

# BIRD SONGS

Newsletter of the North Lakeland  
Discovery Center Bird Club

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## Officers

Carne Andrews, President  
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Carne Andrews, Acting Treasurer  
Linda Dunn, Membership Director  
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## President's Message

*Carne Andrews*

With the final page turn of my personal calendar on December 1st each year, I start reflecting on the events and happenings of the year and begin to anticipate what new adventures next year might hold. A couple weeks ago these thoughts took a new twist after a friend asked, "If you had to pick just one word to describe 2016, what would that word be?" In the course of my contemplations, I wondered how the answer to this question might apply to the Bird Club? The question, however, remained unanswered until just yesterday.

The answer began to take wings as I drove up my driveway on the way to the Minocqua Christmas Bird Count with early morning double-digit below zero temperatures registering on the dashboard. During the 30 minute drive to the rendezvous location, John Bates' September Bird Club presentation on the challenges winter birds have to overcome to survive to the spring breeding season was recalled. This time of year, these vulnerable delicate creatures must learn to tolerate the weather extremes, adapt to diminished food supplies, and avoid increased threats from predators.

Reflecting on 2016 later in the day, it came to mind that we, as individuals and collectively as a club, share some of the same characteristics that we find intriguing about birds. Here the answer to the one word question was concluded - Resilience!

Resilience defined is the ability to change, to recover from setbacks, and to keep moving forward in the face of adversity. It means having to improvise when plans need to be changed, especially when circumstances arise that we can't control such as weather conditions. It means finding meaning and causes for action when threats occur to strongly held values regarding conservation and habitat preservation. And like our feathered friends, resilience requires an acceptance and determination to adapt to reality. Birds, humans, and organizations all need a healthy dose of resilience to survive and thrive.

If members were asked if they considered 2016 a successful year for the NLDC Bird Club, I'd guess most would say it was a good year filled with many opportunities: to learn and expand our knowledge about birds and to share concerns for the environments they rely on; to work together toward common goals and mission; and to enjoy nature and time spent with each other. Yet, let's look a little further to see how the resilience characterized by birds might also reflect the state Bird Club in 2016. Consider that each of the following significant scheduled events was successfully completed as planned despite unfavorable circumstances:

- Birding Festival hikes and field trips in gusting wind and snow squalls
- Reaching both species and financial goals in our first participation in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon despite hours of thick early morning fog soon followed by torrential rains causing a two hour suspension
- Member attendance at every Thursday outing rain, shine or cold
- Route and plan changes due to severe thunderstorms during the field trip to Necedah NWF and Horicon Marsh
- And most recently, the Minocqua Christmas Bird Count that began in wind chill in minus twenty to minus thirty-degree temperatures

Doesn't what we've experienced in our avian pursuits this year remind you of the conditions birds have to contend with throughout the year to survive? As 2016 draws to a close, give thought to the notion that resilience matters! Pause a few moments to reflect on what you learned from birds this year and how what we learned from them speaks to our resilience as individuals and as an organization.

Wishing you the Happiest of Holidays and good birding in the New Year!!!

# Birds and Places Quiz

*Carne Andrews*

## CHARACTERISTIC HABITATS

Each bird has a preferred habitat. Match the habitat below with the appropriate species.  
[Answers at end]

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. American Bittern              | a. Deep mixed forests                     |
| 2. Bobolink                      | b. Forest floor                           |
| 3. Great Horned Owl              | c. Upper tree canopy                      |
| 4. Eastern or Western Meadowlark | d. Riverside or lakeshore snags           |
| 5. Ovenbird                      | e. Marshes or swamps                      |
| 6. Eastern Towhee                | f. Meadows or marshes                     |
| 7. Scarlet Tanager               | g. Open grassy fields                     |
| 8. Upland Sandpiper              | h. Brushy undergrowth in open forests     |
| 9. Belted Kingfisher             | i. Grassy fields with open ground patches |
| 10. Yellow Warbler               | j. Stream-side shrubbery                  |

## Mystery Bird

*Elizabeth Stone*

As cold and snow surround us, this article reflects on late summer birding, specifically, the challenges of bird identification when foliage is full and immature bird identification stumps even the most seasoned birders. Last August, the Discovery Bird Club made an outing to the Little Turtle Flowage, where Dick Theile photographed a "mystery bird" that none of us could identify. It was only a few feet away, but was perched in a thick shrub. After the outing, Guy David pored through his bird book and concluded the bird was likely an American pipit. As for myself, I felt the image on Dick's digital camera viewfinder matched an online image of an immature blue jay. Later, while reviewing Dick's 2016 bird photos on a large desktop computer screen, I was no longer so sure about the blue jay I.D. anymore. I e-mailed Guy, who forwarded my e-mail to Ryan Brady, the Wisconsin E-bird

coordinator. Ryan is the guru of bird identification in Wisconsin, and definitively labeled the mystery bird an immature European starling! However, a European starling sighting at the Little Turtle Flowage is unexpected, and the immature starling certainly differs from the adult. How humbling that such a common bird as a starling could stymie our club, but with thanks to Ryan Brady, the Club has added European Starling to our 2016 bird list! From top left, clockwise....Dick's Mystery bird, and online images of immature Blue Jay, Starling and American Pipit.



# Life List Quarterly

Guy David

Fall birding in northern Wisconsin always is interesting and presents a unique annual challenge. Spring and summer the birds are very active with breeding and raising young and there is a lot of territorial singing and juvenile feeding going on. This makes birds easier to detect and identify. Also, all of the breeding birds are present in their respective habitats so the number of species available to be observed is at their highest density.

For this quarterly report, the bird club's activities through September, October, and November typically yields a decreasing number of species per outing. Some species already began southward migration in August with all other migrating species following during the fall season. This means there are increasingly fewer species to be found in northern Wisconsin as the season advances. Adding to this fact is that birds become increasingly difficult to locate because they become quieter as they forage and, due to molting, many species become more drab and blend in with their surroundings more easily.

The bird club's data supports the observation of decreasing bird observations as fall progresses. I computed the average number of bird species recorded during outings for June, July, and August. Then I did the same for our outings for September, October, and November. I also checked the highest and lowest number of species recorded during each period. See Table 1 for the results.

<b>Species per Outing</b>	<b>June, July, August 2016</b>	<b>Sept., Oct., Nov. 2016</b>
Average	37	20
Lowest	21	4
Highest	76	44

Table 1 data shows that our species detection rate drops almost by half when comparing summer outings to fall outings. Also affected are the lowest and highest number of species recorded during each outing.

But this is just data from bird club outings. The data does not account for the FUN that we have, regardless of the season. The data also does not account for what great results we can get, regardless of the season. This leads me to my fall report.

When I wrote this column for our September Birdsongs, I reported that the club had recorded 161 species for the year through the end of August. Since then there have been 11 club outings.

Ten of these were Thursday morning outings with a one day trip to the Wausau area ably organized by Donna Roche. The eleventh outing was organized by Club President, Carne Andrews, who led a small contingent of members to observe a Tufted Titmouse in Vilas County.

This means that the club's 2016 annual list now includes 171 species, well above last year's output. The 10 species that were added are:

American Black Duck	Plum Lake	Sept. 8, 2016
White-crowned Sparrow	Wisconsin Point	Sept. 24, 2016
Parasitic Jaeger	Wisconsin Point	Sept. 24, 2016
Lesser Scaup	Oxbow Road	Sept. 29, 2016
Mute Swan	West End Park	Oct. 6, 2016
Lapland Longspur	Washburn Marina	Oct. 6, 2016
Ruddy Duck	Maslowski Beach	Oct. 6, 2016
American Tree Sparrow	Minocqua Fish Hatchery	Oct. 20, 2016
House Finch	Bluegill Bay County Park	Oct. 27, 2016
Tufted Titmouse	Cty. N, Vilas County	Nov. 19, 2016

It is of interest to me to note that the club also reported a hybrid Snow x Ross's Goose during our stop at Maslowski Beach on October 6, 2016. This record included photographs that were included with the eBird report to document the bird. The species designation was confirmed by expert eBird reviewers and remains in the club's record for that individual outing. However, when I reviewed the club's eBird Life List that bird does not occur in that record. I haven't inquired about this but I assume that the eBird Life List only includes recognized and distinct species, so a hybrid would not qualify.

This fact means that the bird club's life list count remains at 267 species because no new species have been added since my last report. Back to the FUN part of our outings, when our group spotted the hybrid white goose it caused a lot of excitement as we screeched to a halt, piled out of our respective vehicles and proceeded to peer through binoculars, take photos and study our field guides.

So it has been a great season of outings for our club but the year is not yet complete. Yay for 2 Christmas Bird Counts that may well yield a couple of winter migrants that we couldn't record at any other time of the year! Here's to an outstanding winter finch invasion!

## Guy David's Bird Club Outing Photos

Bird club members enjoying a picnic lunch at the Bayfield Fish Hatchery



Sharing a find on the Boulder Junction Bike Trail by Ben Bendrick Drive



# **Birding in Arizona**

*By Guy David*

Readers of my Bird Songs columns over the years know full well that I often have promoted the need to visit various habitats at different times of the year in order to maximize the number of bird species that one might get to see.

While the Discovery Center Bird Club's outings are mostly regional in northern Wisconsin, I have been fortunate to have been able to spend some quality birding time in Arizona, where I have been for the past month. Doing so for a few years now has permitted me to appreciably expand my personal life list by adding American southwest bird species that typically are not available to observe in Wisconsin. So far, my birding time in Arizona has been limited to the area around Tucson and Green Valley.

Because of my usual Arizona home birding territory, my Arizona Life List has been largely limited to the birds of the Sonoran Desert. The Sonoran Desert is geologically subdivided into six regions and the region of the Tucson and Green Valley area is known as Arizona Upland. Last spring, Bonnie and I took a guided tour of Baja California and Baja California Sur in Mexico. Since that region is Pacific Coastal and mostly in the Vizcaino Subdivision of the Sonoran Desert, my Life List grew some more, but not my Arizona or North American Life Lists.

Late in November 2016 Bonnie and I were able to join another couple for a foray to the Sedona, AZ region. Beyond being overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of the red rock formations in the area, I also was excited by the prospect of visiting a new Arizona area with new bird species. The area did not disappoint me!

This was our first time that we were able to spend a little time north of the Mogollon Rim which forms the southern edge of the Colorado Plateau in Arizona. One difference between the Arizona Upland area and the area north of the Mogollon Rim is about 3,000 to 4,000 feet of elevation in addition to latitude. While in the area we were fortunate to spend parts of 2 different days hiking in the Oak Creek Canyon and Oak Creek Canyon – West Fork areas, a few miles north of Sedona. So, new life list species for Guy? Easy peasy...just get out of the car and pay attention!

Our first day we hiked and birded the Cave Spring Campground where I netted 3 new species in the first hour: Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, and American Dipper. The campground was closed and gated because the camping season was over, but it was open to day users like us, and we had it all to ourselves. The nuthatches eluded my camera but I managed to get a low-quality photo of the Mountain Chickadee and a decent photo of the elusive American Dipper. What a FUN bird to watch!



The next day we hiked the Oak Creek Canyon – West Fork. It took some time but we managed to hike the 3.3 mile length of the trail which included 13 stream crossings. Next time you see her, you can ask Bonnie what she thought about that! The scenery on this hike was beyond belief, just awesome! It takes a while to hike such a trail while trying to photograph every spectacular red-rock formation along the way.

The season was fall / early winter. It snowed heavily the day after we left. Just as in northern Wisconsin, the migration was pretty well done and the birds that were there were residential. Therefore, it wasn't particularly "birdy", but a highlight was being able to observe and photograph Townsend's Solitaires. This species wasn't a lifer for me because I have recorded one in Wisconsin, but it was an Arizona life bird. We did come upon a group of Steller's Jay though, which was a new species for me. What beautiful birds they are, and noisy just like our Wisconsin Blue Jays!

It has been a fine start to my winter birding season. I am signed up to do at least one Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in the Green Valley area and I am considering a second one too. By the time this newsletter edition is published our bird club's CBCs will be over, so I hope that many of our club members have made it a point to participate. I am looking forward to seeing the data for the Minocqua CBC so that I can gain a better appreciation of what I have been missing back in Wisconsin!

Guy and Bonnie David sharing a moment at trail's end, Oak Creek Canyon, West Fork



Townsend's Solitaire in flight. Photo captured by Terry Minks and shared with Guy David.



American Dipper, Cave Springs Campground in Oak Creek Canyon, by Guy David



## Christmas Bird Tree

*Elizabeth Stone and Dick Thiele*

We thought you'd like to see one of the Christmas traditions at our house- a bird Christmas tree. Starting in the mid 1990's we thought it would be fun to have a tree decorated only in bird ornaments, in addition to our standard Christmas tree. Initially, we had only a tabletop sized tree, but once the word was out that we were collecting bird ornaments, we were getting them as Christmas gifts every year and we soon needed a full size tree to display them all. It got to the point where we decided to limit new ornament acquisitions- anything new had to be a species we didn't already have or had to be made from especially unusual materials. For Christmas 2016, about two hundred ornaments adorn our tree. We do have a new "ornament of the year", a long-eared owl! The attached photos show our tree and a closeup of the long-eared owl ornament, hanging among other owl friends.



## **It's Suet Time!**

*Sarah Besadny*

Well, the chill is definitely in the air here in the northwoods ... and that means it's time to put suet out for the birds. Many of our winter birds including the woodpeckers (pileated, hairy and downy), black-capped chickadee, blue jay, red-breasted nuthatch and white-breasted nuthatch all come to suet feeders. Even the summer tanager that graced our yard for a week in early May was partial to the suet. So, if you enjoy attracting a variety of birds, put some suet out.

Suet is a high energy food and beneficial to birds during the winter months when they require more calories to produce enough body heat and energy to survive the cold weather. Suet can spoil in warm weather so it is not recommended as a food source for birds during the summer months. Many experts say if it's 70 degrees or warmer to put the suet away.

You can buy suet or make your own. Here is a recipe that you might want to try if you're the "do it yourself" kind of person.

### Rendering beef fat to make suet:

Buy beef fat from the grocery store/butcher or cut the fat from beef dishes you make and freeze the fat until you have enough. Cut the beef fat into small pieces and heat the fat over a low flame until it liquefies. Strain the fat through cheese cloth to remove impurities. Let the fat harden. Once again heat the fat until it liquefies, strain it and let it harden again. Rendering the fat twice helps it cake.

Once you have made the suet you can add any number of ingredients to it, or just put it out as is. If you'd like to add ingredients, you can follow this recipe or substitute as you wish.

1 cup fresh suet  
1 cup peanut butter  
3 cups yellow cornmeal  
½ cup whole wheat flour

Over low heat melt the suet and add the peanut butter. Stir until blended. Mix the cornmeal and flour together in a bowl. Pour the suet mixture into the bowl and mix thoroughly. Pour the mixture into molds such as a bread pan lined with plastic wrap, reuse containers from suet you've purchased or roll the suet into balls. Let the suet cool until hardened and then store it in the freezer until ready to use. You can also add dried fruits, unsalted nuts cut into pieces or bird seed. Experiment ...and enjoy the fruits of your labor as you watch the birds come to your feeders.



### Answers to Quarterly Quiz

1. e    6. h
2. f    7. c
3. a    8. i
4. g    9. d
5. b    10. j.

***Editor's Note: A big round of applause for all the contributors for their wonderful photos, quizzes and articles! I am pleased to announce that Sarah Besadny will take over the reins of being Birdsongs editor. It has been much fun being your editor over the past three years!***