

Chequamegon Chirps



Medford, Wisconsin

November, 2015

Volume 34 Number 11

Chequamegon Bird Club Banquet

The annual banquet is Monday, November 9, 2015.

Social time begins at 6pm, dinner will be served at 6:30-buffet style.

Location: Marilyn's Catering, 157 Whelan Ave. Medford, WI

Guest Speaker: Carly Lapin, DNR, will speak about her Connecticut Warbler research.

Tickets: \$15. Reservations required by November 2. Phone reservations may be paid at the banquet. Cancellations should be received before November 4 for refund.

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Christmas Bird Counts are just around the corner. (Although the snow yesterday afternoon and evening are a reminder winter isn't so far away.) The 116th session of this amazing event will soon be here. I'm including this notice because at least a couple counts will be completed before our December meeting. The club is unusual in that it actively organizes six different counts which lie in roughly a north to south configuration from Clam Lake, Gilman, Medford, Owen, Spencer to Willard. The numbers compiled help to give a picture of which birds have migrated how far and where for this particular year. Some of these counts have been conducted continuously for more than 30 years which provides a wealth of information dealing with high and low populations, appearance of different or unusual species and the influence of weather for count numbers. Your participation can be in one, all or a part of the six 15 mile circles. If you are fortunate enough to live within one of the circles, you can count the birds visiting your feeders from the comfort of your house. Most counters move about by car and given notice, can always find room for extra participants. While dates haven't been set yet, the weekends before and after Christmas and New Year's Day look as if they will be count days. Joe Scott, Gayle Davis and Connie Decker are all good sources for updated information.

More Migration Mysteries

Migration is one of those mysteries where the more we learn, the more questions, possibilities and contradictions come to light. Snowy Owls are a prime example of this convoluted conundrum. (That is a fancy way of saying, "What the heck is going on?") At one time Snowy Owls were determined to be non-migratory Arctic birds who only came south when they were facing starvation because of population crashes of lemmings- their primary food source. It was popular belief that these birds, which arrived south of the Canadian border, were in such poor shape that they probably wouldn't survive the winter, let alone a return trip to their breeding grounds. More information gathered over the years proved this to be entirely untrue—most of the time. Birds and other animals have the habit of disproving neat theories that we humans concoct—and then sometimes messing up the next set of logical conclusions. Birds are individualistic at times in what they do and aren't known to read books which predict what they should do or where they will go.

This year Snowy Owls are showing up in impressive numbers for the third consecutive year, but a month earlier than expected and, at least some, in extremely poor condition. Marge Gibson of REGI, has received four so far and had heard of seven others found dead in fields. Are these representative of the general condition of arriving birds or just some flukes that have been spotted? Without snow, these owls are much more conspicuous out on green fields. The previous two years Snowy Owls were in good condition and seemed to prosper during our winter before they headed back north. Are this year's owls from a different area of the Arctic? Are these infected or in some way ill birds? Perhaps more birds collected over the winter will provide some suggestions of answers or trends. Whatever the result, it probably won't be a nice, neat answer. Beware of internet postings that claim, "This is why things are the way they are." To me some of these "fact statements" are believed to be true because they were written and therefore must be true." They could be, but maybe not. One piece of true data doesn't mean it won't be contradicted by other true facts. Birds are healthy. Birds are starving. Birds are dying of disease. All of these statements can be true in a relatively small sample. With more data from more sources it tends to become more meaningful and a murky situation can become clearer, but not always. Variables such as food availability, weather, location, diseases, individuals, together can produce possibilities that can become almost endless and that is before unknown factors are considered.

Central Wisconsin in the area between Medford and Marshfield has been a longtime hot spot for overwintering Snowy Owls. Why this area rather than similar areas? Ken Luepke banded a couple hundred of these Arctic visitors over 30 years. He was aided in this cold weather and patience trying activity by Connie Decker in later years. Now she keeps track of area Snowys on morning and evening drives when they tend to be up on higher perches before they settle down for the day. All of this information collected and documented by banders, observers and rehabbers is valuable to put toward a bigger picture of trying to figure out what is normal behavior for a species and some of the variables that can occur. Every bit of information can help in some way. Will it answer a particular question? No. But it might help. In the meantime enjoy the confusion and conflicts of confounding convoluted conundrums. Happy birding.

CBC Monthly Sightings Report

Check list species and observers for October 2015---118

2014 sightings for same period---126

Observers: Connie Decker, Ken Luepke, Joan and Joe Rickert, Claire Romanak

Cam Scott and Joe Scott

Cackling Goose,(Luepke), Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Widgeon, 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), Black Scoter (Luepke), Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Rudy Duck

Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey

Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Green Heron

Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned hawk, Coopers Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk (J Scott), Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel

American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Whooping Crane, American Golden Plover (Decker/Luepke), Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper (Luepke), Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock, Ring-billed Gull

Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove Barred Owl

Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker

Eastern Wood-pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Shrike, Gray Jay (J Scott), Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, House Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, American Pipit, Cedar Waxwing

Tennessee Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Palm Warbler, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat

American Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow (Luepke), Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Sparrow

Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Northern Oriole, Purple Finch, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow

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Club Contacts

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Full moon November 26

Thanksgiving November 26

Watch for feed sales

We have been blessed with
a bountiful harvest.



Feather Facts to Ponder

Feathers grow until complete and then stop.

Feather follicles have muscles that grip the feathers.

The same follicle can produce very different kinds and
colors of feathers at different times of the year.