

Chequamegon Chirps

April 2025 Volume 43 Number 4

Our intrepid and hard-working newsletter editor Jim Bragg continues to recover from his leg injury in the sunny south of Wisconsin. This newsletter is a coproduction from Jim and myself, Scott Stalheim.

Our Next Meeting April 21, 7:00 pm

***Kuse Farm Museum and Nature Preserve
W 6219 Allman Ave, Medford, WI***

We will use the classroom area for our meeting at 7 PM. Weather permitting, we can start with a pre-meeting bird walk at 6:30 PM. Elections.

If you wish to join via Skype, we have not used the internet at this location before. But you can try the link we have been using: <https://join.skype.com/cnbgslaUFxMg>

We suggest joining 15 minutes ahead of time. If you have problems, send an email to scottstalheim@gmail.com and we will see if we can help.

BIRD HUNTERS AND BIRD WATCHERS UNITE!

It is certainly true that all who enjoy the outdoors and wildlife have a common interest in protecting the environment. Duck stamps, for example, are purchased by duck hunters who need to do that, but these funds go to wetland management and are also purchased by some bird watchers. There are two great projects organized by our local **Taylor County Sportsman's Club**, where they use our help.

The Sportsman's Club has been **building and donating bird houses** in the Spring for about 27 years. That adds up to over 16 thousand Bluebird houses and Wood Duck boxes!

Another project of the Sportsman's Club is the **Taylor County Outdoor Youth Expo**. This event, geared toward 5th graders, includes many "camps" on outdoor education, from birdwatching to hunting or fishing or cooking, and everything in between. This awesome

event has been put on by the Taylor County Sportsman's Club for about 18 years and our club has been a part of it all this time.



Last year approximately 381 students with many teachers and volunteers spent the school day visiting with hands on activities at the different demonstrations. See **Upcoming Events** below!

BIRD FLU

Bird flu was first identified in 1878, and called the owl plague. The current outbreak was discovered in North America in November 2021. It is believed the virus was introduced either via transatlantic migration or transmission of the virus in Iceland or Greenland from Europe where it had been circulating for several years. So far, 170 species have been identified among birds with ducks, geese, owls, eagles, raptors, gulls, terns, pelicans and shorebirds being more prone to the disease that we know about. Some species are more susceptible due to large numbers in close proximity such as nesting.

Every state except Hawaii and all Canadian provinces and territory have reported cases. Seventeen other wildlife species have been infected in 22 states. There have been 4,672 incidents of wild bird deaths. That number vastly undercounts total bird deaths because there can be a thousand dead birds in an area and that still counts as one incident. Also, this is found birds, which would be a small percentage of deaths. Some of the numbers are staggering. Peru has recorded 13,000 deaths of pelicans while Peru has listed 3,500 sea lion deaths from the virus.

Like all viruses, influenza can change over time. Every time an animal or person is infected, small changes in genetic sequence occur. These help the virus avoid getting cleared by the immune system. This leads to a need for new vaccines to help us against these changes. Large genetic changes can also occur when one individual is infected with more than one type of influenza virus and the viruses mix their genetic material, This can result in new forms of the virus that suddenly gain the ability to infect new species. Viruses can be present in saliva, ocular, nasal, and feces. Three sources of shedding are: 1) direct contact 2) indirect contact or contaminated surfaces 3) inhalation.

Hope this information isn't too much a downer. Don't panic. However, if you find dead birds, don't touch them or wear gloves to put them in a container. If everything seems normal at your feeder, you can continue to feed. Two other cautions I can think of now are: Don't drink raw milk and cook meats to an internal temperature of 165 degrees. Another side note. Some high-end cat foods include raw chicken. Cats have been diagnosed with bird flu.

In spite of this grim information, please enjoy the spring migration and new birds coming to your feeder.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY 2025

This annual May event is really a bird “month”, with the official day this year being May 10th The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology announced that this year the focus will be on making our cities, villages, towns, and communities, from rural to urban, more bird-friendly. WMBD will raise awareness about the many challenges migratory birds face due to human activities and expanding urban development. The campaign will advocate for strategic urban planning and conservation efforts that incorporate bird-friendly practices, making sure that our communities become havens for these remarkable travelers. The 2025 theme encourages action from all sectors, including national and local governments, businesses, community groups, and individuals worldwide.

“Bird-friendly” means making our environment safe and welcoming for birds. We can do this by planting native plants, providing clean water, and avoiding the use of harmful chemicals. By creating and protecting shared spaces, we can help birds on their long journeys and make our communities more beautiful and healthy.

“Refugia” is one of those biological terms with a simple meaning. “Refugia” are locations that support an isolated or relict population of a once more widespread species, allowing them to persist through periods of environmental stress. Refugia allowed some species to exist through glacial periods, and they are critical for many species today. Some species, like wolves or Goshawks require a large

continuous “refugium”, such as our Chequamegon Forest. But many others can thrive or at least survive, by taking advantage of many dispersed refugia such as we can create even in our own backyards.

CANARY IN A COAL MINE - PENGUIN VERSION

How about penguins to monitor pollution from mining? It is relatively easy to collect molted feathers in penguin colonies and analyze them for mercury levels. Philip Sontag, a polar researcher based at Rutgers University found that molted penguin feathers show varying levels of mercury as well as carbon-13 “fingerprints” that indicate where the penguins were migrating and feeding at the time the feather was growing. Testing has been done on 7 penguin species, and it appears that fortunately for the penguins, mercury is concentrated in feathers and not the nervous system. Trying to map where penguins are picking up mercury, early indicators are that penguins closest to illegal gold mines have more mercury, suggesting that the mercury (commonly used in illegal mining) spreads in the food chain far from the mines. Like the proverbial canary, it turns out that penguins can help us detect dangers from mining activity, but fortunately they do not have to live in the mine!

UPCOMING EVENTS AND VOLUNTEER HELP NEEDS

April 19, 2025 WSO field trip George W. Mead Wildlife Area

Note: Wisconsin Society for Ornithology Field trips are open to all, but generally with limited participants, so WSO members get priority. See “field trips” at wso.org.

This trip will include a combination of a car caravan and some light walking. Highlights include an assortment of waterfowl, Greater Prairie-Chickens, Lapland Longspurs, but also some early spring passerines such as Winter Wren, sparrows (Fox, Vesper, Swamp), Yellow-rumped Warblers, and other songbirds. This trip will be led by Myles Hurlburt. If you have questions contact Myles Hurlburt at (715-574-1003) or mhurlburt44@gmail.com

April 25 Taylor County Homeschool Co-op

who meets regularly for classes and field trips, has a meeting scheduled for Friday, April 25th at Forest Springs in Westboro, and they are hoping to do a birding walk. Leah Andersen asked if “one of your members may be able to come and lead that walk/class for us? We are thinking of splitting our two hour block between that and perhaps a wildflower hunt led by another local friend.”

Contact: jakeandleah@gmail.com

May 3 The Rib Lake Community

is putting on a tourism event to showcase our natural resources. One portion of the event will be located at the Rib Lake School Forest. We will be showing off the new hiking trails and also providing experiences related to the forest. (portable sawmilling, Crosscut Saws and logging history, and birding tours).

“We are in need of a volunteer or 2 that could lead a few short birding tours early in the morning. Possibly a 6,7 & 8am tour. Total event will last until 12 Noon. “

Contact:

Peter Anderson, **Sound Forest Management, LLC**

W3643 Kapitz Rd., Rib Lake, WI 54470

Phone: 715-681-0674 Email: peter@soundforestmanagement.com

Web: www.soundforestmanagement.com

May 10 Sandhill Wildlife Area Open House

1715 CR-X, Babcock, WI

The Open House is a free event. The focus subject this year is Whitetail deer. There will be an ecology talk followed by a wagon ride to showcase deer facts.

There is also a pre-birding event. Pre-register with Vicki Palen. The cost for the birding event, with guidance and walkie talkies for cars is \$10.

Contact: Vicki Palen

vpalen@tds.net 715-652-3131

May 16 Youth Expo -Taylor County Fairgrounds

More volunteers for "our" camp are welcome... **if interested, let camp leader Connie Decker know!**

connied1@charter.net

May 17 World Migratory Bird Day Public Events/Walks in our area

Still being planned. Discussion at April meeting. Stay tuned for details