

BIRD SONG

Newsletter of the North Lakeland
Discovery Center Bird Club



June, 2016; Volume 12, Issue 2

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President's Message

Carne Andrews

Up until about 10 years ago, autumn had always been my favorite season of the year with its colorful landscapes and moderate temperatures. That was a time before developing a deep passion for learning more about birds and an appreciation for nature's finest music....bird song!

Obviously, those who named the Bird Club newsletter shared this same sentiment. As reliable as spring migration, **Bird Song** is published quarterly to keep you informed on the club's activities with summaries of past events, informative articles, and Guy David's comprehensive Quarterly Life List reports on the club's annual and historical species observations. Guy has done a very commendable job of keeping the Club's records since 2004. Hoping you'll read and enjoy this latest edition of **Bird Song**. Special thanks to our editor, Ingrid Stephan.

Bird song also brings me back to a favorite time of day, the predawn and first morning light in spring and early summer when birds are particularly active and vocal. When I first started to learn bird song, I'd awaken early in the morning and from bed listen intently to match the song with its singer. The early risers in my yard, Red-eyed Vireo, American Robin, or Eastern Phoebe, usually begin first with a little stirring twitter, then a single note breaking into a full song. Every few minutes a new voice joins the chorus and soon the melodious voices seem to be calling me from sleep. What a great way to start a new day!

The early morning quiet also provides a time of reflection. The other morning while still in a "birding mind frame", I began to think about and be grateful for the numerous meaningful avian related activities we've engaged in as a club since mid-April. Collectively, we can take pride in contributing many volunteer hours to support bird conservation initiatives, habitat preservation, local and statewide organizations, monitoring and data collection, public education, and fund-raising. Thank you for your participation in these worthwhile endeavors: The Annual Midwest Crane Count; Northwood's Birding Festival; the NLDC Bird Banding Program; Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II; Bird City; our weekly bird hikes and monthly educational programs; and most recently, The Great Wisconsin Birdathon.

This is a "notable" accomplishment for a birdclub of any size...certainly worth singing about!!!



Birdathon Team Members

UP NORTH HAMMERHEADS NAIL INAUGURAL BIRDATHON

Carne Andrews

Participation in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon (GWB) for the first time as a club will be a memory that 14 Bird Club team members will not soon forget! Donna Roche, Carne, and Team Captain, Sarah Besadny formed a committee to choose a team name, set species and fund-raising goals and set up the website. After a short internet search for a nickname to reflect the club's Pileated Woodpecker logo, NLDC Up North Hammerheads was chosen. Routes for the day were strategized, ambitious goals were set to search out 100 species of birds in this 24 hour Big Day event, and to raise \$2,500 for the Natural Resources Foundation Bird Protection Fund.

On Thursday, May 26, 2016 at 6 AM at Powell Marsh LdF, armed with binocs, scopes, field guides, rain gear, bug spray and full tanks of gasoline the mission began. In spite of heavy fog, we got off to a good start with 43 species: mostly common wetland birds, sparrows, warblers, a Brown Thrasher, a Bald Eagle, and a Scarlett Tanager, before the group moved on to the Vista with a few stops in between.

At the Vista, 27 more species were added including a Virginia Rail, a Black-bellied Plover, a Northern Shoveler, and a Northern Pintail before the skies opened delivering a heavy downpour causing a 2 hour suspension. We regrouped at the NLDC over lunch, then headed west to Cathedral Point in Boulder Junction where a few more warblers were added including the Cape May Warbler. A Green Heron was spotted at the Allequash Lake boat landing.

With a stop in Woodruff to get the Eastern Bluebird, it was off to the Lake Tomahawk Demo area off Dove Road. Here a Red-bellied Woodpecker was seen entering and exiting a nest cavity. A Hairy Woodpecker, a Northern Flicker, an Eastern Towhee, a Mourning Warbler, and a singing Golden-winged Warbler were also counted.

By now the skies had cleared and temperatures rose, evolving into a warm afternoon lull. There was no activity along the Wisconsin River at 2 locations so we pushed on to the Woodruff Fish Hatchery where several new species were added to bring the total to 99 species: Wood Duck, Barred Owl, Common Nighthawk, and Eastern Kingbird.

The group decided our last stop would be in downtown Minocqua and the Bearskin Trailhead. Much to our delight and a round of cheers, the Chimney Swift completed our 100 species list, followed by a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Baltimore Oriole, Rock Pigeon, Brown-headed Cowbird, and a House Sparrow spotted on the top of the Campanile Tower. On arriving home Guy added the Downy Woodpecker; Cassaday's the Northern Cardinal; while Katie, Cynthia, and I heard the persistent peenting of the American Woodcock to close out the day with a total of 107 species.

Life List Quarterly

Guy David

At the end of 2015 the bird club's life list stood at 266 species of birds. Six months later, half way through 2016, our life list remains at 266 species. As I have oft predicted, adding new species to our life list will become increasingly difficult. The low hanging fruit, as they say, have been picked. Future additions to this list will require one or more of the following:

- ☞ Exert some effort to ferret out species known to be in our normal area that we just haven't recorded yet. It would be interesting to compare the club's life list against birds known to occur in our area and then plan some targeted outings to find those species.
- ☞ Good fortune by happening upon a vagrant species that has appeared outside of the normal distribution area for the species. For example, the Lark Sparrow that we recorded last summer represented a



- ✂ species that normally can only be found in the far southwestern area of Wisconsin. An example of a possible missed opportunity was John Randolph's recent report of a Northern Mockingbird appearing at his bird feeders, a bird classified as 'rare' by the WSO and absent from our club list.
- ✂ Have bird outings or field trips to other areas of Wisconsin. According to the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology the official statewide Checklist of Birds contains 437 species as of February, 2015. Some of those species are extinct or exceptionally rare and unlikely to be located by us but there are a good number of species that are available.
- ✂ Figure out a way to quickly organize club outings when a species shows up in our area and is reported by via the Rare Bird Alert. One good recent example was the report of the Whimbrel in a nearby cranberry marsh. There have been a few good reports that we just weren't poised to quickly act upon. Maybe our Board of Directors would like to create a quick response system for us to go out and find such birds when they are available.

Our life list will continue to grow through the years and, in my opinion, we have no need to be in a hurry. The important thing is that we continue to regularly get together, get out there, and get our pleasure and enjoyment out of all the birds that we encounter along the way!

Annual List Report

Speaking of getting out there and finding birds, we are off to an incredible start for 2016. As I previously reported, during 2015 the club recorded 151 species for the year. That result was well below our average since the club came into existence and we began recording our observations.

So far, for 2016, the club already has recorded 130 species! When I wrote this column last March, we had 14 species from one winter outing in February to the Ashland area. Well, in part, you know what happened since then, spring migration! Of course, migration can happen without us being out there to observe it, so there must be more to the story. There is! We have been out there!

Thanks to Donna Roche our weekly Thursday outings started up on April 21 and our annual list began to rapidly grow. Then, in mid-May, thanks to Discovery Center staff and many bird club volunteers, we had a great birding festival. Despite the relatively lousy weather for our birding festival field trips including snow squalls and snow on the ground, our annual list probably more than doubled in that single day.

Then, thanks to the efforts of Carne Andrews, Donna Roche, and Sarah Besadny our club successfully participated in the 2016 version of the Great Wisconsin Birdathon. That all day activity resulted in the best outcome ever in terms of species recorded in a single day of birding.

The club recorded 37 species in April and 123 species in May. As of this writing, during the first half of June we have recorded 57 species. Please note that these monthly counts do not represent new species since there are several species that are very common and are recorded during nearly every outing. So, combining the data from all the checklists so far for 2016, having observed 130 species which I consider to be a great outcome. Members who have been participants in our outings have been well rewarded for their efforts!

Quarterly Quiz

Carne Andrews

In June, northern Wisconsin is in the throes of breeding season. Depending on your yard habitat, certain species of birds have highly characteristic nests and nest sites. Match the descriptions on the right with the species on the left to learn more about the birds who might be nesting and raising young in your yard.

[answers at the end of newsletter]

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|----------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. Belted Kingfisher | A. Usually builds a flimsy open cup nest in a conifer lower than 15'. Nest is lined with fine grasses, hair or feathers. |
| _____ 2. Brown Creeper | B. A chamber at the end of a 4-8 ' tunnel in a river bank. |
| _____ 3. Barred Owl | C. Arched concealed nest on the ground with a side entrance, made of leaves and bulky grasses. |
| _____ 4. Wood Duck | D. Built on a horizontal surface from the inside out by pressing dead grass and twigs with the wrist of one wing, then reinforced with soft mud. |
| _____ 5. Whip-poor-will | E. Lays eggs directly on the ground on leaf litter usually on the north or northeast side of a bush to shade nest from afternoon sun. |
| _____ 6. Eastern Phoebe | F. A year-round resident, who often nests in a tree cavity created by a PIWO, COHA, AMCR or squirrel. |
| _____ 7. American Robin | G. Under a loose slab of bark low on a tree trunk. |
| _____ 8. Chipping Sparrow | H. Almost always on sloped ground, well hidden by grasses, under a log or upturned tree root. |
| _____ 9. Dark-eyed Junco | I. Nests in a hole in a tree often near water or in a nesting box. |
| _____ 10. Ovenbird | J. An early spring arriving flycatcher that builds nests in nooks on buildings under protected eaves, on rafters or ledges. |



Marbled Godwit
Guy David



Reddish Egrets
Guy David

Birds of Baja, California

By Guy David

Bonnie and I enjoyed a wonderful eco-tour of Baja, California during March, 2016. We were part of a group of 21 people who gathered in San Diego, CA and ventured to Mexico for an 11 day tour. This trip was an experiential tour that involved a lot of travel with many stops along the way to see and learn about the features of the Sonoran Desert of Baja California Sur, including learning about the plant and animal life of the desert and of a small part of the Pacific coast. Adding to the learning we got to enjoy spectacular scenery along the way too. An added bonus was that many of the desert plants were in bloom while we were there.

A major highlight of this tour was to go by boat out into Scammon's Lagoon (Laguna Guerrero Negro) to watch Gray Whales and to have opportunities to actually pet them. What a tremendous and memorable experience that was!

A geologic feature of this region is a massive salt production facility which we also got to tour and learn about. This facility produces about 5% of the world's salt by using a series of evaporation ponds and proven techniques to harvest massive quantities of salt, much of which is shipped to Japan.

Of course, Salinas De Guerrero Negro is easily the biggest employer and industry in that area. The corporation has contributed a lot to the community and one of their major contributions was to create Parque de Guerrero Negro, a significant bird refuge. The leader of our tour had a strong interest in birds and agreed to take, those of us who were interested, out there birding on 3 different occasions!

This meant that I had some great opportunities to go out birding while we stayed for 4 days in Guerrero Negro which is located about half way down the Baja on the Pacific Coast. It is a shorebird and water bird paradise for the likes of me, who otherwise haven't had any opportunity to observe many species of birds that were present there. A lot of them were new to me! So, with binoculars, camera, and telephoto lens in hand I had a great time! Did you notice that I didn't mention having my smart phone and access to my favorite app, eBird? Oh the pain of having to use pencil and paper to record the bird species the old fashioned way! But, don't worry, once I got back to U.S. cellular service all of the data got eBirded! That sure helped my personal life list with 10 new species added!

The net experience yielded 57 species of birds, many of them wading birds and waterfowl. For example, in northern Wisconsin I have had the pleasure to seeing one Black-crowned Night-Heron during a bird club outing to the Bearskin Trail in Minocqua, and that was years ago. I had never seen a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. There I saw multiple individuals of those species in one pond!

Rather than impose a lot of prose about our trip upon you, I'll include a few choice photos for our reader's enjoyment!



Long Billed Curlew
Guy David

Woodland/Forest ground-nesting birds

Donna Roche

I read with interest John Bates' article in The Lakeland Times of June 10, 2016 and was particularly rewarded with his list of ground-nesting birds. I had recently been pondering the question of how many birds did not build nests or use cavities above ground level for rearing their young. I wondered what bird species constructed their nests on the ground. I am listing here what John identified as northwoods bird species that nest on the ground in forested areas and in more open habitats. I was amazed at how many warblers nest on the ground. Once again, our friend has answered the questions we find hard to answer ourselves. I'll be keeping this list and if you have any species to add, let me know. Thanks, John!

Ruffed Grouse, Spruce Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse

American Woodcock

Whip-poor-will

Wild Turkey

Winter Wren, Sedge Wren

Ovenbird, Blue-winged Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Palm Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Northern Waterthrush

Hermit Thrush, Veery

Savannah Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher

Bobolink

Northwoods Birding Festival 2016

Sarah Besadny

On the weekend of May 13-14, 81 people gathered to celebrate spring migration and International Migratory Bird Day. Friday evening was a chance for old friends to reconnect after the winter and an opportunity to make new acquaintances. Christian Cold gave an interesting talk about wildlife ecology and management from his perspective as a naturalist.

Saturday began early with breakfast and warbler walks and then individuals attended one of several additional birding walks during the morning hours. By the end of the Festival a total of 76 species of birds were spotted. Keynote speaker, Chris Latimer, gave a intriguing presentation about what birds can tell us about their changing environments. A diverse selection of programs were available for attendees to choose from for their afternoon sessions.

Although the species list for the event wasn't as extensive as it has been some years, by all accounts everyone had a terrific time in spite of snow (yes, snow on May 14th!) and rather chilly temperatures for mid-May, even by northwoods standards.

Thank you to members of the Bird Club for helping prepare the Discovery Center grounds and trails during Helping Hands Day, for setting up tables and providing beautiful flower arrangements for the event, for providing yummy appetizers and desserts and for helping lead numerous bird walks.

Here you go...

ANSWERS to Quarterly Quiz: 1. B; 2. G; 3. F; 4. I; 5. E; 6. J; 7. D; 8. A; 9. H; 10. C

Editor's Note: A big round of applause to all the contributors for their great articles and photos!

Just a final comment about bird songs as Carne mentioned at the start of this newsletter. I hope you all got a chance to read the in depth report about how baby birds learn to sing...and this begins while still in their warm eggs!

Here is a website for that article: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/baby-birds-learn-calls-from-their-mothers-while-still-in-the-egg/>

At this Cornell Ornithology Lab website it later talks about how baby birds perfect the accuracy of their particular songs. As you may have observed it's fun to hear the shortened or distorted songs of the young birds and then to hear the adult correct the young learner. Even the Phoebe who nested outside our basement entrance had young ones who insisted on saying "Phoebe, Phoebe" all on a monotone one note song. Mind you, I sort of don't mind being awakened at 4:00 in the morning hearing them practice! I. S.