Bird in its habitat
- Behavior
- Group shot (2 or more birds)
- Composition
- People enjoying birds

When taking photos, use your imagination! Bird watchers could be photographed inside or outside, in the city, suburbs, or country. They might be at a nature center or retirement home, in unusual places, or photographed from unusual vantage points. Young children, seniors, or scout groups could be photographed marking tally sheets, talking to each other, looking up birds in a field guide, entering data on-line, filling feeders, making bird treats, or just having fun!

his female offspring carry the recessive normal egg-laying trait, and the population has rebounded, with the rim-laying trait gradually being reduced through natural selection to only 9 percent of the females. This does point out the possibility of unintended consequences of well-meaning and even successful conservation efforts.

- New research shows that at least one Red-necked Phalarope flew from its breeding grounds in Scotland across the Atlantic and Caribbean to winter along the Pacific coast of South America and returned, a distance of about 16,000 miles round trip. They were previously thought to winter in the Arabian Sea. Red-necked Phalaropes are 7” long.

Bird Reports (November 19 – December 16, 2013)

Checklist observers: *Connie Decker, Hildegard and Loretta Kuse, Ken Luepke, Joan Rickert, Claire Romanak, Joe Scott*



Total Number of Species Observed this month is: 47

(Only names of observers for rare or unusual sightings are included in the list below.)

- Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan (Luepke), Tundra Swan, American Wigeon, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan (Luepke), Mallard
- Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Northern Bobwhite
- Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel
- American Coot (J. Scott)
- Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove
- Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl (Decker/Luepke), Barred Owl
- Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker (Rickert), Pileated Woodpecker
- Northern Shrike
- Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark
- Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper (J. Scott), Golden-crowned Kinglet (J. Scott)
- American Robin (Romanak/J. Scott)
- European Starling
- Cedar Waxwing
- American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow (Romanak), Dark-eyed Junco, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting
- Northern Cardinal
- Purple Finch, House Finch, Pine Siskin (Romanak), American Goldfinch
- House Sparrow

Reminder – Annual Dues

Annual dues are payable in January. Dues help pay for programs and activities, projects such as International Migratory Bird Day, the annual picnic and banquet, and the *Chirps*.

\$18.00 per mailing address

Member(s) Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

E-mail Address _____

Telephone _____

Do you prefer to get the Chirps by Mail _____ or E-mail _____ ?

Suggestions for activities or programs _____

Activities or programs that you can help with _____

You can send this form and payment to:

Chequamegon Bird Club, c/o Cam Scott, N3566 Grover Dr, Withee, WI 54498 or bring it to the next meeting.



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

Club Officers

President – Claire Romanak
Vice-president – Connie Decker
Secretary – Gayle Davis
Treasurer – Cam Scott

Other Club Contacts

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 (Cathy Mauer, editor)
Bird sightings: Connie Decker



Birder’s Apps

January - February Outdoors

- January 16 and February 14 – Full Moon
- Chickadees begin singing spring courtship song
- Many mammals begin mating: red fox, wolves, beaver, lynx, gray squirrels, coyotes
- Great Horned Owls begin courtship activities
- Time to erect and clean out nesting boxes: American Kestrels, Eastern Bluebirds, Wood Ducks
- White-tailed deer shed antlers
- Northern Cardinals begin singing spring songs
- Horned Larks begin migrating north
- Watch for snow fleas, especially in footprints in the snow, on warm days

Merlin Bird ID App

from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Did you just see a bird you don’t know? This new app, which is designed with beginner and intermediate birders in mind, might be able to help you identify it. The app asks a few simple questions: when and where you see the bird and the color, size, and what it is doing. Then, based on eBird reports and user input to the Merlin development site, it presents a list complete with photos of possible birds. Initially, the app includes 285 species but more will be added, along with additional features.

The app is free at the iTunes store. Right now it is only available for devices running iOS7. An Android version is expected this spring and a web version is also being developed. For more information, go to <http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org>