



Chequamegon Chirps

Newsletter of the Chequamegon Bird Club

Medford, Wisconsin

October 2012

Volume 31 Number 10

NEXT MEETING:

Date: Monday, October 15, 2012

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: Medford Public Library

Program: Club Discussion – feeding birds, Christmas Bird Counts, migration observations, deer hearts, holiday gift ideas for birders

– Everyone

SAW-WHET OWL BANDING

Wednesday, October 17 –

Linwood Springs Research Station

(near Stevens Point)

We will be going to the Linwood Springs Research Station for an evening banding Saw-whet Owls and possibly a Long-eared Owl. Participants will observe the owls being captured through infrared video surveillance equipment and will have a chance to see them up close. Our host will discuss owl migration, mortality rates, diet, vision, flight, and hearing, and how these benefit the owl to ensure its survival.

- Space is limited. Please call either Cathy (715-748-3160) or Claire (715-257-1905) to reserve your spot.
- We need to be there by 7:15 p.m. We will have a couple carpooling options. Those who would like to leave from Medford, please call Cathy for details. We will leave by 5:30 p.m. at the latest, but may leave earlier if folks would like to stop to eat or to do some birding on the way down. Those who would like to leave from Highway 29 or south of there, call Claire for details.
- Cost is \$10 per person. Adoption of an owl and the privilege of releasing one are additional.

A Holiday Gift Idea

I was once again given the opportunity to review a new book, *Hawk Ridge*, by Laura Erickson with illustrations by Betsy Bowen. The duo also collaborated on *Twelve Owls*, which I reviewed last year. Books are a favorite holiday gift item in my family, and this book will make an excellent gift for anyone interested in birds, especially raptors. Despite its title, the book is not so much about Hawk Ridge as a place as it is about the birds that pass overhead. As was true with the owls, the Hawk Ridge raptors (including vultures) are the same species we see in Wisconsin.

The natural history of each of the twenty species is covered, though in varying degree of detail. The accounts of rearing young, hunting behaviors, and

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- Bring a flashlight and camera. There will be some good photo opportunities.
- It will probably be at least 10:00 p.m. when we leave the Research Station so do not expect to get home until at least 11:30 p.m.

Denali National Park – the Familiar and Not-so-familiar

A recent visit to Denali National Park reminded me that even thousands of miles from home we may find birds, wildlife, and plants that are familiar, if not exactly the same species we have here. Denali is, of course, known for its grizzly bears, Dall sheep, moose, caribou, and wolves. Of these, only wolves, and occasionally moose, are found in Wisconsin. But at its lower elevations, Denali is also home to black bears. Snowshoe hares are residents of the park, though currently they are at a low in their population cycle. The hares are a favorite food of lynx, which are seldom seen in the park but are much more common than in Wisconsin. Red fox are frequently seen, and coyotes are becoming more common.

Not unexpectedly, many of the bird species found in Denali are species that, if seen in Wisconsin, are found almost completely in the northern part of the state. These include Spruce Grouse, Ravens, Boreal Chickadees, and Gray Jays. Others, such as Golden Eagles, have a limited range here. On the other hand, Bald Eagles, as well as Northern Osprey, are only seen occasionally in Denali, probably due to limited fishing opportunities. Other Denali birds may be found many places in Wisconsin, at least seasonally. Among these are Northern Harriers, American Kestrels, Dark-eyed Juncos, American Robins, and American Tree Sparrows.

Our campsite was visited frequently by Gray Jays, especially after a neighboring camper, in violation of park rules, put peanut butter out for them. Living up to the nickname of “camp robber”, one especially bold jay snatched a piece of bread from a bread package sitting a foot or two away from us. He dropped it when I chased him and the bread was recovered. We ate most of our meals thereafter with one eye on our food and one eye watching for sneaky jays. Despite their boldness, I didn’t get a really good photo of one.



Gray Jay – the “Camp Robber”

Cathy Mauer photo

Although grizzlies, moose, and sheep provided opportunities for good photos, the Boreal Chickadees were not so cooperative. They seemed to show up early in the morning when I didn’t have my camera handy, flitted about out of sight in the vegetation and refused to perch in, or came when it was getting dark. A photo of one will have to wait for another trip.

We often found Juncos flitting and chattering along the sides of roads and trails, just as we find them here. They seemed to be of both the Slate Gray and Oregon colorations.

Robins were fairly common, but as I returned to our campsite one morning, there was a different type of thrush perched on the tip of a spruce tree. A closer look through binocs showed it to be a Varied Thrush.

Buses are the usual means of travel to the interior of the park, including to Wonder Lake, which is about 89 miles from the entrance. We made a few trips there, and on the first trip saw a small flock of Sandhill Cranes. I had forgotten that they were found in Denali so was rather surprised to see them. On the second trip, several large flocks flew by very high overhead, maneuvering and merging as they came. It was quite a spectacular sight.



One of the most striking birds in Denali, is the Black-billed Magpie. Like the Gray Jay, it is in the corvid family. The coloration is black and white, though a closer look reveals the black feathers, especially on the wings, to be a beautiful iridescent blue, purple, and green. A most noticeable feature is the very long tail. It is one of only four songbirds in North America whose tail is as long, or longer, than the body.

Another bird found in Denali, but not here, is the Ptarmigan, both Willow and Rock. This year we saw only one flock, which flushed them when we were walking with a group of people. Another day, we saw Ptarmigan tracks in the snow and later, not far away, saw the tracks of a fox dragging something. Unlucky Ptarmigan?

It’s a pleasure to meet new friends (and birds) but also to enjoy the familiar.



Bird Reports (August – September 2012)

Checklist observers: *Connie Decker, Ken Luepke, Cathy Mauer, Gordy Ruesch, Doug and Willa Pledger, Joe and Joan Rickert, Claire Romanak, and Cam Scott*

Total Number of Species Observed this month is: 168

(Only names of observers for rare or unusual sightings are included in the list below.)

- Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan (Luepke/Decker/C.Scott), Wood Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Surf Scoter (Luepke), White-winged Scoter (Luepke/Decker/C.Scott), Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck
- Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey
- Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Western Grebe * (Luepke/Decker /C.Scott), Double-crested Cormorant
- American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron
- Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk (Mauer/Ruesch/ Rickert), Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk (Pledger), Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Merlin (Luepke/Decker /C.Scott), Peregrine Falcon (Luepke/Decker)
- Sora, Sandhill Crane, Whooping Crane (Luepke),
- Black-bellied Plover, American Golden Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer
- Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper (Romanak (extremely late)), Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock
- Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Common Tern, Black Tern (Decker (late))
- Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo
- Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl
- Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, 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, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo (Luepke), Red-eyed Vireo
- Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark
- Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow
- Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper
- House Wren, Winter Wren, Sedge Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin
- Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird * (Luepke), Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing
- Blue-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Palm Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Black and White Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Mourning Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Canada Warbler, Scarlet Tanager
- Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow (Luepke/Decker /C.Scott), White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Lapland Longspur
- Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak,
- Dickcissel (Luepke (late)), Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Northern Oriole
- Purple Finch, House Finch, Pine Siskin (Pledger/Romanak), American Goldfinch, House Sparrow

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other facts are quite interesting, but the anecdotes bring the birds to life. Most of the accounts also mention how the population is doing and what threats the birds face or faced in the past. Size and color are described along with some identification tips, but the woodcut illustrations are not designed for identification purposes.

Each species account includes a small table with facts about sightings at Hawk Ridge. It was not clear

to me at first that the earliest sighting date given was for the fall migration counting period. In several accounts a fact or comment are unnecessarily repeated. Those are minor quibbles.

Did you know that a female Harrier will return a very young chick to the nest by carrying it carefully by the nape in her bill? You would if you had read this enjoyable book.

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Editor, Chequamegon Chirps
N4416 Crane Dr
Medford WI 54451-9376

«FIRST_NAME» «LAST_NAME»
 «STREET_ADDRESS»
 «CITY» «STATE» «ZIP_CODE»

Club Officers

President – Claire Romanak
Vice-president – Connie Decker
Secretary – Gayle Davis
Treasurer – Cam Scott

Other Club Contacts

Web site: www.chequamegonbirdclub.org
Email: info@chequamegonbirdclub.org
Newsletter Email: newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org
 (Cathy Mauer, editor)
Bird sightings: Connie Decker



October – November Indoors & Out

- “Birds in Art” runs through November 11. Be sure to visit and see the new Owen J. Gromme exhibit, which is housed in its own wing of the museum. It features forty-three Gromme paintings that were donated to the museum.
- Save deer hearts for REGI – the Raptor Education Group needs them for feeding eagles that they are rehabbing. Please freeze them and bring them to a meeting.
- White-throated Sparrows depart
- White-tailed deer begin rut
- Black bears begin denning
- October 21 (before dawn) – Orionid meteor showers
- October 29 – Full moon

Kuse Nature Preserve
<http://kuse.medford.k12.wi.us/main/index.html>

Club members Hildegard and Loretta Kuse are developing a website, with help from Cathy Retzer and Dennis Hinterleiter, that tells the story of the Kuse Nature Preserve and features both natural and human history. You will find links to photos of flowers, birds, and other wildlife along with a history of the farm. There are also videos and articles about some of the items. Loretta’s great photos have been taken at the Preserve or in the Taylor County area. The tabs “Benches”, “Animals”, and “Plants” link to the most extensive photos and information so far. The site, like their wonderful Nature Preserve, is a work in progress so check periodically to see what has been added.