

Chequamegon Chirps



July 19, 2021 Volume 40 Number 7

Golden Feather Game Farm is located 1 ½ miles west of the stoplight on Highways 13 and 98 in Spencer. The address is W266 Hwy 98. It is the first driveway west of the cemetery on the same side of the road. Members are welcome to arrive by 5:00 for some early birding in a nearby pine and tamarack area. A farm tour will start at 6:00 to be followed by a brief meeting.

The July meeting will be another outdoor affair as we gradually shift away from zoom meetings to a post-pandemic pattern. This will be an outdoor session that will be held rain or shine as there will be cover if we need it. Please bring your own chairs for seating. We will meet at the Golden Feather Game Farm which has been licensed since 1978. Clifford Johnson, a former club member, established this facility to produce endangered birds and animals, some of whom are extinct in the wild. Of the more than 40 different species, whose origins are from Africa and Asia as well as North America, I'll bet there are some you have never seen. These animals go to zoos and preserves around the United States. None are sold for hunting purposes. This is definitely a "Don't miss it place." If you aren't able to attend—as I can't—let's get together for a guided tour in the near future.

New Members

We are pleased to welcome four new members to our club who have joined due to efforts of the May birding challenge. Welcome to Elsie Hochstedler of Gilman, Jake Anderson—Rib Lake, Phyliss Ludvigsen of Sheldon and Emmee Halopka of Medford.

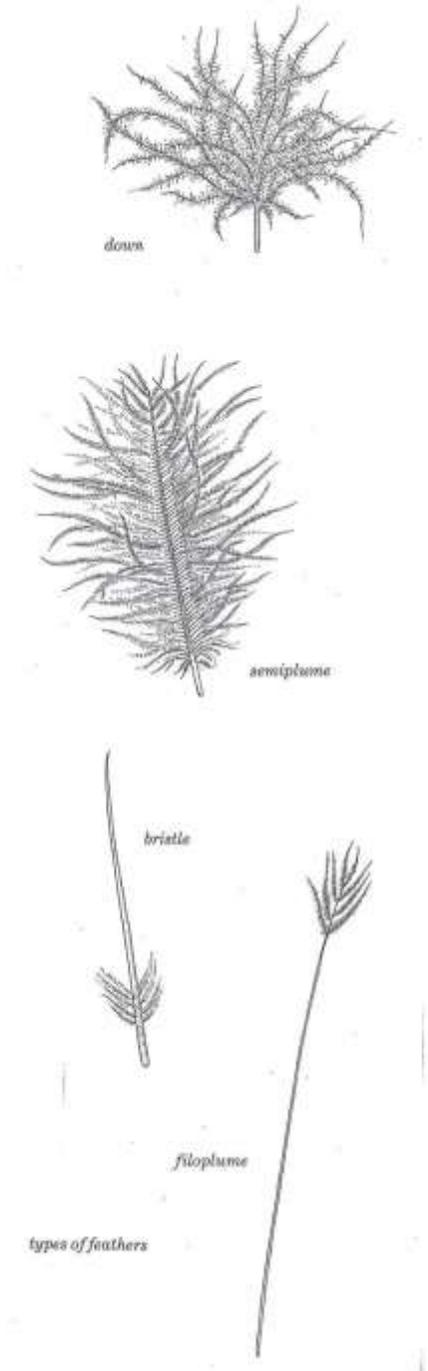
To Feed or Not to Feed?

This can be a reasonable question during the summer due to abundant food supplies. An added wrinkle this year of some kind of virus that is active in more eastern states and some cases have been reported in Wisconsin. Starlings, robins and blue jays seem particularly susceptible with other species impacted also. Infected birds have crusted eyes, impaired balance and lose the ability to fly. Contact at feeders is believed to be a prime spreader of the virus. I haven't heard if there are any cases being treated by REGI, the bird rehab center near Antigo. Bottom line is if you find any birds exhibiting these conditions in your yard, you should quit using your feeders and disinfect them. If practical, collect any victims so they can be properly studied.

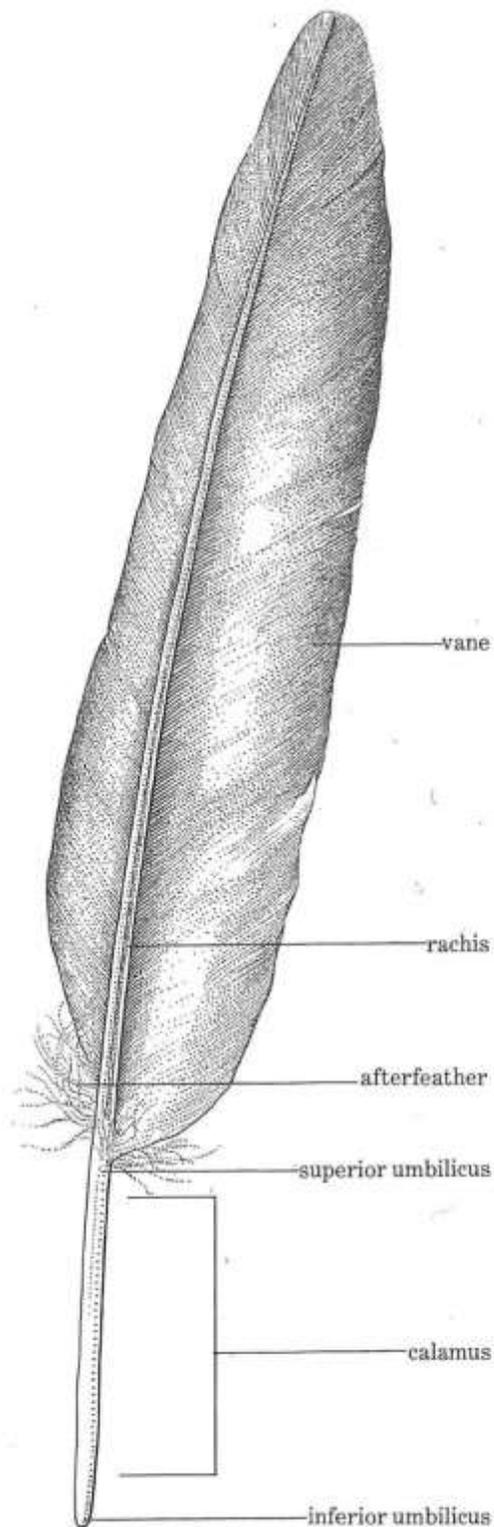
I'm guilty of being a continuing feeder for the time being. I'll soon be gone for a couple weeks so that will leave the feeders empty for ten days or so. Then I'll decide if feeding will continue or wait until fall. For selfish reasons, I feed during the summer because I enjoy the color and activity at a sunflower tube with a suet cage nearby. These are located within five feet of where I'm sitting as I type so I get great views of who's eating and what's happening. Oddly enough, the suet gets most of the activity. I'm feeding suet blocks that were on sale at Fleet Farm. Ingredients are listed as a woodpecker blend that has rendered beef suet, cracked corn, millet, pecans, and processed grain by-products for ingredients. Hairy, downy, and red-bellied woodpeckers are bringing their newly fledged young to the free food. White-breasted nuthatches and chickadees are also among the expected visitors. During the writing of the last few paragraphs, house sparrows and one red-winged blackbird have visited. Even more interesting and welcome were a half dozen different Baltimore orioles and many rose-breasted grosbeaks. Are they storing energy before heading south? Do they prefer easy food? Am I causing possible harm to them for my pleasure? I hope not.

FEATHERS (continued from June)

Last month's email Chirps didn't go out for some unknown reason. That's why you're getting a double dose today. Who knows, some of you may even be tickled by the subject. Feathers are amazingly complex and are only on birds. These are made up of keratin which is structurally similar to hair and wool. Keratin also makes up the scales on their feet, claws and the horny sheath of bills. "Feathers serve mainly as an insulator in retaining body heat, to assist in flying, in protective coloring, and in a bird's behavior. The total feathering is generally waterproof in most birds and protects their



tender skin against injuries.” One count found 25,000 feathers on a swan and only 940 on a ruby-throated humming bird. In most feather counts, passerine birds generally had from 1,500 to 3,000 contour feathers. These main feathers have webs that are formed by toothpicklike branches called barbs. There are about 600 pairs on a primary wing feather of a rock dove. Each side of a barb has several hundred barbules that overlap and hook with adjoining barbs. The barbules have tiny hooks that interlock adjacent barbs. This creates a limited, though sliding arrangement that makes each feather flat and flexible, yet stiff enough to be almost impervious to air and water. The barbs can be pulled apart and put back together just by running them through your fingers. By preening and pulling a feather through its bill, a bird repairs or smooths a disrupted or disarranged feathers. “Juvenile plumage grows rapidly as most of the plumage is grown before the young bird leaves the nest and is fully developed in three weeks.”



the parts of a contour feather

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July and August Events

Full Moons July 24 and August 22

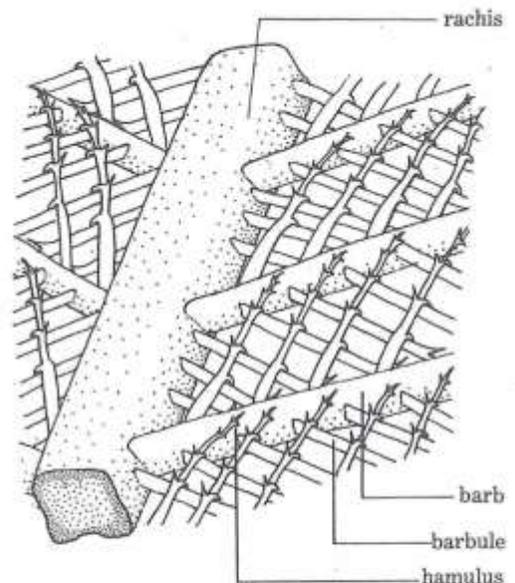
Prime berry picking time.

Will there be any fruit to pick this year?

Be on the lookout for meteor showers.

Bird numbers are at their highest—

And least conspicuous.



FEATHER

The main shaft of a feather is the rachis, from which slender, toothpicklike barbs grow. A pigeon's primary or flight feather may have 600 pairs of barbs. From each side of the barbs grow barbules, several hundred from each barb. The barbules have rolled edges and tiny hooks, or hamuli, which interlock each barb with an adjacent barb, forming a web.