



Chequamegon Chirps

Newsletter of the Chequamegon Bird Club

Medford, Wisconsin

March 2014

Volume 33 Number 3

NEXT MEETING:

Date: **Monday, March 17, 2014**

Time: **7 p.m.**

Location: **Medford Public Library**

Program: **Studying Birds, Here & There**
*Ashly Steinke,
County Conservationist, Taylor County*

Bird Club Booklet & Membership Renewals

A membership booklet is being planned for publication after the April meeting. It will include a list of members as well as the club by-laws and other information. As currently planned, the membership list will include name, address, phone number, and email. The booklet will only be distributed to club members and the member information will not be put on our website, but if you do not want your address, phone, or email included, please let Cam Scott know. She can be reached at 715-785-7614.

Speaking of the membership list, we have not received membership renewals from a number of members. If our records show you have not yet paid, you will find a hummingbird sticker near your name and address. Please let Cam know if this is in error. If you plan on renewing your membership but have not yet paid, please bring your payment to the March meeting or send to: Chequamegon Bird Club, c/o Cam Scott, N3566 Grover Dr, Withee, WI 54498. Dues are \$18 per mailing address. The April *Chirps* will be the last issue for anyone who has not paid.

March Program:

Studying Birds, Here & There

We are happy to be able to offer the program originally planned for February.

Before becoming the head of the Taylor County Land Conservation Department, Ashly Steinke participated in bird studies in a number of locations throughout the U.S. He studied Merriam's Wild Turkeys in South Dakota and grassland birds, including Prairie Chickens, in Wisconsin. He was also the Special Projects Director for the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association. He will discuss several of these studies and projects at our February meeting.

As the County Conservationist, Steinke is encouraging local farmers and other landowners to use good conservation practices that will provide habitat for grassland and other birds.

Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin Field Trips

The schedule of field trips sponsored by the Natural Resources Foundation has recently been published. Among the 150 trips being offered this year, almost 70 have birds as a major focus and 9 are "Birding Blitz" trips. Many of the trips have a fee of only \$12 and many others are in the \$20 - \$27 range. Birding Blitz trips have a higher fee that includes a \$75 donation to support bird conservation efforts in Wisconsin and Costa Rica, winter home to many of "our" birds. Participants in the Blitz trips are part of a Great Wisconsin Birdathon "team for a day".

Trips are led by biologists and naturalists, many from the DNR, including Andy Paulios, Ryan Brady, Mike

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March is National Women's Month - Women Ornithologists

In addition to Fran Hamerstrom, the noted Wisconsin Prairie Chicken and raptor researcher, several other women were prominent in American ornithology.

Graceanna Lewis (1821-1912) was a teacher of botany and chemistry in the 1840s and 1850s. She was an active abolitionist and helped escaping slaves as a participant in the Underground Railroad. After meeting John Cassin, the well-known ornithologist, in 1862, she began an advanced study of ornithology. She went on to give private lectures about ornithology while also expanding her interest in other natural history subjects. Lewis published her *The Natural History of Birds* in 1868. She was also a scientific illustrator and was commissioned to produce fifty watercolor paintings of tree leaves for the World Columbian Exposition in 1893.

Florence Merriam Bailey (1863-1948) was the first woman associate member of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), the first woman elected as a Fellow of the AOU, and the first woman recipient of the AOU's William Brewster Memorial Award. (Her brother, Clinton Hart Merriam, was a biologist and the first head of the U.S. Biological Survey, now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Merriam's Wild Turkey was named after him.) While in college in the 1880s, Bailey helped organize the Smith College Audubon Society, in part to protest the use of bird plumes on women's hats. She began writing articles for Audubon magazine and went on

to write about 100 other magazine articles for ornithological magazines as well as ten books. Among her books was *Birds of Village and Field* (1898), which was "written for beginning ornithologists and became one of the first popular American bird guides, including simple field keys for identification and illustrations by Ernest Thompson Seton, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, and John L. Ridgway." *NMBirds.org*

A biography of her, *No Woman Tenderfoot: Florence Merriam Bailey, Pioneer Naturalist*, was written by Harriet Kofalk.

Margaret Morse Nice (1883-1974) studied Song Sparrows in the 1920s and 1930s. She observed sixty-nine pairs of banded birds for almost ten years, studying their interactions, breeding, territoriality, learning, instinct and song. This was at a time when many bird researchers were focusing on collecting, describing, and looking at geographic ranges of birds rather than life histories. She had been interested in birds and had been making notes about them since she was a child. In her seventies, she was able to compare the rates of fledgling success of American Robins, Chipping Sparrows, and Least Flycatchers with those she had observed when she was thirteen. She wrote several books, including an autobiography. Two children's books have been written about her.

Yum, Tree Buds - & Flowers, Too

Just the other day, a Ruffed Grouse was enjoying a lunch of apple buds in our yard. Grouse are known for eating the male buds of aspen, but most often I seem to notice them in cherry trees. Many researchers, including Gordon Guillion, have studied the rather complicated Ruffed Grouse ten year cycle. This cycle involves not only the Ruffed Grouse themselves, but also snowshoe hares, a variety of predators, forest tent caterpillars, and aspen, including a cyclical chemical change in the buds, which may affect their palatability to grouse. In the late 1800s, several places in Massachusetts offered bounties on grouse in an effort to decrease damage they did to fruit trees. But some folks think grouse benefit the apple crop by reducing the number of buds/apples, thereby increasing the size of the apples that remain.

Ruffed Grouse are not the only birds that "bud". Wild Turkeys and Cedar Waxwings along with finches, grosbeaks, and sparrows are among other species that dine on buds.



In addition to buds, many birds eat flowers, not only smaller flowers such as those on red maples and birches, but also apple blossoms, jasmine, forsythia, and others. Cedar Waxwings, and probably other species, also eat young leaves. Spring seems to be the favorite time for birds to eat flowers, probably for the same reasons they eat buds – there are not a lot of other options and buds and blossoms are both nutritious.



Bird Reports (January 21 – February 17, 2014)

Checklist observers: *Connie Decker, Ken Luepke, Joan and Joe Rickert, and Cam Scott.*

Total Number of Species Observed this month is: 40

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

- Canada Goose, Mallard, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser
- Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey
- Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk (C. Scott), Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel
- Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove
- Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Barred Owl
- Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker
- Northern Shrike
- Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven
- Horned Lark
- Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper (Rickert/C. Scott)
- European Starling
- Cedar Waxwing
- American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Snow Bunting
- Northern Cardinal
- House Finch, American Goldfinch
- House Sparrow

NRSFW Field Trips (continued from p. 1)

Mossman, Yoyi Steele, Steve Betchkal, and Stan Temple among others. Group size is usually limited to 12 to 30 people, depending on the trip.

Some trips include canoeing or hiking or a boat trip; some include the opportunity to observe or assist in bird banding, and others offer a chance to observe rare or uncommon species. Trips are available for those with limited walking ability as well as those looking for more strenuous activities. In addition to birding trips, there are trips that focus on butterflies, flowers, amphibians, different habitats, and many more areas of interest. Many trips include visits to State Natural Areas.

You must be a member (\$25 membership fee) to take part in the trips. Trip sign-ups start online at noon on March 25. Many trips fill up very quickly.

For trip and membership information, visit the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin website: www.wisconservation.org

The Natural Resources Foundation is a major supporter of conservation in Wisconsin, including Trumpeter Swan and Whooping Crane recovery efforts, the Wisconsin Bird Protection Fund, and the Great Wisconsin Birdathon.

Silent Wings (continued from p. 4)

may be best known as the author of *Mammals of Wisconsin* but also studied birds, and in this booklet contributed an essay titled "Attitude in Conservation".

Schorger based his research in large part on historical written accounts and on interviews with people who remembered the Passenger Pigeon. In his first essay in *Silent Wings*, which includes the natural history of the Passenger Pigeon and a summary of its extinction, he notes that there were gaps in knowledge of basic facts about the species such as the number of eggs laid and the number of nestings per year. His second essay covers the Wisconsin nesting of 1871, which may have been the largest nesting ever recorded, covering an area of about 850 square miles.

Schorger was a chemical researcher who specialized in wood products but was also an ornithologist.

A new book about the Passenger Pigeon, *A Feathered River Across the Sky: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction*, was published this January. The author is Joel Greenberg.



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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

March - April Outdoors

- March 16 & April 15 – Full Moon
- All bets are off as to timing of spring arrivals if the snow doesn't melt soon and the ice doesn't go out, but birds do respond to day length and their hormones telling them to get to their breeding/nesting sites.
- In "normal" years, we'd expect Killdeer, meadowlarks (we hope), Hooded Merganser, Wood Duck, Eastern Phoebe, Great Blue Heron, Hermit Thrush, Mallard, Belted Kingfisher, Tundra Swan, Tree Swallow, and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers to start arriving.
- Wildflowers usually start to bloom with skunk cabbage often the first one.
- Ruffed Grouse begin drumming and American Woodcocks begin peenting.



Birder's Bookshelf

Silent Wings: A Memorial to the Passenger Pigeon

Edited by Walter E. Scott and published by The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology

WSO has reprinted this booklet, which was first published in 1947 for the dedication of the Passenger Pigeon Monument at Wyalusing State Park. The booklet includes essays by Aldo Leopold, Arlie William (Bill) Schorger, and Harley H.T. Jackson. Leopold is, of course, well known by most conservationists and many Wisconsinites. Schorger was a professor at UW-Madison and wrote *The Passenger Pigeon: Its Natural History and Extinction*, published in 1955 and considered the definitive work on the Passenger Pigeon. Jackson

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