

# BIRD SONGS

Newsletter of the  
Discovery Center Bird Club

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## Officers

John Randolph, President  
David Foster, Secretary  
Carne Andrews, Treasurer  
Jim Krakowski, Program Chair  
Linda Dunn, Membership Chair



## President's Message

By John Randolph

We haven't had any exotic visitors to our bird feeders, and even our woodpeckers have not been around as much as usual (I fear it's a commentary on the cheap suet I've been buying). Area Christmas Bird Counts, always special events, have been low in species count too. However, there has been a nice, free development from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, a Merlin Bird ID app for I-Pads and I-Phones. An Android version is expected in the spring. The Cornell University [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org) website is very useful, providing an array of resources. Another very helpful website is [www.natureinstruct.org/dendroica/](http://www.natureinstruct.org/dendroica/), a Canadian product with a large number of bird pictures and song/call recordings from volunteers. I don't think it's as easy to navigate as the Cornell website, but it provides more samples per bird. It is free, but requires one to choose a user name and password. For birds around the world, the Internet Bird Collection is excellent. As with Nature Instruct, it allows submission of videos, pictures, and sound recordings from volunteers. The website is <http://ibc.lynxeds.com>. I'm not sure, with DNA findings and controversies over what factors determine species definitions, but I think there might be close to 10,000 bird species worldwide.

This issue of the Club Newsletter, Bird Songs, is produced by our new editor Ingrid Stephan, who has graciously taken on this important job. David Foster has edited Bird Songs for at least five years, and will be an excellent resource for Ingrid. The Club really appreciates David's contributions, and is grateful to Ingrid for assuming the role of editor.

I am delighted to learn that the Discovery Center has engaged Dr. Jay Mager, Loon Behavioral Ecologist, to be the keynote speaker for the May 9-10 Northwoods Birding Festival. This past summer Karin and I had an enjoyable dinner with Jay. [Editor's note: see article by Heather Lumpin re: Birding Festival].

The Bird Club's Board of Directors consists of the President, Secretary, Treasurer, Program Director and Membership Director. Terms are three years, with the possibility of a second three year term, after which one must be off the Board for at least one year. As a Club member, please consider serving on the Board of Directors. Election of officers and directors will take place at the August 2014 Annual Meeting.

## Annual Discovery Center Bird Club Social

January 14, 2014. On a cold crisp night in January a rousing group of 41 birders and guests gathered together at Smokey's Restaurant. We all enjoyed lively discussions over tasty appetizers before sitting down to a delicious meal. Guy David's slide show set to music was a great review of the year's activities. Everyone enjoyed seeing the bird club members in action.



## Life List Quarterly

By Guy David

### New Life List Additions for 2013

At the conclusion of our 2013 birding year the Discovery Center Bird Club's Life List stands at 260 species! At the end of 2012 the club's Life List included 254 species. We were able to find and identify, and record 6 new species during 2013. Here is an accounting of those observations.

Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*) – The Kirtland's Warbler probably is the rarest bird species on the club's Life List. This observation was made by 6 members during a Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin field trip to a central Wisconsin Kirtland's Warbler breeding area on May 24, 2013. Researchers enabled us to

observe several Kirtland's Warblers that day and learn about current management practices. The club's eBird record and this photo were contributed by Guy David.



Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) – Eleven club members traveled to Ashland, WI on October 10, 2013 to search for migrating waterfowl and other species of birds. There was a large raft of waterfowl in Chequamegon Bay off of Maslowski Beach. Jim Krakowski was the first to find and identify 2 Surf Scoters. He explained their identifying marks to the rest of us, and helped us with the challenging task of locating them with our spotting scopes within the raft of 200+ actively moving birds. Guy David recorded the observation on eBird.

Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*) – Observed by the group who participated in the Kirtland's Warbler outing on May 24, 2013. On the way home the group stopped at the Lost Creek Wetlands near Stevens Point, Wisconsin. We were able to observe a single swan resting in an open area with a spotting scope. The species was later confirmed as being a Tundra Swan by local eBird experts. The eBird record and photo were contributed by Guy David.



Year	No. Species for Year	No. Species Added to Life List	Life List Total
2004	111	111	111
2005	150	51	162
2006	158	30	192
2007	150	5	197
2008	154	9	206
2009	169	12	218
2010	193	19	237
2011	180	3	240
2012	191	14	254
2013	184	6	260

Wilson’s Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – Also observed on May 24, 2013 at the Lost Creek Wetlands. While standing with our scopes and binoculars we noticed a small group of what appeared to be wading birds in a shallow pond with reeds. All 6 members were able to observe and identify the birds as Wilson’s Phalaropes. This eBird record was entered by Guy David.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) – Observed by participants in the Bird Club’s outing to Wisconsin Point in Superior, WI. It was first observed and recorded on September 20, 2013 during the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology field trip popularly known as “Jaegerfest”. This eBird record was entered by Cynthia Krakowski. Four club members were present for the observation but a large group of expert birders shared in the observation because of “Jaegerfest”.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) – Also observed by the participants in the “Jaegerfest” outing on September 20, 2013 and recorded in eBird by Cynthia Krakowski.

The Discovery Center Bird Club has been making steady progress in adding bird species to our life list every year. Following is a table to illustrate this progress through the 2013 season.

For life listing, obviously the earliest years are the most productive. Eventually the club became more sophisticated in selecting local areas for our outings where we might encounter new species. After some time we have become adept at finding the more common species for our area which helped our annual listing to become more productive. The club has been able to keep adding ‘lifers’ to the club list each year, mainly by conducting field trips to places outside of our local area where habitats and bird species exist that are not found around our home range. During 2013, all 6 new life species were observed during extended field trips outside our normal birding area.

### **2013 in Review**

The year 2013 was a great year for adding species to the club’s life list and our annual list. I have been recording our club’s bird observations since 2004 on an outing on May 22, 2004 to the Powell Marsh Vista Flowage. That was the first organized outing by the group of Discovery Center members who were instrumental in

creating the Discovery Center Bird Club the following year. We recorded 34 species that day, which was the beginning of the club life list.

The 12 participants were fortunate to observe a Dunlin. Little did we know then that a Dunlin would not be spotted again until June 20, 2013 when we found one on Maslowski Beach in Ashland! This is proof positive that every outing can result in special and unique discoveries!



Our 2013 annual list data was accumulated during a total of 38 outings. The average number of participants during 2013 outings was 11+ people per outing, similar to the last 4 years. Except for Birding Festival attendance, 2013 club outings ranged from a low of 2 to a high of 19. This year's field trips began on February 25 with an outing to the Iron County area lead by Zach Wilson and ended with the Manitowish Waters Christmas Bird Count on December 21, 2013 organized by John Bates.

Donna Roche organized the vast majority of Thursday morning outings for the year. Thank you, Donna, for your special dedication and effort toward leading our Thursday morning birders to a great variety of wonderful birding habitats!

Special, extended field trips also were organized again during 2013. Guy David organized the first trip to Adams County to find Kirtland's Warblers.

Included in that trip were visits to the Mead Wildlife Area in Marathon County, and Buena Vista Grasslands and Lost Creek Wetlands in Portage County.

On September 19, 2013 Jim Krakowski lead a special field trip to the Clam Lake, WI area. Jim dubbed this trip "Bugles and Birds" because not only were we in search of boreal species of birds, Jim also arranged for our 16 participants to engage with an Elk researcher to experience Wisconsin's elk herd.

Following "Bugles and Birds", several club members proceeded to Douglas County to participate in Jaegerfest, an annual field trip sponsored by the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.



In late October several club members joined a Discovery Center Field Trip to Hawk Ridge, organized and lead by Sarah Johnson.

The Discovery Center Bird Club has had a great year! In addition to many birding outings and field trips, the club contributed in several other ways.

- Birding Festival 2013 was another outstanding event that featured great birding, outstanding presentations and programs about birds, and it was profitable for the club budget. In planning for the 2014 Birding Festival, the Discovery Center and club leadership collaboratively developed a new financial arrangement designed to reduce or eliminate the process of negotiating a new agreement every year.
- During June, 9 club members joined Discovery Center and WDNR staff in conducting bird surveys for the Shoreline Restoration Project while earning over \$600 for the club. A new “deal” for sharing the income for this project was negotiated between the club and the Discovery Center.
- Under Jim Krakowski’s leadership, the club began planning for the construction of a Chimney Swift Tower and approved the construction project for 2014. Planning is proceeding and more information will be coming later.
- Bird club members have been involved with the “E-Pod” project development at the Discovery Center as part of the Discovery Center’s Master Planning effort. Planning and discussion of E-Pod ideas and projects has been undertaken, as well as fund raising by the Discovery Center. Consequently some of those projects may be initiated during 2014. Bird related E-Pod projects may include adding a bird friendly water feature, increasing native plantings to improve bird food and habitat, improving bird feeding stations, installing bird photography blinds, and other projects on

the Discovery Center grounds. All are in the planning stage now with assistance and input from bird club members.

On May 2, 2014 the Discovery Center Bird Club celebrates it’s 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The club members can be proud of all that has been accomplished and the great plans for 2014. Looking to the future we have more we can choose to do.

I hope that every club member will look for ways to be involved in club activities and help out in any way that you can. Maybe an ad-hoc committee will be created to plan and conduct a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 2015?

## **10<sup>th</sup> Annual Northwoods Birding Festival Features Loon Behavioral Ecologist Jay Mager**

By Heather Lumpkin, North Lakeland  
Discovery Center Research and  
Monitoring Coordinator

One of my favorite sounds is the beautiful yet haunting yodel of the Common Loon echoing across the lake on a still, summer evening. A summer in the Northwoods wouldn’t be complete without it; it’s one of the first things that I want family and friends to experience when they visit.



Photo by Ingrid Stephan

This year the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Northwoods Birding Festival, an event hosted by the North Lakeland Discovery Center in partnership with the Discovery Center Bird Club, will feature this iconic bird with a keynote presentation about loon behavior by ecologist Jay Mager.



**Dr. Jay Mager**, an associate professor of Biological & Allied Health Sciences at Ohio Northern University, is studying the acoustic signals that common loons use to acquire and defend breeding territories. He works to uncover the mysteries behind those haunting melodies that echo across our Northwoods lakes in the summer. In addition to being an experienced and well-published researcher, Jay is also a distinguished educator. He has received the Ohio Northern University College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award in addition to serving with Ohio Northern University's Center for Teacher Education.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Northwoods Birding Festival takes place on May 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> and begins on Friday evening with a welcome reception and bird photography presentation by North Lakeland Discovery Center's Assistant Director, Azael Meza. Azael will explore the connections between birds, nature photography, and conservation, providing inspiring examples from his own outstanding bird photos. Saturday will kick off with early morning warbler walks

followed by field trips to local birding hotspots. The day will also include bird banding demonstrations, Jay Mager's Keynote presentation, and concurrent session that include presentations on bird identification, reducing obstacles to bird migration, rare and threatened Wisconsin Bird species, and an update on the bird surveys which have been conducted by many Bird Club members over the last several summers as part of a shoreline restoration study through Michigan Technological University.

You won't want to miss this wonderful line up of speakers coming for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Northwoods Birding Festival. The festival is great for bird enthusiasts of all levels and there will be many opportunities to improve your skills and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow birders. I hope to spot you all there! Program details and registration will be available on the Discovery Center web page ([www.discoverycenter.net](http://www.discoverycenter.net)) on February 10, 2014.

## **Project SNOWstorm Field Trip**

By Guy David

On Saturday, January 18, 2014 I traveled to Bancroft, WI to join a Wisconsin Society for Ornithology field trip to view Snowy Owls. This was a joint field trip between the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and Project SNOWstorm. It was organized as a fund raiser for Project SNOWstorm, a collaborative research effort by Project OwlNet, the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art and many independent researchers, agency and organizational partners. They are working together to learn more about the historic Snowy Owl irruption of 2013-14. For more information on Project SNOWstorm, please visit: <http://www.projectsnowstorm.org/>

Bird researchers in Wisconsin have reported that as many as 225 different snowy owls have been located. The trip leaders informed us there were

four confirmed Snowy Owls (and a possible 5th one) staying in the Buena Vista area this season..Great news!

The field trip was organized by Kim Kreitinger, WSO Vice-President. Kim had recruited Gene Jacobs of UW-Stevens Point to discuss Snowy Owl biology, the background of Project SNOWstorm, and the movements of “Buena Vista,” the WSO-sponsored Snowy Owl that was fitted with a Project SNOWstorm transmitter. Jeff Baughman and Tom Schultz were the WSO field trip leaders who lead our search for local Snowy Owls, including “Buena Vista.” You can read about the tracking technology and even see “Buena Vistas” tracking record by visiting: <http://www.projectsnowstorm.org/tracking-snowy-owls/>

We were resoundingly successful in our search! Within 15 minutes of leaving the rendezvous point a Snowy Owl was sighted perched atop a telephone pole, about 150 yards down the road. So nine vehicles with about 30 occupants were emptied in short order as binoculars, spotting scopes, and cameras were deployed!



Stopping at a safe distance allowed us to enjoy the owl’s presence for a few minutes.

Then, the owl flushed. Incredibly, instead of flying away, it flew toward us, landing on the top of a dead tree stump about 100 feet from us! It completely filled the field of view of our binoculars and scopes! Here is a one digiscoped photo of about 100 that I took.



As it turned out, the bird that we enjoyed so much was not “Buena Vista”. The researchers explained that they haven’t received any signals from Buena Vista’s solar transmitter in a couple of days, probably because of very cloudy conditions.

The WSO raised \$700 on the Project SNOWstorm fundraiser field trip! This money will be donated to Project SNOWstorm to help them gain more insight into irruptive Snowy Owls, such as their genetic background, their general health, how their diets change seasonally, and how regional Snowy Owl populations may differ. Additional funding will also be used to develop interactive maps to track the movements of each tagged owl.

## Bird Observation Records

By Guy David

Do you feed birds or landscape your yard in hopes of attracting birds? Are you successful? Do you share your exciting observations with others? Are you an “eBirder”? Our club can confidently answer “yes” to these questions. Many club members share their observations individually as well. Are you among the bird lovers who contribute as citizen scientists on behalf of birds in our northwoods area?



Photo by Ingrid Stephan  
Two of 34 Trumpeter Swans at sunrise on Anvil Lake. Each fall they stay for about 3 weeks.



Photo by Donna De Pape  
Horned grebes in fall migration on Anvil Lake

*These are two observations that we should have entered on eBird last fall. (Stephan & DePape )*

The bird club observation record is an important contribution to the world wide bird observation database. I enter all of our club’s bird observation records into eBird regularly. That is a significant citizen science contribution to the welfare of all species of birds. I continue to encourage club members to become regular participants in eBird beginning with your feeder birds and yard birds.

I use eBird as an individual as well as for the bird club records. Recently I joined a new Wisconsin eBird competition, “Wisconsin eBird Patch Challenge.” As a participant’s home area is marked as a “Patch”, an area within a geographic circle with a 7.5 mile radius,. All eBird records entered within the “Patch” are automatically accumulated. How about other bird club members setting up their own “Patches”? It could be a friendly and fun competition within the club and more importantly,would encourage more club members to contribute to eBird.

Having all of our data in the eBird database does something for all of us. For example, have you visited the Discovery Center Bird Club’s Website lately? You can do so by visiting <http://www.discoverycenter.net/birdclub3.html> to see a new and free feature called BirdTrax. Now, eBird entries that are made within a 50 mile radius of the North Lakeland Discovery Center show up on the club’s BirdTrax feature of our Web Site. I have been checking our BirdTrax ,hoping there will be a report via eBird a Northern Hawk Owl, Varied Thrush, Boreal Chickadee, or any other rare or uncommon species for our area. So far, the reports have been limited to the common winter birds for our area.



However, I am really looking forward to seeing the appearance of new species for the year on BirdTrax as the northward migration begins this spring! Who will be the first to report an American Robin? Purple Finch? Common Loon?

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology Website also has BirdTrax under their Rare Bird Alerts tab. (Their website: [http://wsobirds.org/?page\\_id=3045](http://wsobirds.org/?page_id=3045)) Since the WSO is a statewide organization they set the filter for their BirdTrax feature to capture and report all rare bird observations throughout Wisconsin. For the time being, the bird club's BirdTrax is set to report all species reported via eBird within a 50 mile radius of the North Lakeland Discovery Center. That parameter has been working well but can be adjusted in the future if eBird reports within the area become more numerous.

### **Action Steps:**

- Enjoy exploring our BirdTrax feature. It is REALLY cool!
- Add your personal observations to eBird. You will be adding to the store of observation data for our region. There could never be too many eBird yard reports, feeder reports, reports during your X-C skiing excursions, or whatever other reason you have to enjoy the outdoors. You can get started at: <http://ebird.org/content/wi/>
- Pull on your boots, get out your optics and field guides, and join in on our adventures. (I contribute the "Life List Quarterly" column for "Birdsongs", (elsewhere in this edition) so members are aware of what we are seeing on these great outings.).

### **Kirtland Warbler Surveyors**

A huge thanks you goes out to our bird club members who participated in our searching for this illusive warbler in May and June, 2013. These hardy souls trudged through thickets of scrub and jack pine in designated areas primarily in the Northern Highlands Forest. In response to my request to Kim Greveles, project manager of

the Wis. Kirtland Warbler study, she set up a wide variety of areas for each volunteer to survey. The packets of detailed information she sent was quite helpful. Thanks to: Katie Foley, Donna Roche, Donna DePape, Roger Yaeger, Vanessa Hesse-Lehman, Jim Rennhack, Jim and Cynthia Krakowski, John Randolph and me, Ingrid Stephan. While no Kirtland's were spotted, the area is rich with potential.

### **Crane Count Coming Soon**

The Annual Midwest Crane Count is a citizen-based wildlife survey designed to monitor the abundance and distribution of cranes. We invite beginner and experienced birders to join us in this important work. Early in the morning on April 12 we will spread out across Vilas County to complete crane counts at a variety of locations and then come back together to share our data. Please plan to attend a brief training on the day prior to review count protocol and to determine logistics.

Training: Friday, April 11, 10-11am. Count: Saturday, April 12, 5:30-7:30am (optional breakfast gathering follows). Pre-registration by April 10 required.

Contact Heather Lumpkin (877) 543-2085 with questions



Your new editor enjoying a moment with a chickadee on the Anvil Lake Ski Trails.