

Chequamegon Chirps



November 15, 2021

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The November meeting will be a zoom session starting at 7:00 P.M. on Monday, November 15—the third Monday of the month. Nearly a dozen people participated in last month’s session. Again, the connect number is **870-3717-5938**. Thanks to Scott Stalheim for having this service available for us. Joe has agreed to present a program that pertains to shore birds and migration. This fits in with a Chirps article and give participants an opportunity to contribute life experiences. What’s Around may have interesting information about early winter arrivals and if some slowpokes are still hanging around.

The Wausau Bird Club will host Lynn Barber, author of *Extreme Birder*, who will speak about Birding the Isles of Western Alaska. This will be at the First Universalist Unitarian Church, 504 Grant Street Wausau at 6:30 P.M. on Monday, December 6.

U.W. Milwaukee is offering online workshops about Introduction to Bird Songs and Making Your Own Nature Film. Contact fieldstn@uwm.edu for details.

Christmas Counts—then and now

Christmas counts were team shooting contests in the late 1800’s. Whichever team killed the most birds was the winner and any bird was considered fair game. Frank Chapman (1864-1945), a self-taught ornithologist was the editor of the *Bird-Lore*, which later became the *Audubon Magazine*. He deplored the Christmas Day slaughter and proposed a new kind of hunt where teams would, “Count, but not kill birds” on Christmas Day. Participants were asked to send reports to him to be published in the *Bird-Lore* publication.

Twenty-seven bird watchers in 25 locations from Connecticut to California counted 18,500 birds of 89 species on Christmas Day 1900. One hundred twenty years later 2,646 counts conducted worldwide by 81,601 counter listed 42,704,077 birds of 2,566 species. U.S. numbers were 672 species, 39,062,097 birds counted by 55,630 field observers and 6,791 feeder watchers. Chequamegon Bird Club counters are included in these huge numbers. Last year, members organized and

participated in five counts that totaled 12,519 birds of 53 species. The five counts, which are 15 mile diameter circles are organized by Keith Merkel-Clam Lake; Gilman, Spencer and Willard by Ken Luepke-715-659-3910; and Medford-Joe Scott-715-965-3498. Counts will start the weekend of December 18. Contact an organizer soon if you can participate or for more specific information.

Moonbird

“B-95 is a red knot of the subspecies rufa whose lifetime flights would take him to the moon and halfway back. His name-and fame-comes from the letter and number combination inscribed on an orange plastic flag fastened around his upper left leg. Throughout the course of his extraordinary long life-about 20 years-scientists have captured and examined him four times and observed him through binoculars and spotting scopes on dozens of other occasions. Because he is so old, and has survived so many difficult journeys, he has become the most celebrated shorebird in the world.”

“Trip by trip, B-95 flew with fewer companions. When first banded in 1995, scientists estimated there were about 150,000 rufa red knots in existence. Then, around 2000, these birds began declining by the thousands. Evidence points to abrupt Great Circuit changes. A special challenge is the reduction of essential food sources at their stopping points between flights of thousands of miles.”

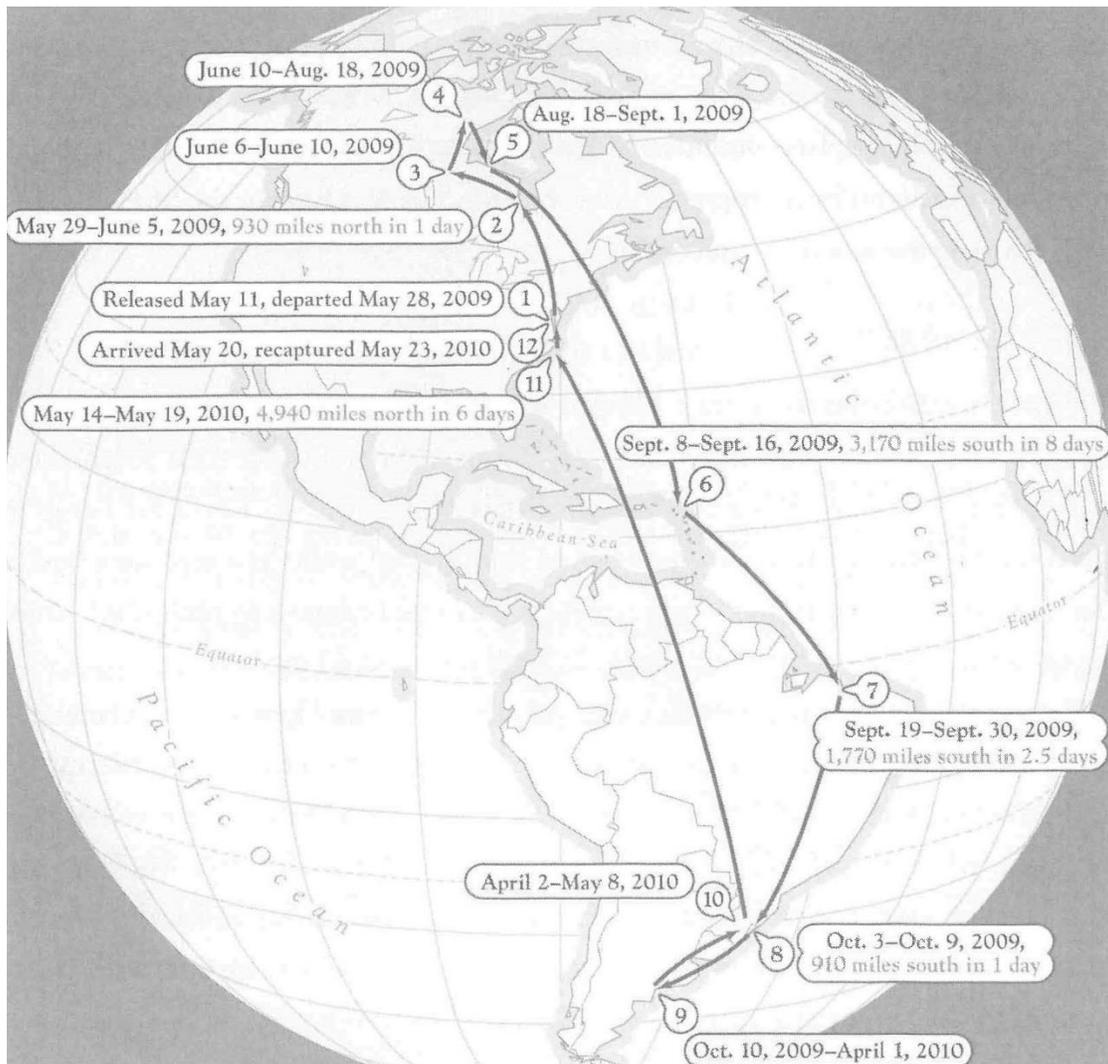
“In the weeks before flights, red knots eat non-stop, converting the food into fat, the ideal flight fuel since a gram of fat has about eight times more energy than a gram of protein. Fat also releases water into their bodies so they don't have to stop to drink. Studies show that fat birds fly faster than thin birds and can stay in the air longer.” Red knots can nearly double their weight before leaving on non-stop flights of thousands of miles and arrive at the next stopover absolutely depleted of all body reserves. And within a few weeks repeat the whole process.

“Eating constantly when they can find food, red knots inflate, storing fat in cavities and compartments all over their bodies. Stomach and digestive organs expand to take in more fuel. They can consume 14 times their own body weight. [That is the equivalent of a 110 pound person eating 2,300 2/3 pound hamburgers with cheese and tomato.] They stuff themselves until the last few days before departure when they switch to softer food and less of it. Internal organs began to

shrink. Liver, gut and leg muscles shrivel. The gizzard decreases nearly by half, meaning they are only able to eat only soft food at first when they stop to refuel. By the time they make these changes, body mass has been reduced by 30%. Breast muscle sinues have toughened into tissue that are among the strongest in the animal kingdom.”

The extremes of physical change and flights to the razor edge of survival by red knots defy believability which makes B-95’s longevity so unlikely. Most of the information is quoted from the book Moonbird by Phillip Hoose. I’d give it a strong recommendation for any age group. It will be a granddaughter’s Christmas present.

“The following map depicts the year-long journeys and stops of a red knot fitted with a geolocator on May 11, 2009 at Delaware Bay and recaptured at Delaware Bay on May 23, 2010. The bird’s astounding circuit included one northbound marathon of nearly 5,000 miles during which the bird stayed aloft for six days.”



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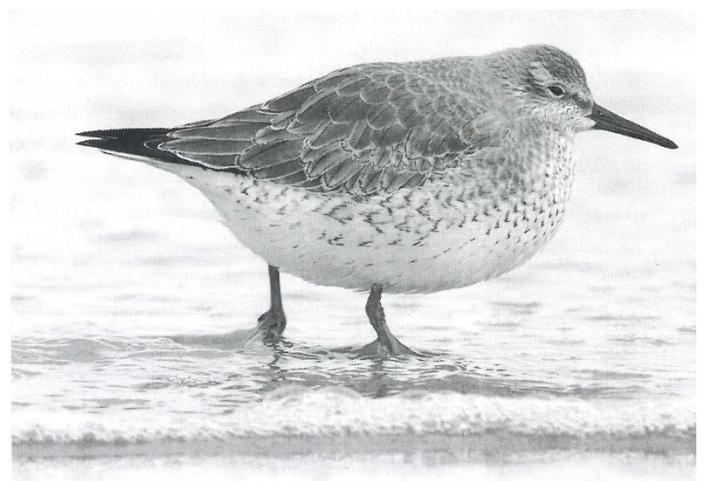
November and December Events

Full moons November 19 and December 19

Birds in Art open until November 28

White-tailed rut has started

“When one tugs at a single thing in
Nature, he finds it attached to the rest of
The world.” Joh Muir



A chubby knot, almost ready for liftoff