

BIRD SONGS
Newsletter of the
Discovery Center Bird Club

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President's Message

By John Randolph

I cannot imagine ever hopping onto a plane in immediate response to a special bird alert, but we did have a very enjoyable opportunity on February 5 when someone reported seeing a White-winged Scoter in downtown Rhinelander, on open water on the Wisconsin River, just south of the paper mill. Karin and I were in the area for a Learning in Retirement class, and decided to check out the boat landing on our way back home. Another car was already there, and Dave Franzen, a very fine photographer from the Phelps area showed us several pictures of the Scoter, which was still just 30 feet away in the river, a nice look for us (a female). With Dave was Erica Pertile, who had led a birding outing around Thunder Lake with our Club and the Nicolet Bird Club of Three Lakes. The sighting was unusual, seemingly related to inward movement of such ducks because of extensive ice cover on the Great Lakes.

We were especially fortunate to experience seven days of superb birding in Florida, both on the Atlantic coast and the Gulf coast. It was wonderful, and I particularly loved seeing some bright breeding color details that I had not previously noticed. For instance, in relatively close up in the sun, the bald head of a Roseate Spoonbill was a subtle light green, and the lores of the Great Egret a relatively more vivid green. The lores of one particular Snowy Egret were a stunning scarlet. Though it may be year round (?), the eye ring of the male Painted Bunting was a different striking shade of red. We were grateful to see many different species, though the various "good looks" we were treated with stand out the most.

Karin and I have signed up for the Northwoods Birding Festival, May 9 and 10, and are set with our Sunrise Warbler Walk and Field Trip choices. This is the 10th Annual Festival, and the Club again will host the Friday night social, a relaxing evening which will include an expert

photography presentation by Discovery Center Assistant Director Azael Meza.

With migration season soon upon us, I'm so looking forward to our Thursday morning bird walks. Last year's ice-out gave us some wonderful groupings of waterfowl, stacked up in Minocqua and Powell Marsh, waiting for open water further north. It's always fun anticipating what we might see and hear.



White-Winged Scoter photo by Dave Franzen

Tenth Annual Northwoods Birding Festival: Manitowish Waters, Wi.

by Sarah Johnson

Spring in the Northwoods is slowly upon us, with longer days, more sunshine, and migrating birds! This year's 10th Annual Northwoods Birding Festival, an event hosted by the North Lakeland Discovery Center and in celebration of International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), will be hosted May 9-10, 2014.

Launched in 1993 by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, IMBD is now coordinated by Environment for the Americas, and is the largest-known bird conservation and education event of its kind in the Western Hemisphere. IMBD

brings attention to one of the most important and spectacular events in the Americas – bird migration. Public awareness and concern are crucial components of migratory bird conservation. Citizens and communities enthusiastic about birds, informed about threats, and empowered to become involved in addressing those threats, can make a tremendous contribution to maintaining healthy bird populations. In addition to the Discovery Center and the Bird Club hosting bird events and field outings, the Towns of Manitowish Waters and Presque Isle have shown their commitment to conservation by becoming a Wisconsin Bird City, with Manitowish Waters recently earning “High Flyer Status”! Furthermore, both of these Towns’ Chambers of Commerce support the event through added publicity and sponsorship – the collective energy of our communities adds to the annual and repeated success of the Northwoods Birding Festival.

This year's Festival begins Friday, May 9 with an evening welcome reception hosted by the Discovery Center Bird Club and featuring complimentary appetizers and wine provided by The Wine and Beer Barn in Manitowish Waters. Nature Photographer Azael Meza will present a delightful and inspiring program celebrating the 2014 International Migratory Bird Day theme “Why Birds Matter.” Azael will explore the connections between birds, nature photography and conservation, providing examples from his own outstanding bird photos. Saturday kicks off with early morning bird walks followed by field trips to birding hotspots – with all activities led by skilled guides including Naturalist-Author John Bates, Wildlife Researchers Terry Daulton and Jeff Wilson, and Research Professor Amber Roth.

Saturday's afternoon programs feature bird banding demonstrations, a lunchtime Keynote presentation by Dr. Jay Mager from Ohio Northern University entitled "Loon Language: The Science of Communication", and concurrent afternoon sessions by experts on bird identification, reducing obstacles to bird migration, and rare and threatened Wisconsin Bird species.

The festival is great for bird enthusiasts of all levels, with many opportunities to improve your skills and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow birders.

Breakfast and lunch on Saturday, as well as delicious appetizers, desserts, and more will keep you nourished and ready to bird, learn, and bird some more! Festival registration is \$50 (\$40 for members and \$20 for students and youth under 18). Festival details, schedule, and printable and online registration are now available at www.discoverycenter.net or call [715-543-2085](tel:715-543-2085). For more information on Bird City Wisconsin, visit www.birdcitywisconsin.org/; and on IMBD, please visit www.birdday.org/

St. George Island

By Ingrid Stephan

Donna DePape and I enjoyed a week in the Florida panhandle on St. George Island. The peak event of the trip was watching four Swallow-Tail Kites soaring above our patio.



All Things Snowy Owl--Update

By Guy David



Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative monitoring coordinator, Ryan Brady, has been tracking this year's remarkable irruption of Snowy Owls and the tally now stands at ~271 birds. Read more details and get a map of sightings at:

<http://bit.ly/1nqpVd3>

Project SNOWstorm now has 3 Snowy Owls tagged with transmitters in Wisconsin, including birds at Buena Vista Marsh (Portage County), Freedom (Outagamie), and Kewaunee (Kewaunee Co.). View their daily movements at the link below. Many thanks to the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin for sponsoring these birds.

<http://www.projectsnowstorm.org/maps/>

You may also enjoy this 30-minute podcast Ryan did on Snowy Owls, bird monitoring, and citizen science for Lab Out Loud, a biweekly podcast from the National Science Teachers Association that discusses science news and education.

<http://laboutloud.com/2014/02/episode-107-the-snowy-owl-irruption/>

Just in the Nick of Time!

Notes from the Florida Panhandle

By Sandy Gillum

Every day on St. George Island is a great day, but this one was one I will remember.

After a morning rain, the sky cleared and a stiff off shore (NW) wind was blowing when Mari (our dog) and I were heading home along the shore. Mari was spooking willets and sanderlings and I was simply bracing against the gusts. In my peripheral vision was a flash of orange. An incoming migrating Northern Oriole glided right onto the top of a 4-foot wave, was tossed onto shore and hit by a second wave. Realizing the little male was a going to be a goner with the next wave, I shifted into "high gear" and swooped him up. He was caked with sand in eyes, ears, nares, and underwing. His eyes were half mast and he was exhausted, soaked with salt water, and very cold.

I ran (that is relative on 7-decade knees) home, rinsed his eyes and beak, wrapped him in layers of TP to soak water off his feathers. Offered him fresh water, sugar water, and fresh orange juice. He let me dust off much of the sand, but he was so tired, he seemed to like the warmth of a hand. When he would take no more fluids and was a bit dryer, Don and I put him in a beer box in the laundry room where it is warm.



He slept/rested for over 4 hours. Once he began to move a bit, Don put a small branch in the box so he could perch normally, rather than sit "flat footed". After a few more feedings of juice his eyes were open, he perched on the branch, and was shaking and preening his feathers and ridding himself of residual sand.

Thinking that this guy had had a rough day, rather than releasing him on the island to face a flight across the sound into the wind, we drove him across the causeway and released him on the NOAA Estuary Reserve. He took one look at me and was "outta here"...headed north! He was beautiful! Wonder what tale he will share on his breeding ground?

New WI-DNR Birding Website

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/outdoorrecreation/activities/birding.html>

WBCI Staff here at WI-DNR are proud to announce the release of a birding and bird conservation website. There is great info on where to find birds, how to report birds and information

on how to get involved with conservation. Click through to the site and save it to your bookmarks! We'd appreciate any and all feedback as we ramp up to the peak "birding" season.

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Life List Quarterly

By Guy David

The Discovery Center Bird Club's Life List stands at 260 species. Adding species to the club's life list is expected to become more difficult as more of the "easy" ones are tallied. The following table depicts the number of species added to the club life list each of our 10 years of record keeping.

Year	Number of New Species
2004	111
2005	51
2006	30
2007	5
2008	9
2009	12
2010	19
2011	3
2012	14
2013	6
Total	260

So, if we are looking for "lififers" what should we be looking for? What is the potential for the State of Wisconsin? What is the potential for Vilas County?

I checked the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology's Website to find the "Checklist of the Birds of Wisconsin". <http://wsobirds.org/files/Records/Checklist/Checklist-09122012.pdf>

This checklist shows 435 species of birds that have been historically recorded in Wisconsin. Species on the checklist are rated. There are 201 "Common" species, 82 species are rated as "Uncommon", 58 species rated as "Rare", and another 91 rated as "Casual/Accidental". The 2 "Extinct" species are the Passenger Pigeon and Carolina Parakeet, so, sadly, they will never be available to us. Within the club's Life List of 260 species are recorded a number of species rated as less than "Common" for the State of Wisconsin. As we add new "lififers" to our list each year, the pool of possible additions gets smaller.



Carolina Parakeet Photo from Wikipedia
 There are several reasons that it is getting harder. We need to continue to improve our birding skills because some species are hard to identify. We may actually have seen or heard some of the species missing on our list but didn't recognize them when we encountered them! Our rule that at least 2 club members must positively identify a species before we record it makes it a little harder still. Difficult to identify species make it challenging.



Pacific-Slope / Cordilleran Flycatcher”. These species were formerly considered conspecific, once known as “Western Flycatcher. Silent birds are impossible to tell apart with certainty. Voice and range are best identification clues to separate the species. Note the teardrop shaped eye ring that is broken above. Photo by Guy David

A second reason has to do with geography. Most of our club outings are close to home and there are many species of birds on the Wisconsin Checklist that don't occur in our home area. We would need to bird of our home area in coastal areas, prairie habitats, and other ecosystems.



A few of the David's AZ birding friends, doing the same thing that we do...just different habitat!

Photo by Guy David

How are we doing for the northwoods birds and have we added all of them to our Life List? Well

not all of them according to the data available via Wisconsin eBird! Do you eBird? If not, please do! The more data entered the better!

By using the Internet and going to Wisconsin eBird, one can click on “Explore Data” and then click on “Explore a Location”. I then selected Vilas County and found that as of April 12, 2014 there have been 3,483 checklists recorded in Vilas County and 269 species are included on that list.

The bird club has a significant presence on that list with our records, but of the 269 species recorded in Vilas County, NLDC Birders have recorded 180 of them with 89 more to go! The collective record is likely to always exceed any individual's record but the NLDC Birders are ranked at number 3 with second place holder, Guy David, at 195 species and James Baughman in number one at 255 species. Remember Jim? Jim presented at a club meeting about a year ago and offered to lead us on an outing and we should take him up on that! He may be king of that list forever.

For 2014, 249 checklists and 79 species have already been recorded in Vilas County. The club won't appear on the 2014 list for Vilas County until our weekly outings begin and the tallies from the Birding Festival outings are added.

I checked the eBird record for other counties in our home area and for Oneida County and I found that there have been 2,811 checklists and that 259 species are recorded for the county. The NLDC Birders are sixth on that list at 157 species, so there is room for us to grow in Oneida County too. Club member Vanessa Haese-Lehman is currently in the top 10 for Oneida County with 147 species.

For Price County there are 466 checklists with 218 species. The NLDC Birders are eighth on that list at 86 species. Guy David is sixth at 96 species and our own Jim Krakowski leads the list with 160 species! Congratulations Jim!

Iron County has 802 checklists and 233 species. NLDC Birders are third on that list at 155 species.

The Checklist of the Birds of Wisconsin reveals that the NLDC Birders have many more species of birds that are available to us within our own State. Wisconsin eBird records show us NLDC Birders are a major contributor to bird species records in the counties of our home area, but we aren't at the top of any of the county lists...YET!

How are we doing for this year's annual list as of April 12, 2014? Our field trip to Duluth to look for Boreal species at Sax-Zim Bog was snowed out. We only recorded 7 species of birds for that trip all in the Duluth Harbor. We have a long way to go to equal last year's total of 184 species., and even further for the club to achieve my personal dream goal of 200 species in a single year. I know we can do it...will we?



Broad-billed Hummingbird, perhaps the most common hummingbird species in southeast Arizona
Photo by Guy David

Birding and Vacation

By Anne Swift

This year my husband Duanne and I decided to spend two months camping in the southwest on vacation. Although we had spent time in the southwest years ago it was before becoming birders.



Birders in the Southwest

When first beginning to plan our trip Duanne found a birding festival, The Verde Valley Bird Festival in Cottonwood Arizona. This festival which starts on April 24th sounds truly amazing and we are looking forward to it. It will be our last stay before heading home.

We've birded in Arizona's Chiricahua (sighting of our first Acorn Woodpecker) and Catalina State Parks as well as the San Pedro River Valley in Arizona. We've added several life list birds to our list and camping now in Utah, are adding more.

Trips to visit Zion, as well as mundane trips to refill gas tanks, or do laundry also have netted new finds. We stand at 75 species, counting birds we are 100% sure we have seen.

While in Tucson we joined up with fellow Discovery Center birders, Guy and Bonnie David for the aforementioned trip to San Pedro, with a

group of birders Guy met near their getaway in Green Valley Arizona. While at Catalina State Park we were able to go on two guided bird trips lead by volunteers in the park. Now In Utah, we found remote birding hot spots on the St. George birding website. Upon arrival to one such spot truly in the middle of nowhere, we ran into fellow birders who graciously gave us the lay of the land.

The theme of my writing; birders are birders. As shown in the accompanying picture, to some degree we even look the same, vested, necks bent back in search of our delight, a lovely bird! Finding a Golden Crowned Warbler for the first time, or a Crissal Thrasher, Costa's, Anna's, Black-Chinned and Broad-Billed Hummingbird, to mention just a few, is incredibly exciting. So is discovering the common sharing and enjoyment of fellow birders. Whether it's organized birding, like the festival we will be attending in late April, meeting up with friends from home like Guy and Bonnie, or meeting new birder volunteers or wanderers, birding has added so much to our lives. It's no wonder birding is growing by leaps and bounds!!

Red Tailed Hawk Trapped While Hunting

By Liz Stone and Dick Theile

The photos below were taken by our son, Chris Theile, who has participated in Discovery Bird Club field outings when he visits the Northwoods. Chris and his wife were lucky enough to witness a red tailed hawk attack a squirrel in its nest, then start to fly away with the squirrel.

However, the hawk lost its balance as it flew away. It fell upside down into some brush below the tree where the nest was, and it became stuck!

It firmly refused to let go of the squirrel as it struggled to regain its balance. The hawk eventually disentangled itself from the brush without losing its prey, and descended to the ground, where it proceeded to have a meal.



Very Kind Bluejay

by Ingrid Stephan

I have never liked Bluejays because they seem like pigs at the bird feeder, swiping the sunflower seeds off onto the ground to their buddies, the squirrels. Well, one particular Jay has won my heart. I was sitting indoors noticing big gray flakes come down from the sky. It was summer and I thought, "Oh no, someone has a bonfire badly out of control"! Then I observed this Bluejay repeatedly flying up to the peak of the house and back down to the ground. It was attacking a hornet's nest and eating the larvae fell to the ground. What an unexpected bonus. I was very thankful to see the hornet's nest destroyed because we could not reach it.

Crows to the Rescue

by Joan Galloway

It happened last summer. After hearing a duck quacking loudly on the lake, I went to investigate. I saw a mallard hen by a dock quacking. I wondered what had her so upset and then noticed a floating object out from her on the lake. It was a group of very young ducklings huddled together. The mother was trying to call them to her but they refused to come. Why didn't she just swim out to them?

The reason appeared overhead. A bald eagle swooped down at the ducklings but hot on its tail were two crows diving at the eagle and harassing it. It flew into a tree with the crows cawing at it. The hen then swam half way out to her ducklings calling to them. They started to follow her to the dock but turned back. The eagle again came after the ducklings only to be harassed by the crows tight on its tail. The hen again swam out and this time the ducklings followed her under the dock. I now have a new appreciation of crows because they harassed the bald eagle long enough for the hen to rescue her ducklings.

Hurrah, Wisconsin Birders!

By Sarah Johnson

The attached USFWS report from Ryan Brady serves as an addendum to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Recreation and presents “information on the participation and expenditure patterns of 47 million birders in 2011. Trip-related and equipment-related expenditures associated with birding generated nearly \$107 billion in total industry output, 666,000 jobs, and \$13 billion in local, state, and federal tax revenue. This impact was distributed across local, state, and national economies.”

Some not-too-surprising birder stats:

- In 2011 there were 47 million birdwatchers (birders) 16 years of age and older in the United States – about 20 percent of the population.
- 88% of birders are backyard birders, while 38% take trips away from home to “go birding.”
- The “average” birder is 53 years old while only 17% fall under the age of 35.
- Unlike hunting and fishing where men were overwhelmingly in the majority, a larger percent of birders were women – 56 percent in 2011.
- Birders are not a racially or ethnically diverse group. Ninety-three percent of birders identified themselves as white.
- 75% of birders reported observing waterfowl, making them the most watched type of bird. Birds of prey followed at 72% and songbirds at 68%.
- **Wisconsin has the second highest birding participation rate by state residents in the country (33%), behind only Vermont (39%).**
- Wisconsin birders average 95 days of birdwatching per year.

Table 9. Summary of Economic Impacts (determined using IMPLAN, a regional input-output modeling method).

Birders	46,741,000
Total Expenditures	\$40,942,680,000
Travel	\$14,868,424,740
Equipment	\$26,074,255,293
Total Output	\$106,977,730,000
Jobs	666,000
Employment Income	\$31,391,977,000
State Tax Revenues	\$6,000,203,000
Federal Tax Revenues	\$7,089,387,000