



# Chequamegon Chirps

Newsletter of the Chequamegon Bird Club

Medford, Wisconsin

November 2013

Volume 32 Number 11

## NEXT MEETING:

Date: **Monday, November 18, 2013**

Time: **7 p.m.**

Location: **Medford Public Library**

Program: **Wildfires**  
*Joe Scott*

## Birds and Fire



The phoenix has come to symbolize rebirth after fire or other tragedy. It or a similar mythical bird occurred in ancient Greece, Egypt, China and many other cultures, including early Christianity. The phoenix usually is described as plumage of red, purple, and golden feathers.

The stories varied across cultures. In one common theme, only one phoenix lives at a time and it lives for 500 years (or more) before building a nest and setting it on fire where it dies. A new young phoenix then rises from the ashes.

But the phoenix is not the only bird that relies on fire. As most birders know, the Kirtland's Warbler is a fire-dependent bird. It builds its nests under low hanging branches in jack pine forests that are about 6-22 years old. It is thought that younger trees do not have large enough branches to hide the nest and older trees have self-pruned and lost their lower

## November Meeting - Wildfires

Come see the power of fire as Joe Scott discusses wildfires and his experiences putting them out - and sometimes starting them. Lots of interesting photos capture what it's like to deal with massive fires, the equipment used, and what life is like for the men and women who work in this profession.

Many people forget that fire serves a purpose in nature and many ecosystems depend upon regular burning. We'll take a look at some of these landscapes and discuss how they and the animals that live in them are affected by fire.

Hope to see you there!



*Joe Scott*

## Birds and Fire (cont.)

branches. Jack pines depend on fire to fully release the seeds from the cones, and fire suppression efforts greatly decreased jack pine regeneration, resulting in a lack of suitably aged trees. Fortunately, changes in forest management have resulted in establishment of increased suitable habitat. This is often done by imitating the effects of fire through clearcutting and planting of young jack pines. Singing Kirtland's males have increased from fewer than 170 in the 1970s and '80s to over 1,800 in 2011.

While the Kirtland's Warbler is probably the best known fire-dependent bird in Wisconsin, and perhaps the country, it is not the only one. Black-backed Woodpeckers also prefer burned-over sites, feeding on wood borers that infest the burned trees. Its black back provides camouflage among the blackened trees, whether by coincidence or evolutionary advantage.

According to a Nature Conservancy web article (<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/habitats/forests/explore/natures-firebirds.xml>) on the topic, another Wisconsin bird that may benefit from fire is the



US FWS

Brown Thrasher, which inhabits shrubby areas, forest edges, and young second growth forests. These types of habitats have been lost as land is converted to cropland and residential use or forests have matured. In the past, fire played a role in maintaining suitable habitat.

## Gifts for Birds and Birders

- Bird seed
- Suet – Homemade or purchased
- Feeders, baths and waterers
- Nestboxes
- Bird sounds – app, cd, or flash drive
- Bird dvd – *The Big Year*, *Winged Migration*
- Gift certificate for wildlife shrubs/trees
- Membership in Chequamegon Bird Club
- Membership in or donation to Wisconsin Society for Ornithology or other bird organization
- Bird magazine – *Birdwatcher's Digest* or *Birdwatching*
- Field guides
- Organic shade-grown coffee
- Field bag for carrying field guides, notebook, binocs, snack, water, etc.
- Notebook and pencil for recording sightings and making notes/sketches

- Books for kids:
  - *The Boy Who Drew Birds: A Story of John James Audubon* by Jacqueline Davies
  - *For the Birds: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson* by Peggy Thomas
  - *Birds of a Feather* by Bernadette Gervais
  - *The Law's Guide to Drawing Birds* by John Muir Laws (for older kids and adults)

Here are a few places to find bird and conservation gifts:

- Environment for the Americas (sponsors of Migratory Bird Day): <http://www.birdday.org/shop>
- Wild Birds Unlimited – online and local shops, including Wausau area: <http://www.wbu.com>
- National Audubon Society: <http://www.birdday.org/shop>
- WSO Bookstore: <http://wsobirds.org>

## Bird Reports (September 16 – October 21, 2013)



Observers: Gayle Davis, Connie Decker, Hildegard and Loretta Kuse, Ken Luepke, Cathy Mauer, Gordy Ruesch, Claire Romanak, Cam Scott, and Joe Scott

Total Number of Species Observed this month is: 144

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

- Cackling Goose, Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Tundra Swan (Luepke), Wood Duck, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup (Luepke), Lesser Scaup, White-winged Scoter (Luepke), Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck
- Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Greater Prairie-Chicken (Luepke), Wild Turkey
- Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron
- Turkey Vulture, White-tailed Kite \*\* (Luepke), Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk (J. Scott), Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon (Luepke)
- Sora, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Whooping Crane (Luepke/Mauer/Ruesch), Black-bellied Plover (Decker/Luepke), American Golden Plover (Decker/Luepke), Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitcher (Decker/Luepke), Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock, Red Phalarope (Decker/Luepke)
- Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Common Tern
- Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove
- Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl
- Chimney Swift (Romanak), Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher
- Red-headed Woodpecker (C. Scott/Mauer/Ruesch), Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker
- Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe
- Northern Shrike
- Blue-headed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo (Luepke), Red-eyed Vireo
- Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven
- Tree Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow
- Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper
- House Wren, Winter Wren, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren
- Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin
- Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, American Pipit, Cedar Waxwing
- Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Palm Warbler, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat
- Eastern Towhee, American Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lark Bunting \*\* (Luepke), Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow (Luepke), Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Lapland Longspur
- Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting
- Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Rusty Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird
- Purple Finch, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow

### **Noel Cutright**

We are saddened to report that Noel Cutright died Sunday, November 10. Noel was an advocate for birds and birders in Wisconsin and was both an ornithologist and a conservationist. He was a past president of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and senior editor of the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Wisconsin*. On many holidays he appeared with Bill Volkert on the Larry Meiller Program on Wisconsin Public Radio to answer callers' questions about birds and birding. Several years ago, he was a guest speaker at our annual banquet. Birds and birders alike have lost a friend, but the positive impacts he has made will live on.



Editor, Chequamegon Chirps  
 N4416 Crane Dr  
 Medford WI 54451-9376

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**Club Officers**

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

**Other Club Contacts**

*Web site:* [www.chequamegonbirdclub.org](http://www.chequamegonbirdclub.org)  
*Email:* [info@chequamegonbirdclub.org](mailto:info@chequamegonbirdclub.org)  
*Newsletter Email:* [newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org](mailto:newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org)  
 (Cathy Mauer, editor)  
*Bird sightings:* Connie Decker



**Birder’s Bookshelf**

**November - December Outdoors**

- Full moon – November 17 and December 17
- Thanksgiving Day – November 28
- Winter Solstice – December 21
- Ring-necked pheasants begin wintering in cattails
- Time to start watching for tracks of all kinds in the snow
- Christmas Bird Counts start
- Watch for otter and mink slides
- Keep feeders full and clean. The first for your and the birds’ enjoyment and the second for birds’ health.

***Birds of Wisconsin***

By B.F. Best

This is not a field guide. It is a book of poems inspired by Owen Gromme and Gromme’s *Birds of Wisconsin*. Here is a description from the publisher’s website: “Birds of Wisconsin is a collection of poems that employs the local birds and the fictionalized voice of Owen Gromme to address the human condition of life in Wisconsin. Best is not concerned with the ethereal air where few take flight, but instead manages to capture the loss that comes along with life. Best sees both the beauty of flight and the fear of falling. Ultimately, death, loss, faith, and home are all major concerns for the *Birds of Wisconsin*.”

New Rivers Press, 2010