

Chequamegon Chirps



February 15, 2021 Volume 40 Number 2

February Zoom Session

The monthly air wave get together will be Monday, February 15 at 7:00 P.M. Go to the Chequamegon website for details. In addition to swapping what's around, there will be a National Geographic program "Tactics for Better Birding." From the series "Guide to Birding in North America." Another event that is taking place February 12 to 15 is the annual Great Backyard Bird Count. Google that for details to participate in this year's event.

Last month's Chirps was so discombobulated that it left me embarrassed and thinking, How? What? And Why? No answers whatsoever. Insipient senility is one possibility. My excuse last month was, "The computer ate it." That didn't justify a proof reading goof that missed nearly 50 species that were left off the yearly totals. Several years of Chirps disappeared in the general mess up and what came out of that puzzles me to the point of total confusion. Those years ended up on Cam's computer. Is she part of an international hacking ring? But she looks so charming and makes great soups and cookies. The power of looking like an innocent bystander is great cover. So, if this Chirps or one in the future is really, really weird, I'm sorry. Grounds for editor impeachment? Or could it be Cam?

More 2020 species recorded by members in Wisconsin

These are the families, or parts of them, that weren't printed last month. **Grouse**-Ruffed, Greater Prairie Chicken. **Turkey**-Wild. **Loon**-Common. **Grebes**-Pied-billed, Horned, Red-necked. **Cormorant**-Double-crested. **PELICAN**-American White. **Bitterns**-American, Least. **Herons**-Great Blue, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue, Green, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night. **Vulture**-Turkey. **Hawks**-Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's Broad-winged, Red-tailed, Rough-legged. **Rails**-Virginia, Sora. **Gallinule**-American Coot. **Cranes**-Sandhill, Whooping. **Avocet**-American. **Plovers**-Black-bellied, American Golden, Semipalmated, Killdeer. **Sandpipers**-Spotted, Solitary, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Stilt, Dunlin, Baird's, Least, White-rumped, Buff-breasted, Pectoral, Semipalmated, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock, Wilson's Phalarope. The last eight Sandpipers were reported last month, but I included them to complete the family.

What's Around?

As I sit by my east kitchen window with bright sun warming things up, it's warm and pleasant with a cup of hot tea alongside. The bird feeders, which are within one to two feet of the window, have fluffed up visitors in this minus 25 degree morning. Since I don't have any feathers to fluff, I piled on a couple more layers when I went out to the mailbox and soon hustled back inside. Don't think I'd live long as a bird on a winter day. It is a marvel to think, how do those tiny bits of flesh and fluff handle such fierce conditions? Weighing a fraction of an ounce, they have to have a roaring internal furnace to not only survive, but to thrive each day and then to have enough reserve to not freeze during the night and greet the next day's dawn. A tip of the cap to one of the truly miracles in nature. It gives one a good feeling to have these visitors and to help them a bit with feed supplies. There are rewards for them and us as we share the joy of living.

Today I've had Juncos, whose numbers have increased to one dozen this week, Cardinals, White-breasted Nuthatches, Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Mourning Doves, Chickadees, House Sparrows, and Blue Jays feeding on some suet blocks and/or taking black sunflower seeds from the feeders or eating those I throw on the driveway.

Ron Shiffler and Claire Romanak have pairs of Pileated Woodpeckers coming to their feeders. Claire also has a Goshawk that is frequently in the neighborhood and Goldfinches, Blue Jays and Mourning Doves are abundant and earlier in the winter there were visits by a few Redpolls and then by six and two Evening Grosbeaks. Joe and Ken have also seen Goshawks. Jeff and Lynn Dodge have had Bohemian Waxwings in their yard and are joined by familiar Red-breasted and Chickadee friends when they go for woods walks. Randy Dreger has many, many Chickadees coming to his feeders and is seeing Horned Larks, Ravens, Snow Buntings, and Ruffed Grouse on his comings and goings to his pan fishing expeditions.

Movement Toward Migration

It's kind of hard to think about migration, sitting on eggs and such when it is twenty below without factoring in a wind chill. Migration isn't always a nice neat black and white situation. Sure, some species travel thousands of miles between continents. Others might be more erratic, both where and when they might travel. Horned Larks start to come north of Highway 29 in late January or early February. Within the next week or so we should start to see them along gravel roads where they like to feed along the edges. Gayle Davis has seen some north of Withee while Ken Luepke has observed groups of 40 or more for over a month in the Spencer-Marshfield area. They are a specie that tends to drift along rather than leave their winter areas and fly long distances rapidly to get where they are going. Then there are the years where weather changes interrupt or stall out bird movement. What will happen this

spring? There will be definite answers within six months. But until then, listen for song changes from Cardinals, Chickadees and in the near future the first Robins will arrive.

Covid-19 Vs. Corvids

It is the start of the second year since the Covid-19 pandemic began and has been the major nonstop news since then. How about something that sounds similar, but is totally different? This year I'd like to feature a couple articles about Wisconsin birds of the Corvid family which includes Crows, Ravens, Blue Jays and Gray Jays. Locally, Crows and Blue Jays predominate, while Gray Jays are north of here and Ravens can be north or south, as they prefer larger forests.

The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of Birds describes this family as, "Having the highest degree of intelligence among birds. Experiments with captive American Crows showed that they can count up to three or four, are keen, wary birds, good at solving puzzles and at performing astonishing feats of memory, and quickly learn to associate various noises and symbols with food. Members of the Crow Family can mimic sounds uttered by birds and other animals and, in captivity the human voice." As a family they are the largest and some of the most bold, active, noisy and aggressive of all songbirds.

Crows

If you see a large, black bird either as a single or in a flock, you can be sure it is a crow if you hear a distinctive caw-caw. They are one of our most seen and easily identified birds since they are noisy and often in open areas.

Gregarious, crows will gather in enormous numbers in fall and winter from a few thousands to 200,000, usually near a food source although they will travel up to 50 miles to feed. Flocks will harass or mob larger hawks or owls, who are their natural enemies. If you are on a Christmas Bird Count, a noisy batch of crows can help you find an owl or hawk that you otherwise would have missed.

Corvid family members eat a wide variety of foods which helps them to adapt to many different circumstances. Spiders, insects, snails, frogs, salamanders, snakes, eggs, young birds, earthworms, and mice are all fair game in addition to road kill, garbage, corn, other grain, wild and cultivated fruit.

Crows are common year around here now, but not that many decades ago, they were much more scarce around here during the winter as they moved further south during cold weather. Climate moderation and other unknown factors would be a part of this change. Now they are common year around and have adjusted well to town environments.

Editor Chequamegon Chirps

103633 Fence Road

Abbotsford, WI 54405

Club contacts

Website: chequamegonbirdclub.org

Information: info@chequamegonbirdclub

Newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org

February and March Events

Full moon February 27 and March 28

Horned Larks are moving slowly north

Great Horned owls hatching eggs

Chickadee and Cardinal start spring songs

Cold weather to be followed by spring—eventually

Maple sap collection

Enjoy longer day length