

# BIRD SONG

Newsletter of the North Lakeland  
Discovery Center Bird Club

---

March, 2016; Volume 12, Issue 1

Ingrid Stephan, Editor

[12panda47@gmail.com](mailto:12panda47@gmail.com)



## Officers

Carne Andrews, President

Cynthia Krakowski, Secretary

Carne Andrews, Acting Treasurer

Linda Dunn, Membership Director

Linda Dunn, Acting Program Director

## President's Message

Carne Andrews

### Ready or Not...Here They Come!!!

Dwindling numbers of common Redpolls at the feeders, early arrival of Trumpeting Swans, Hooded Mergansers, Mallards, and Canada Geese on the upper Manitowish River this year, territorial displays by Hairy Woodpeckers observed today, along with a lone Dark-eyed Junco, a couple of Common Grackles and an American Robin in the yard seem to be consistent with an earlier than usual spring in Wisconsin's Northwoods! If this pattern of warmer weather continues, be on the lookout and listen for more of the usual early arrivals and breeding species in our area: Red-winged Blackbirds; Great Blue Herons; Ruffed Grouse drumming; Yellow-rumped, Chestnut-sided, Yellow, Blackburnian, Nashville, Black-throated Green, Black-and white, and Pine Warblers around native trees and bushes that provide the insects warblers eat.

Also, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird migration has begun with sightings reported along the Gulf of Mexico coast from eastern Texas to southern Florida. It won't be long before they arrive in the northwoods establishing breeding territories, raising nestlings, and visiting your flowers and feeders. If the warmer than usual weather continues this spring, expect them to

arrive around the first of May. To make sure you have your feeders ready for the first arrivals, visit the website [www.hummingbird.net/map](http://www.hummingbird.net/map) to check the progress of their migration. Be prepared to offer a nectar solution of 1 part sugar to 3 or 4 parts water for early migrants and nesting birds. Use table sugar, not artificial sweeteners or honey. Bacteria and fungus will thrive on a honey mixture. [ed. note: we found it necessary to melt the sugar in hot water first and then cool before putting it out.] Do not add red food coloring. Nectar is clear and the red food coloring may be harmful. Clean feeders frequently, preferably before refilling. Whether you prefer to clean your feeder with hot soapy water, vinegar or a bleach solution make sure all black spots of mold are removed.

Ready or not, spring migration is underway! In just a few weeks the NLDC Bird Club will be resuming a full slate of exciting activities with our monthly meetings and presentations on the first Monday of the month and weekly outings Thursday mornings May through October. If you find birds a joy to watch and want to learn more about our feathered friends with folks who love birds come join in! Beginners welcome! Looking forward to seeing you "out there"!!!

## **Birds and Places Quiz**

Fill in the blank to name a correct species name of a North American bird.

[Answers at end of newsletter]

1. Bohemian \_\_\_\_\_
2. Canada \_\_\_\_\_
3. Caspian \_\_\_\_\_
4. European \_\_\_\_\_
5. Acadian \_\_\_\_\_
6. Baltimore \_\_\_\_\_
7. Cape May \_\_\_\_\_
8. Carolina \_\_\_\_\_
9. Virginia \_\_\_\_\_
10. Philadelphia \_\_\_\_\_

# **Northwoods Birding Festival Coming Soon!**

## **Heather Lumpkin**

The 12th Annual Northwoods Birding Festival is scheduled to take place May 13-14, 2016 and will provide an opportunity for bird enthusiasts to celebrate birds while enjoying field trips to local hot spots and presentations by experts in ornithology. Registration for the event is currently available at <http://www.discoverycenter.net/northwoods-birding-festival.html>. Register early to reserve a space for your favorite field trip.

Friday's welcome reception and keynote presentation will feature a wildlife ecology and management presentation highlighting the significance of the 100th anniversary of the International Migratory Bird Treaty. Based on his 25 year tenure in WDNR Wildlife Management, presenter Chris Cold will provide a philosophical perspective on current critical issues facing wildlife management professionals today.

Saturday's keynote presentation by Chris Latimer, PhD candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will discuss how birds can be used as a model for understanding the effects of land use and climate change. Chris's research within the Zuckerberg Lab focuses on the ways that winter bird foraging behaviors and bird survival are influenced by landscape characteristics and weather. He uses specially designed "smart feeders" that are equipped with Radiofrequency Identification (RFID) data loggers to record the feeder visits of birds that have been outfitted with uniquely numbered Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags. With this data he can compare the characteristics of the feeder locations to the survival and foraging patterns of birds that visit the feeders.

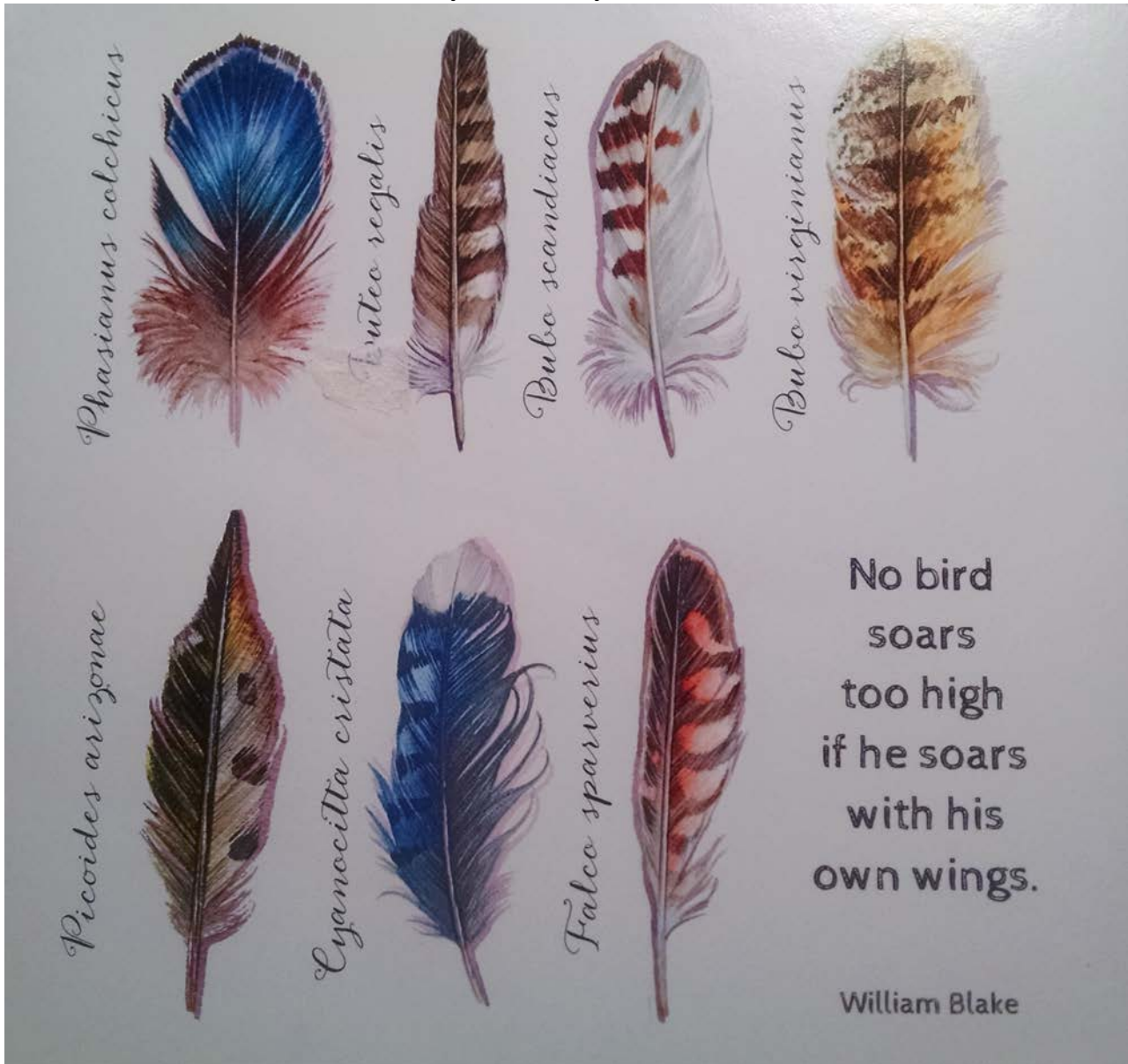
Saturday morning activities include bird banding demonstrations, early morning warbler walks, and field trips to local birding hot spots. New this year John Bates and Mary Burns will offer a field trip exploring the lesser known birding sites in the Mantiowish Waters Area. Space is limited, so register early to receive your top choice among field trip locations.

Saturday afternoon concurrent sessions will provide opportunities to sharpen your raptor identification skills with tips from Northwoods Wildlife Center educators and their live birds. Learn about loon ecology and population research with Erica LeMoine from Project LoonWatch or explore artistic and cultural links to birds with Charlotte Hockings' presentation on the role of birds in Ojibwe culture or a bird sketching class with Sharon Reilly. Discovery Center Naturalists Heather Lumpkin and Licia Johnson entertain and enlighten you with a special "Secret Love Lives of Animals: Birds Only Edition" presentation that will have you guessing at the strange (and often hilarious) mating rituals of birds around the world as you participate in a Jeopardy-style game.

## Trivia Corner

by Cynthia Krakowski

Who lost these feathers?? Can you identify these? [answers at end of newsletter]



## 2015 Christmas Bird Count Data Summary

By Guy David

Thanks to efforts by Donna Roche and John Bates the Minocqua and Manitowish Waters the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) occurred once again. Due to their efforts and the cooperation of good weather on the count days, the outcomes were quite successful.

The Minocqua CBC recorded 27 species and 1,261 individual birds. The average results for the 18 years of the Minocqua CBC are 24 species and 911 birds per year so the 2015 result was well above average. The highest totals ever for the Minocqua CBC occurred in 2008 and 2014

when 1,418 birds and 27 species were recorded both years. The 2015 results were the third highest among the 18 events for total numbers of birds. In terms of number of species recorded, 2015 tied with 2 other years (2008 & 2012). The best year was 2014 when 28 species were recorded.

Every year the CBC always yields some interesting outcomes and 2015 was no exception. There are certain species that almost always show in good numbers. Included among these are the Black-capped Chickadee, Blue Jay, and the local nuthatches. Other species are cyclical and appear in high numbers on a less than annual basis. Among these are Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin. In 2014 we recorded 122 Common Redpoll and 102 Pine Siskin. Those were the third highest on record for Common Redpoll and the highest ever for Pine Siskin. Given those results one might have expected a general absence of both species in 2015 but such was not the case because 84 Common Redpoll and 70 Pine Siskin were recorded. It sure will be interesting to see what shows up on our 2016 CBC!

Now, for the surprises for the Minocqua 2015 CBC: 1) the recording of a White-throated Sparrow by a feeder counter, and 2) 13 Ring-billed gulls that were reported by two different field counting groups. That can only be explained by the presence of more open water. Perhaps the same explanation can be given for 30 Bald Eagles being counted. That far exceeded previous high of 19 eagles being recorded in 2011!

The 2015 CBC also was a banner year for Mergansers. For 2015 there were 8 Hooded Mergansers and 88 Common Mergansers. WOWEE! Previously only one merganser was recorded way back in 1962!

I have to hand it to Donna Roche for doing such a great job of recruiting and organizing the highest number of field counters and feeder counters ever. That contributed to the great results!

The Manitowish Waters CBC, which has been organized and run by John Bates for 23 years, also yielded interesting results with 22 species and 458 individual birds reported. Thanks, John, for taking on this task for so many years!

It is interesting to compare the results of the Manitowish Waters and Minocqua CBCs because there always is a significant overlap of species being recorded for both counts but there always

are surprising differences. For example, Manitowish Waters has had a lock on local Trumpeter Swans but have never been recorded for the Minocqua CBC. This year, even with so much open water and a relative abundance of ducks, the Minocqua count did not yield any Canada Geese but the Manitowish count did! But the Minocqua count recorded 4 Mallards; none for Manitowish Waters. In 2015, for the first year ever, Manitowish Waters recorded a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; none for the Minocqua CBC. The Northern Cardinal is another interesting case in point. After being reported 3 out of the last 4 years on the Minocqua CBC it was missing from the list for 2015. So, of course, one Northern Cardinal was reported in Manitowish Waters, their first since 2010!



I guess the point can be made that it certainly is worthwhile for the club to continue to sponsor and participate in both the Manitowish Waters and Minocqua CBC every year. They continue to be so much fun, yield unique and interesting outcomes every year and continue to contribute to the great tradition that was begun by the National Audubon Society in 1887 with 2015 being the 116<sup>th</sup> count year.

As for me, I was in Arizona in December so I missed our local bird counts, but I did participate in a CBC here in Green Valley. No snow, comfy temps, sunshine, and no frozen ground or ice. Nice! I partnered up with a friend who is a local birder and we headed out to our assigned area in the scrub desert. How different from WI winter birding! There were flocks of 20, 30 or more birds that whizzed past us leaving me clueless! When some did happen to land nearby they were hard to spot on the ground and in the brush. Also, they wouldn't sit still long enough to let me study them! Life was challenging for this Arizona birding rookie! Maybe I'll be sharper after more experience. Familiar story for anyone else?



White-throated sparrow in the brush in AZ.

Despite the challenges, we did manage to identify and record 25 species for our effort. I thought we did OK but when I attended the tally event and found out that 172 species were recorded by the group of over 60 participants, I realized that I have a lot to learn about finding birds in the Green Valley, AZ area. I know that our count of 25 species of birds was way below reality for our assigned area. Often a mixed flock of something would be around us only to flit away before we could get a decent count! Fun, but challenging!

After walking the trail and returning to our vehicle, we came upon 2 bow hunters who had returned to their trucks from deer hunting. We visited with them for a while and they got a kick out of explaining to us how the cougars have greatly reduced the number of deer in the area. Observing that we were only packing binoculars and not side arms, they delighted in carrying

on about how they would NEVER walk around in that area without “packing” due to the chance of coming upon a hungry cougar! Hmmm. Maybe I should have been nervous...I think my friend maybe could outrun me! [ed. note: Glad you made it back, Guy!]



Snowy owl  
photo by Donna De Pape

### **Ashland Birding Outing** by Donna De Pape

On February 16, 2016 eight enthusiastic birders set out before sunrise, amidst blowing snow to caravan northward to Ashland in pursuit of Snowy owl (& other bird) sightings. We gathered at the Discovery Center and then headed north, in spite of the snow which did slow us down at times. By the time we reached Ashland the day had brightened. Several stops were made:

#### 1) Hot Pond (Xcel Energy)

Two stops along the shore. One slightly east of the Hot Pond.....where we spotted coyote tracks crossing the ice. Then on to the hot pond where we saw:

Common Goldeneye 3

gull sp. 1

Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 58

American Crow 1

#### 2) Prentice Park was a little more sheltered from the wind. In the open waters we saw:

American Goldfinch 1

Canada Goose 5

Mallard 20

Common Goldeneye 5

***Gadwall*** 1

(eBird accepted the Gadwall as a rare sighting after additional description details were provided)!!

### 3) Hwy 2 Bridge

We all had great, clear views of a Shrike sitting high in a tree, buffeted by the same winds that were hitting us full in the face. It stayed there quite awhile on the hunt for some tidbit below.

Bald Eagle 1

Northern Shrike 1

Black-capped Chickadee 4

4) The beautiful Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center was our lunch stop and also provided the major excitement of the day. We shared our lunches in a pleasant bright area surrounded by windows. Then we headed up the tower. From the viewing area atop the tower we noticed a large white lump on the electric poles overlooking a farm field and open meadow which surrounds the visitor's center. When viewed through binoculars it was clearly a snowy owl! Yahoo! We had not brought in a scope so I raced down the stairs and out to the car. Running and sliding back as fast as I could, for I feared that the bird would have flown away by the time I finally reached the top viewing area. As I raced by the ranger's desk, she came flying out behind me, clearly as excited as we were to have spotted a Snowy. She joined me looking out to the field as I waited impatiently for the elevator. By the time we reached the top I was so excited that someone else had to help focus the lens so we could see the owl! What a sight! And when she flew after we all had a good look through the scope, it was pure grace. We were indeed rewarded! As a group, we had a lengthy discussion about whether it was a female or a first year male, given the speckled coloring around the neck and upper chest. We decided that it was a female and watched in awe as it took flight. Once again, as we returned to the parking lot, the bird took flight and then disappeared in the cover not far from our cars. We located it on the ground adjacent to an electrical box and were surprised by its great camouflage. We were able to view it again perched on a fence post as we drove away.

Snowy Owl 1

American Crow 6

Common Raven 1

Black-capped Chickadee 10

Red-breasted Nuthatch 1

No further sightings! We wended our way north and stopped at the artesian well in Washburn to refresh our water supply and say goodbye before all heading out for various points on the compass. A wonderful day!





Ashland trip group: l. to r. Carne, Ingrid, Sarah, John, Katy, Judy, Donna  
photo by guest, Lety, from Teaching Drum



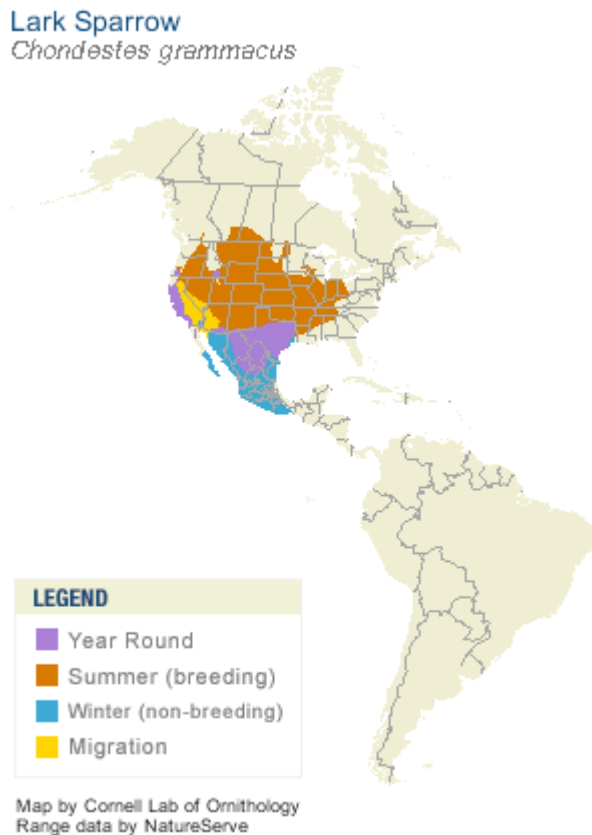
Snowy Owl...not the best setting for a photo!  
photo by Donna De Pape

# Life List Quarterly

Guy David

After the Christmas Bird Count data was added to the club's eBird record, our total species count since inception stands at 266 species. As reported in our December newsletter, the two new species added during 2015 were the Short-billed Dowitcher (Little Turtle Flowage) and Lark Sparrow (Thunder Marsh).

The Lark Sparrow has caused a bit of excitement in the WI ornithology community after it was recorded on eBird. We were so fortunate that I was able to digiscope over 50 photos of the adult bird and then add a couple of those photos to the eBird report. Photos are simply the best at removing all doubt among those who would otherwise have a hard time believing the species was found during breeding season so far outside of the normal range for the species.



Today, while writing this, I received an email from eBird Reviewer, Nick Anich, asking additional questions about our report that 2 juveniles were reported along with the adult Lark Sparrow. I dug into my memory of the sighting as best I could and provided Nick with as complete a description of the juveniles that I could truthfully muster. I hope it is good enough! The juveniles only appeared briefly while the adult was so cooperative by hanging around for several minutes as everybody in our group enjoyed scope views. A photo of the young would have been so great to get, but count that as a miss.

There is a lesson to be learned from this story. Using an eBird app while birding does a lot to alert us when a rare species is being recorded. In fact, the app won't let the record be entered unless a written description is included. When this happens, it stimulates the birder to look more closely at the bird being observed for any details that would help confirm the species being seen. If obtaining a photo, even a poor quality one, is possible, knowing the species is rare would stimulate a greater effort to get a picture. Lacking a photo, the next best thing is to immediately write some field notes with as much detail as possible. This is important whether the birding is being done in the field or at home watching birds at bird feeders!

*Epilogue: I just received the following feedback from Nick Anich regarding my juvenile Lark Sparrow report.*

*"Thanks Guy. Ryan and I batted this record back and forth for awhile.*

*Obviously this would be an exceptional breeding record due to range and habitat. Because your looks were brief and no interactions between the family group were observed I think we'd rather err on maintaining a high standard of data collection and not validate the fledged young at this time, though clearly you had a nice adult there. So I guess I would recommend keeping your comments as is, but coding this as H showing it was possibly breeding, but denoting a greater level of uncertainty given the whole situation and how rare this breeding record would be at a place like that.*

*Let's hope the birds return and you or others can better confirm this exciting find in the remaining years of the Atlas!"*

Scientifically, I agree that they made the right call in the absence of a photo or a complete enough written description on my part. As I think back on it, it would have helped if I had taken the time, at that time, to secure written documentation from my fellow observers. Because of the expert input I changed my report from C = Confirmed Breeder to H = Possible Breeder. Well? Do we have any candidates to take a field trip to Thunder Marsh next summer to see if we can document Lark Sparrows as a breeding species?

### Annual List

The club's official bird species list for 2015 as recorded in eBird is 151 species. How this compares to other years was discussed in the December, 2015 Bird Songs newsletter. One species was added to our annual list with the report of Bohemian Waxwings during the Christmas Bird Count.

Joyfully, I can report that the club's 2016 outings have already begun with a winter outing to the Ashland area. A great start it was! The report of 14 species already is exciting to me! I entered the data into the club's eBird account and found out right away that there were two species on the list that were uncommon on the area for that time of year, the Ring-billed Gull and Gadwall. Carne Andrews and Sarah Besadny sent me written descriptions that I could enter into the record. Again, this experience reinforces the importance of making accurate

observations when recording species for the record. That is one big reason why I strongly promote the use of our smart phones with the eBird app while birding out in the field! Trying to enter a rare or uncommon bird for the time and/or place in the eBird app gives immediate feedback whether the species is 'normal' or not and stimulates closer observation and note taking, or photographing even if the photo would be of poor quality.

Well, that isn't all that excites me about the Ashland trip! Species were recorded that were missed on our 2015 annual list! That would be Northern Shrike and Common Goldeneye! What a great start on our birding year!

Let's get out there early and often and visit as many kinds of habitats as we can to enjoy all the various species during 2016. Our biggest birding day of the year in terms of bird species usually is our own Birding Festival.



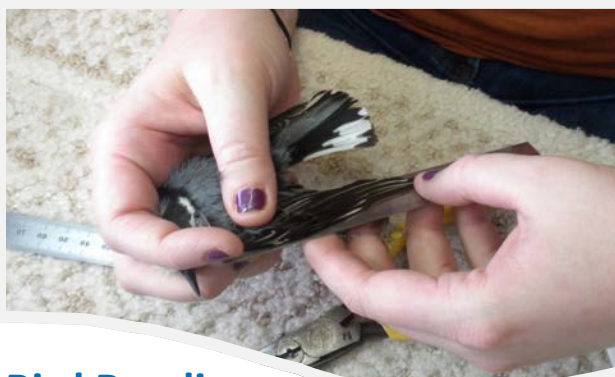
So the Redpoll said, "And you're hanging that feeder there??"  
photo by Ingrid Stephan

For an update on the Discovery Center's bird banding station you will find an infographic with a summary of the 2015 season at <https://infograph.venngage.com/p/67184/2015-stories-and-data-from-the-discovery-center-bird-banding-station>.



From Heather Lumpkin at the Discovery Center:

# Celebrate Public Participation in Science! **CITIZEN SCIENCE** Day



## Bird Banding Demonstration

**Thursday, April 14 2-4pm**

All ages will enjoy seeing live birds up close. Adopt a bird for a memorable experience releasing a banded bird. Special activities just for kids including "band-a-kid" and a migration challenge game. Banding station will close during heavy rain and temperatures colder than 20°F. Donations appreciated.



  
North Lakeland  
Discovery Center

## Nibbles N' Knowledge: Climate Change

**Thursday, April 14 5-7pm**

Cathy Techtmann will present about the G-WOW changing climate, changing culture initiative which uses Ojibwe cultural lifeways as an indicator of changing climate. Cash bar and complimentary appetizers from 5-6pm, program from 6-7pm. Held at Camp Jörn YMCA. \$13 (\$10 members)

## National Citizen Science Day Hike

**Saturday, April 16 11am-12:30pm**

Join Research Coordinator Heather Lumpkin for a guided hike on the Discovery Center trails to celebrate the first national Citizen Science Day. During this program you will learn how to become involved in local, statewide, and national citizen science projects involving birds, bats, lakes, phenology, and more! Free.

## Crane Count Training and Count

**Training: April 15 10-11:30am**

**Count: April 16 5:30-7:30am**

*(Optional breakfast gathering to follow the count.)*

We invite beginner and experienced birders to join us in the morning on April 16 to count cranes across Vilas County. Plan to attend a brief training on the day prior to the count to review protocol and determine logistics. Call for details. Pre-registration is required by 4/14. Free.

**To Register Visit**

**[www.DiscoveryCenter.net](http://www.DiscoveryCenter.net)**

**Or Call (715) 543-2085**

Unless otherwise specified programs take place at the North Lakeland Discovery Center in Manitowish Waters, WI.



# **Bird Banding**

Heather Lumpkin

There's nothing quite like the experience of holding a live bird in your hand! The North Lakeland Discovery Center's bird banding station makes this experience possible while conducting important avian research through bird banding. At the bird banding station, birds are captured in fine, nearly invisible nets (mist nets) or in traps. They are then fitted with a lightweight, aluminum leg band inscribed with a unique, nine-digit number. Species, age, and sex are identified before they are released unharmed. "Bird banding is one of the best tools for studying bird migration, behavior, life span, survival, and productivity. Banding is also an incredible tool for outreach and education. Nothing hooks kids and adults of all ages on nature quite like the experience of releasing a live bird back into the wild." says North Lakeland Discovery Center's Research and Monitoring Coordinator, Heather Lumpkin.

In July 2015, Lumpkin was issued a Bird Banding Subpermit by the U.S. Geological Survey. This Subpermit, sponsored by Master Bird Bander Thomas Nicholls of Fifield, WI, allowed the North Lakeland Discovery Center to launch its new bird banding station in August 2015. The Discovery Center Bird Banding Station partners with the Northwoods Wildlife Center, an animal rehabilitation center in Minocqua, WI that admits an average of 130 songbirds annually. Lumpkin says, "Little is known about the survival of these small songbirds after their release from a rehabilitation program, and we hope to learn more by banding and then later recapturing or re-sighting them. Of the 57 birds banded by the North Lakeland Discovery Center over the last 4 months, 15 have been birds rehabilitated by the Northwoods Wildlife Center."

The North Lakeland Discovery Center also plans to contribute to long-term avian research through the MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) Program. This continent-wide program, operated by the Institute for Bird Populations (IBP), seeks to identify key demographic parameters that drive avian population trends. Operating a MAPS banding station requires the assistance of a team of trained volunteers. The Discovery Center is currently training 17 volunteers to band birds.

Public outreach and bird conservation education is also an important goal for the new banding station. New equipment was purchased for the banding station with funds from the North Lakeland Discovery Center 2015 Fund-a-Wish Campaign. One of these purchases was a document camera that projects and magnifies real time video of bird banding to a large screen TV that can be viewed by the public during banding demonstrations. Kids and adults alike are invited to stop by during the banding station's public demonstrations. At the banding station kids can participate through a scavenger hunt, band-a-kid activity, and bird migration game. Visitors are encouraged to support the banding station through donations and the "adopt-a-bird" program. For \$10 individuals can adopt a bird and help release it once banded. They will also receive a personalized adoption certificate in the mail and will be notified if their bird is recaptured. Bird Banding offers an opportunity to study birds while discovering a new love for them through encounters with live birds.



Just think.... we,too,will see this nimble -beaked fisherbird before long! Blue heron having a snack...  
photo by Gerald Diederich

### **Answers to Birds and Places Quiz**

1. Waxwing 2. Goose 3. Tern 4. Starling 5. Flycatcher 6. Oriole 7. Warbler 8. Wren 9. Rail 10. Vireo

### **Answers to Trivia Corner Quiz**

1. P. colchicus - Ring-necked Pheasant. 2. B. regalis - Ferruginous Hawk. 3. B. scandiacus - Snowy Owl. B. virginianus - Great Horned Owl. P. arizonae - Arizona Woodpecker. C. cristata - Blue Jay. F. sparverius - American Kestrel.

*[Editor's Note: A big round of applause for all the contributors for their wonderful photos, quizzes and articles! ]*