

## ***BIRD SONGS***

Newsletter of the  
Discovery Center Bird Club

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*David Foster, Editor*

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### **Officers**

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



## **President's Message**

*By John Randolph*

Our birding hikes and adventures have always been greatly enjoyable to me, and this year the Bird Club has further increased our opportunities by hiring very knowledgeable guides for several of the trips taken thus far in 2012. In addition to the wonderful skills (and generous sharing of expertise) of many of our members, we benefited from the talents of fine birders who had valuable familiarity with the areas we visited. Starting in February in Duluth and the Sax-Zim Bog, we added two life birds for the Club, the relatively huge Great Black-backed Gull (biggest gull in the world) and the Thayer's Gull, and got good looks at other birds less commonly seen in our general area such as a Boreal Chickadee and a Rough-legged Hawk.

In April, excellent in-house (and volunteer) guide Guy David took us to the Mead Wildlife Area and the Buena Vista Grasslands, where we saw Club life birds like the Greater Prairie Chicken and the Short-eared Owl, among many other lovely sightings. In May, Jim Krakowski (another

outstanding in-house, volunteer guide) arranged for a trip to Wyalusing State Park and adjacent areas. This trip was guided by a young man who did a terrific job, helping us to see several Club life birds, such as the Kentucky Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, and my favorite sighting, the Cerulean Warbler, and many other species. I had a particularly good look at the beautiful blue color of the Cerulean, despite the tree-top height of its perch.

Although attendance was smaller than we hoped for, the 2012 Birding Festival was a major pleasure, with quite nice weather, good field trips, and notably fine speakers and programs. As for the Club's April through October Thursday morning birding outings (with several being all-day), Donna Roche has done a tremendous job planning and organizing, in addition to skilled spotting and hearing. Jon Cassady will be leading a biking/birding outing this month.

The Club again this year was a sub-contractor with the North Lakeland Discovery Center to do

some of the Shoreline Survey work that the Wisconsin DNR pays the Center to carry out. This is a citizen-science effort as well as an important revenue opportunity for the Club's budget. At the last training session, the DNR asked Survey participants to take and pass (after practice tests) the Visual and Auditory Tests of the online Birder Certification program. We were asked to pass the two tests at a modest level, and while several of us found the experience rather daunting, we got through it. While I personally consider myself to be a bird-watching enthusiast as opposed to birder (having passed at the "level Low"), I can say that I found the time spent to be very helpful and informative. Assuming we do this again, I will certainly get an early start, well before Spring migration. The website is [www.birdercertification.org](http://www.birdercertification.org). The site states: "A major goal is to help validate the integrity of bird inventory and monitoring projects by improving and documenting birder identification skills. The program also provides an educational tool for students and recreational birders of all skill levels"

## Life List Quarterly

*By Guy David*

### Life List

As was predicted in this column in April, the club's Life List was significantly built upon due to two field trips to other areas of Wisconsin. The list below indicates that all new species added to the life list so far this year have been recorded in areas outside the club's home birding area! Canal Park in Duluth, Buena Vista Grasslands, and the Prairie du Chien area have produced species not typically found in northern Wisconsin.

October 12-14: [Birding Workshop Grosbeaks Galore! A Birds on Your Landscape Workshop in Port Washington, plus field trips to Horicon Marsh and Lake Michigan shoreline sites. For information contact Guy David at \[bgdavid@wildblue.net\]\(mailto:bgdavid@wildblue.net\)](#)

Following is a list of the species added to the bird club life list so far in 2012.

Species	Date	Location
Thayer's Gull	2/16/2012	Duluth-Canal Park
Great Black-backed Gull	2/16/2012	Duluth-Canal Park
Eurasian Collared-Dove **	5/21/2012	Prairie du Chien
Short-eared Owl	4/19/2012	Buena Vista Grasslands
Acadian Flycatcher	5/22/2012	Wyalusing State Park
Bell's Vireo *	5/23/2012	Crawford County - Hogsback SNA
Carolina Wren *	5/21/2012	Prairie du Chien-La Riviere Park,
Blue-winged Warbler	5/22/2012	Wyalusing State Park
Yellow-throated Warbler *	5/22/2012	Wyalusing State Park
Cerulean Warbler	5/22/2012	Wyalusing State Park
Prothonotary Warbler	5/22/2012	Wyalusing State Park
Kentucky Warbler	5/22/2012	Wyalusing State Park

Yes, that's right! The club has added 12 new species to our life list already this year, so the total number of species observed in all outings since we began to keep records in 2004 now stands at 251 species of birds!

*Four of the new species on the club's life list also have been determined by the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology to be hard to find anywhere in the State of Wisconsin. Those species have one or two asterisks by their name in the table above. The Eurasian Collared-Dove, with 2 asterisks, has been determined "Casual," meaning that 1 has been recorded in Wisconsin in the past 1-5 years. Actually, this species is being reported more regularly so its status may be changed in the near future. The Bell's Vireo, Carolina Wren, and Prothonotary Warbler are notated with 1 asterisk. This means these species have been determined to be "Rare," meaning they have been*

recorded less than 9 times in Wisconsin each year. Therefore, these 4 species can be special observations for the club members on these outings.

Birding outside our home territory increases the likelihood of encountering new species for our life list. However, that does not mean the club can't find new species in our 'neck of the woods'! It is interesting to note that the last time the club added a "lifer" in our area was when a Christmas Bird Count crew recorded White-winged Crossbills on December 19, 2010. Before that, the club added the Fox Sparrow to our list Fish Hatchery Road on October 21, 2010.



### **Kingbird on nest—Natural Lakes**

*Photo by David Foster*

(This bird was first spotted by Guy David during a Bird Club field trip to Natural Lakes on July 5. She subsequently hatched two young ones who fledged at the end of July).

True, it has been awhile since we have located a new species for the club life list in the northwoods area, but there are many possibilities. We just have to keep getting out there to look for them!

### Annual List

So far, the bird club has been enjoying a great year in 2012. When this report was written in April we had only 27 species for the year since we had only one outing so far which was a winter outing. As of this writing, our annual list proudly includes 167 species!

We have a way to go to meet or exceed our production of 180 species in 2011 or maybe exceeding our record year in 2011 when we recorded 193 species. We have

a good chance this year! We still have the fall migration, major field trips such as Hawk Ridge and Jaegerfest planning in the works, perhaps a fall trip to the Ashland area during migration, and the winter species we usually manage to find during the Christmas Bird Counts! And then there is the annual fall shorebird migration beginning sometime in August...

When I look over our annual list of 168 species this year and compare it to our life list, I can easily see species of birds we haven't recorded that certainly are attainable yet this year.

Let's go and get 'em!

*Boom Time!*

## **Watching Prairie Chickens in the Buena Vista Grasslands**

Donna Roche-

Sometimes our motivation to participate in a specific birding trip is triggered by more than just marking a species on our 'life list'.

The main reason I wanted to participate in the recent Bird Club field trip to the Buena Vista Grasslands on April 19 was because of Francis Hamerstrom. Perhaps you know her name, but I did not until I read her memoirs of a naturalist, "My Double Life". After reading the book and learning about her conservation work with her husband, Frederick, to study and help save the Greater Prairie Chicken from near extinction in Wisconsin, I decided that I must experience what her work means today. So, with six others, I got up in the middle of the night to sit in a bird 'blind', wait and then watch this unique bird and its breeding rites.

Yes, I marked the Greater Prairie Chicken on my life list, but my greater reward was to be able to pay a small tribute to those who have dedicated their life work to the study and preservation of the birds.

Jean Hanson—

Although I had watched the prairie chickens at Buena Vista Marsh several years ago, I was still thrilled to see the "dance" again. The entire experience was extraordinary, from sitting in the pitch black, totally quiet blind waiting to hear the first "booming" of the chickens, to opening the shutters and trying to count the birds in the dim light, to finally seeing 14 males performing for one female. What a sight! And to experience all this on a perfectly clear windless morning--what luck!



**Prairie Chicken—Buena Vista Grasslands**  
*Photo by Guy David*

Guy David--

As a Natural Resources student at UW-Stevens Point I took a course in Wildlife Management. One of the requirements of the course was to participate in a morning of Greater Prairie Chicken research under the tutelage of Fred and Frances Hamerstrom.

The experience included going to the Hamerstrom's home the night before and being instructed about what our tasks were for the next morning. The instruction period was made memorable in itself when the Great-horned Owl that lived in their home decided to swoop down over our heads while scattering Dr. Hamerstrom's papers all about.

After our instruction it was early to bed in the unheated upstairs 'dorm' that was filled with

bunk beds. Reveille came so early that I thought I barely got to sleep when we had to get up to eat the hot bacon and eggs breakfast that the Hamerstrom's prepared for us. As college students, we understood about going to bed at 3:00 AM but never knew that people actually got up at that time of day to prepare to go to work! Becoming wildlife researchers didn't seem like such a great career choice right at that moment.

After breakfast we loaded into the Hamerstrom's van and were deposited one by one in open country and told the general direction to find our blind, in the dark. Flashlights? Hmmmmp! The birds didn't need them so neither did 'Gaboons'!

Well, I did find my blind, and settled in to wait for the action. What unfolded before me for the next 3 hours was astounding! Despite the lack of down or fleece clothing or even warm footwear, I was oblivious to the damp and cold conditions in the rickety (by today's standards) blind. I may have been a young and inexperienced kid, but I was completely captivated!

Once the booming ended and the Hamerstrom's came back to pick me up, we drove around to pick up the others. I remember them stopping to look at a speck of a bird on a tree at the edge of a woodlot off in the distance and agreeing that it was a Broad-winged Hawk. My sharp, young eyes didn't even notice the bird. That was the first time I realized that I could learn to do that!

The college professor that took us on that field trip was Dr. Fred Baumgartner. He and his wife, Marguerite, were renowned ornithologists who came to UW-Stevens Point from Oklahoma. Through them I was exposed to my first Christmas Bird Count and learned about the value of that annual event in building a research data base on the health of our bird populations. I also learned it was fun!

Little did I understand then about the significance of these experiences and how important my teachers were to the world of wildlife research. While wildlife research did not become my profession, teaching and education in the natural

resources field did. While field work was not my future, I had gained a lifelong interest that I have felt compelled to share with others. All those experiences added up to the Discovery Center Bird Club and the activities it brings us.

I am so thankful for our club members' willingness to continue learning about birds and birding here in the north woods. Christmas Bird Counts, the Great Backyard Bird Count, our birding trail, bird surveys, and observing Greater Prairie Chickens on their booming grounds not only contributes to the well-being of birds, it also provides great experiences for anyone interested in birding.

## **Birding in Southwest Florida: Tigertail Beach, Marco Island**

*By Jim Krakowski*

SW Florida has many birding hotspots; they include Ding Darling NWR, Audubon's Corkscrew Sanctuary, Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Big Cypress National Preserve, Crew Trust Lands, Collier 20/20 Preserves, Ten Thousand Islands and many more. However, during the winter months, one of my favorite birding locations is Tigertail Beach Park.

Tigertail is located in extreme southwestern Florida within the city of Marco Island. It is a Collier County Park with a mile-long tidal lagoon that is a haven for wading and shore birds. Mid-tide is the best time to visit, because at low tide the birds are scattered far and wide along the coast and at high tide the lagoon may be entirely under water.

**BIRD CLUB PRESENTATIONS  
MONTHLY, 7 PM AT THE NORTH  
LAKELAND DISCOVERY CENTER:**

September 10: Guy David on "Birding in the Southwestern USA"

October 1: Jim Baughman on "40 Years of Birding in Vilas County"



**Judy and Jon Cassady and the Caloosa Bird Club Tigertail.** *Photo by Jim Krakowski*

As one walks out to the lagoon flats north of the parking area, birders are treated to Prairie Warblers singing in the mangroves; Osprey feeding young at nest platforms; and Reddish Egrets dancing in the shallows. Other wading birds commonly observed include: Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Tri-colored Heron, Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, White Ibis and sometimes the white phase of the Reddish Egret. Brown Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Red-breasted Merganser, Ring-billed Gull, Laughing Gull, Northern Mockingbird, Mourning and Common Ground Dove, Common Grackle and Boat-tailed Grackle are species always observed. In the air Red-shouldered Hawk, Bald Eagle, Royal Tern, and occasionally a Magnificent Frigatebird may be seen.

However, it is the shorebirds that I enjoy most because there are few opportunities to observe such a wide variety of species at close range. A spotting scope is still needed to identify some of the birds and of course closer views are always more satisfying. The birds are not too flighty as people frequently walk along the edge of the lagoon. Thus birders can slowly walk into close range of some flocks. During the morning hours the sun is at your back and the views are fantastic!

The area is most noted for having all five of the wintering plovers that occur in Florida: Black-bellied; Snowy; Piping; Semipalmated; and Wilson's. It is a wonderful place to study the

different winter characteristics that distinguish these cute little plovers. Other shorebirds commonly observed include: Willet, both Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Short-billed Dowitcher, Dunlin, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Red Knot, and Killdeer.



**Short-billed Dowitchers and Dunlin.** ``  
*Photo by Jim Krakowski*

The area is large and attracts birds from quite a distance. One is always on the lookout for an unusual species such as: Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, or Whimbrel. Also one has to be on the alert for an occasional Merlin or Peregrine Falcon that may take a pass at the shorebird congregation.

Birders visiting SW Florida should not pass up a visit to Marco Island's Tigertail Beach.

## **Put Yourself on the Map**

*By Guy David*

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has started a new citizen-science project called YardMap. Check it out at [www.yardmap.org](http://www.yardmap.org).

I read an article about this project in the Cornell Lab's spring 2012 edition of BirdScope: News and Views from Sapsucker Woods and decided to try it myself. I found that it works and is easy to do. Here is an excerpt from that article that does a good job of explaining this new project.

Bird watching and backyards have always gone together-many of the questions we answer each day at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology concern how people can best attract birds to their yards. Now, a new citizen-science project called YardMap helps you get the most from your yard, all while helping scientists collect data about how gardening practices affect birds.

YardMap works by giving participants tools to plan their yards, and by creating a community of gardeners with whom you can share ideas and advice. It's easy to use-if you've ever used Google to look at a satellite image of your house, you're well on your way to mapping your yard.

You start with a birds-eye view of your house and use our simple point-and-click mapping tools to draw in ecological details. Your site is automatically linked to our eBird project so that you can enter your bird sightings at will-create a yard list, keep track of spring arrivals and fall departures, or any other memorable visits by birds.

YardMap helps us learn about how Americans manage one of the most familiar and most extensive habitats on the continent. The average yard consists of lawn, hedge, flowerbeds, driveways-but we need to know about yards in a lot more detail than that. And by pairing habitat information with bird sightings, we can learn about the effects of different gardening practices at a much larger scale. But first we need help from the experts - you.

From the very smallest inhabitants to the grandest of trees, your yard has a role to play in helping to establish safe bird habitat

I checked my YardMap project today and found out that there are only 2000+ maps drawn so far. So far I am the only one to create a map in the Lac du Flambeau area and, so far, I am only one of three in northern Wisconsin. One of the others is located east of Sayner and the other is located a few miles north of Park Falls. It truly is a new Citizen-Science project that is just beginning!

To get started, just go to [www.yardmap.org](http://www.yardmap.org) and then begin by watching the video that demonstrates how to use the tools provided via the website. Then, sign in and get started. If you have ever participated in any other Cornell Lab Citizen-Science project you already have a user

name and password to use. Examples of other projects that you might have participated in where you would use the user name and password would be eBird, Project Feeder Watch, and the Great Backyard Bird Count.

I think that it would be GREAT if many of our members took the time and effort to map our yards so that our region would be well represented in the YardMap project. Since our parent organization, the North Lakeland Discovery Center, is in the process of site planning, it also would be great if the Discovery Center grounds also were mapped. Since there also is a considerable eBird data record for the Discovery Center due to club activities, it would be a perfect candidate. Because citizen-science is a significant part of the Discovery Center's Strategic Plan, even more perfect!

OK, now I'm going to go way out there. How about doing this project for member yards as a group at the Discovery Center? All we would need to do is get together at an agreed date and time, use laptop computers with WiFi capabilities, and have each person log in to their map project. Then we could work together at getting each of our maps in good shape, while having a good time to boot! I would enjoy sharing my project with other club members and maybe some of you would like to do so too.

On top of all that, here is a magic word, it is FREE!

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## **BIRD CLUB CELEBRATES GREAT BIRDING AT ANNUAL MEETING!**

On a sunny afternoon –August 6--the NLDC Bird Club celebrated another successful year with a toast, cookout, and business meeting, followed by a screening of the film “The Big Year.” Linda Dunn organized the event, which brought together 16 club members and guests for an enjoyable evening.

Even some NLDC birds showed up for the festivities: first a Merlin flew from tree to tree,

apparently enjoying the conversations, then a Bald Eagle came over to kibitz, followed by an Osprey and a Belted Kingfisher.



*Photo by David Foster*

The following officers were reelected for the 2012-2013 club year:

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

Contact information for these officers may be found on the Bird Club page of the North Lakeland Discover Center website, at [www.discoverycenter.net/](http://www.discoverycenter.net/), under Programs and Events.



**Toasts all around for another outstanding Club year!** *Photo by David Foster*