

ChequamegonChirps



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Our January meeting will be Monday, January 19

7:00 p.m. at the Medford Library

Ron Draeger will have a presentation about sparrow identification including the one who carries that name, but doesn't belong in the same family. Joe Scott will conduct the meeting for Scott Stalheim who will be participating in a cross country skiing event in Italy. Various members have interesting hobbies and life experiences. I wonder how many countries club members have visited in their lifetimes. I suspect they would be scattered over six continents.

2026 Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is scheduled for February 13 to 16, 2026 a four day global event where people count birds in their favorite places (it doesn't have to be in just your backyard) for at least 15 minutes. This information is reported to help scientists track bird populations, coordinated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with data submitted via eBird. The backyard could be your yard where you watch feeder activity for 15 minutes. Or it could be for any length of time or wherever you want to watch bird activity.

Why It Matters

This large-scale citizen science project helps scientists understand global bird populations and trends. Data from the GBBC feeds into eBird, the world's largest biodiversity project.

Is it a big deal? Yeah, it is and growing. In a world that is at odds over so many different issues, it is an opportunity to demonstrate we can come together for birds in something bigger than borders and conflicting views. It demonstrates global respect for the natural world. The whole is more than the sum of the parts.

2025 Results

Hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world participated in last year's four day event, recording 8,078 of the world's known species. Data came from 217 countries or eBird subregions via 387,652 eBird checklists with 655,549 Merlin IDs by an estimated 838,113 global participants.

Merlin was introduced in 2021 as a way to contribute to the GBBC. There was a tremendous increase of this tool in 2025 as the 650,000+ Merlin submissions more than doubled from the previous year.

The use of Merlin isn't yet accepted by all birders as there can be erroneous IDs from the sounds it uses for identification. Hopefully, this process will improve as more data is included in its function to increase accuracy and eliminate inaccurate results. How accurate is it? This could be a possible meeting topic to discuss pros and cons of bird identification by a hand held computer. Will it diminish human spotting and hearing skills? Or add educational outdoor experiences and knowledge to understanding biodiversity of whatever area we are in? Will it increase birdwatcher numbers and participation?

The GBBC began with a focus on North America. Now, engagement continues to grow and expand all over the world. Notable increases occurred in China, Columbia, Kenya, Nepal, Taiwan, Thailand and South Africa. Participants submitted information from Angola, Eswatini, Iraq, Samoa, Nigeria and Malawi. The top three countries by submissions were the United States, India and Canada. The most identified birds in Merlin were: United States--cardinal, dark-eyed junco and house finch. India—Red-vented bulbul, common myna and purple sunbird. Canada—Black-capped chickadee, dark-eyed junco and cardinal.

Species identified increased by 158 from 2024. Columbia had the most species IDs at 1,374 followed by Ecuador with 1,129 then Brazil with 1,091 and India 1,085. Sixteen more countries recorded at least 500 species. Peru—871, Mexico—785, China—724, Argentina—715, Costa Rica—697, Kenya—696, Thailand—678, United States—670, Panama—645, South Africa—621, Australia—610, Tanzania—580, Malaysia—571, Indonesia—532, Uganda—528, and Venezuela—515. Canada had 247 species. Hope you haven't nodded off or fallen off your chair. I could have listed the 8,000+ species. If you are enough of a number nerd, much more numerical information can be gleaned from the [2025 Global GBBC Results](#) including the mid-west, Wisconsin, and more local areas.

Flocks were reported as single entries. Some of those numbers were huge, proving birds are resilient even in the face of global threats. Despite all odds, they continue to flock together. The largest flock recorded was 500,000 European Starlings seen in England, UK. Another flock consisted of 350,000 Common Murres seen off the coast of California in the United States. Tanzania had a gathering of about 200,000 Greater and Lesser Flamingos. I put the about in that total because flamingos often stand on one leg which could shift numbers by a half dozen or more if that was the way they were counted. Whatever the number, it had to be a spectacular display of pink.

Odds and ends

Eggs are not nearly as fragile as you might think because their structure is similar to an arched stone bridge to hold up under the weight of the parent. An ostrich egg can withstand about 120 pounds of pressure before breaking. DDT caused thinning of egg shells which, if it continued, could have caused the extinction of bald eagles among other species.

Male Emperor Penguins care for a single chick while the female travels an icy marathon of up to over 100 miles to find food for her partner and offspring. She returns to the flock which can be many thousands. Now what? She issues a unique call to find her mate and her partner who, when he answers, is able to connect with her so he and the chick can eat. Wow. Do you sometimes come across a fact that seems so improbable that your first reaction is: *That can't be true*. But it is. It is a good exercise to try to wrap your mind around something that is so far beyond our comprehension you can't begin to realistically know how in earth something is possible. It makes me think how we're really such a small part in the greater happenings of what was, what is now, and what will be in the future. I don't understand what I can't comprehend. I can appreciate it though. It helps me to keep things in perspective and not get upset about a yellow light or if the newly washed car gets splattered on the way home. Birds can instigate such thoughts for me. I try to avoid people who know everything about anything. Hmmm, Really got off on a tangent—and that was without a glass of wine—or two. With age, greater mind wanderings can occur. Different paths present new scenery.

Happy New Year and happy birding

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Club contacts

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January and February events

Days start to get noticeably longer

Horned larks will start to appear

Some spring songs will begin

Great horned owls start laying eggs

