

BIRD SONGS

Newsletter of the Discovery Center Bird Club

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Officers

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President's Message

By Judy Cassady

Hello, Bird Club Members!

The Ghost Bird movie viewed after our Bird Club meeting on Oct. 4 was both educational and entertaining. The hunt for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker has put Brinkley, Arkansas, population approximately 4000, on the map. Besides showing how the village had embraced the changes brought about by the influx of birders, the movie included interviews with ornithologists at major universities as well as author and illustrator David Sibley.

The question asked in the publicity of this new documentary by Scott Crocker was "Whatever happened to the Ivory-billed Woodpecker?" Loss of habitat is an obvious answer. The politics involved in conservation efforts as explained in the film was surprising and disappointing. The Ghost Bird movie served as a reminder of the vital

role local conservation efforts play in reversing the global extinction crisis. As members of the North Lakeland Discovery Center, we Bird Club members also promote stewardship of the region's natural and cultural resources as stated in the Discovery Center's mission statement.

For those of you who were not in attendance last evening, you will note that I did not include any conclusions or ideas shared by those interviewed in the movie. I hope that you may have an opportunity to view the film yourselves at some other time. The Bird Club actually rented the film from the producers. Perhaps you will find it on PBS or at your local library sometime in the future.

Keep on birding! Judy

Life List Quarterly

By Guy David

July, August, and September have been very active birding months for the Discovery Center Bird Club. Club outings were planned for many of our familiar haunts plus new areas such as the Tiffany Bottoms area near Durand, the National Eagle Center in Minnesota, and the Baker Lake and Little Tamarack Flowage in Vilas County.

Even though life's circumstances have prevented me from personally enjoying most of these outings, I have thoroughly enjoyed receiving the observation lists from club members so that I could vicariously enjoy club experiences. I am looking forward to articles about some of the adventures that I hope will appear in this newsletter.

I want to extend a special note of thanks to Donna Roche, Jim Krakowski, and Judy Cassady for making sure that I received a list for every outing. Were it not for their efforts, this column would not have been possible for this edition of Bird Songs.

The club life list already is quite inclusive of species of birds we may expect to see. We made exceptional progress during our spring quarter because of special habitats that we visited during that period. I would not have been surprised if no new species were added during the summer quarter, but our avid seekers of birds surprised me once again with a report of a Harris's Sparrow during the recent outing in the Superior/Duluth area. With the addition of the Harris's Sparrow our club life list now totals 236 species! Wunderbar!

As I reported for the spring quarter, the club already had exceeded the number of species reported in our annual list for 2009. This year promises to be a great year because our 2010 list already totals 183 species. At the end of 2009 our annual list stood at 169 species, so our success this year already is much improved, probably due to increased efforts to visit new areas and improved expertise among the birders. Congratulations!

Following is a list of annual list additions since July 1, 2010.

Date	Species	Location
7/1/2010	Lincoln's Sparrow	Powell Marsh
8/23/2010	Bonaparte's Gull	Ashland Area
8/23/2010	Herring Gull	Ashland Area
8/23/2010	Tennessee Warbler	Ashland Area
9/13/2010	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Tiffany Bottoms Area
9/13/2010	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Tiffany Bottoms Area
9/24/2010	Red-breasted Merganser	Superior/Duluth Area
9/24/2010	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Superior/Duluth Area
9/24/2010	Harris's Sparrow	Superior/Duluth Area
9/25/2010	Northern Pintail	Superior/Duluth Area
9/25/2010	Peregrine Falcon	Superior/Duluth Area
9/25/2010	Sanderling	Superior/Duluth Area
9/25/2010	American Pipit	Superior/Duluth Area

I am fairly certain that our species list will increase a little as we approach winter birding, especially the two annual Christmas Bird Counts that have become traditional club activities. Species like Common and Hoary Redpoll, Pine Grosbeak, Snow Bunting, Bohemian Waxwing, Varied Thrush,

Northern Shrike, Barred Owl, Snowy Owl, Great-horned Owl, Rough-legged Hawk, and Northern Goshawk all are missing from our 2010 annual list but certainly remain possibilities into the winter birding season.



Linda Dunn, Cynthia and Jim Krakowski at Amnicon Falls near Lake Superior.

Photo by Judy Cassidy

As with every year, when I look back at our bird observation lists I find myself wondering how we missed some species that we know are around us but remained unobserved during over 30 plus outings. Missing some of the shorebird species is easy to explain with the absence of significant mud flats and open farm fields in the Northwoods. The high water levels resulting from significant rainfalls during July and August even ensured that commonly productive flowage shorelines were covered with water this year.

Among the additional ‘missing’ species for 2010 are the American Black Duck; Greater Scaup and Horned Grebe (how about another trip to Ashland in October?); American Woodcock (as surprised as me?); Yellow-bellied Flycatcher; Bank Swallow (we never checked the Manitowish Waters sand pit during early summer?); Swainsons Thrush (usually found during fall migration but probably too late now); Black-throated Blue Warbler; and Wilson’s Warbler.

Well, that’s OK, that’s one of the many reasons that birding is so much fun. Searching for the uncommon species and trying to find them during the seasons in the habitats where one would expect to find them is part of the challenge. Recognizing them when we do see or hear them is another part of the challenge. Because of our increasing life and annual list we can show that we are getting better in both respects. We also know enough now to know that we’ll probably never have that “perfect” year when all possible species are observed during our bird outings. But, it sure is fun trying!

Thumbs up for Tiffany Bottoms!

By Carne Andrews

On Friday September 10th, a group of adventure seeking Discovery Center Bird Club (DCBC) members met at the Cobblestone Inn & Suites in Durand, a historic river town at the trail head of the Chippewa River lowlands known as Tiffany State Wildlife Area (SWA), for a late afternoon overview of the weekend as a cold front was moving through. A short time later, evening showers forced us indoors from the deck of the Riverside Grill to enjoy a variety of Friday night fish entrees.

Saturday morning dawned cool, damp, and windy but improved to overcast until late afternoon, then welcomed evening sunshine. Everyone was up for an early breakfast and eager to spend a couple hours of birding through the Chippewa River Valley north of Durand along Rustic Road #107 before embarking on the Chippewa Valley Motor Coach Association train. There we were joined by DCBC members, Joan and Dean Galloway, our DNR Naturalist Guide, Gary Wolf, and the railroad staff. In no time, everyone found a seat on the antique no-frills open cars with wooden plank seats built to haul railroad repair crews to their work sites. These sites required an eight-mile trek powered by Ford Pinto motors in little engines on either end of the linked cars.

The 19,000 acre Tiffany SWA is also part of the Audubon Great River Birding Trail because its

dense mix of woods, swamp, sloughs, and flood plain attracts nearly every species of bird and mammal found in Wisconsin and is also home to Timber Rattlesnakes, the Massasauga Rattlesnake (the most endangered snake in WI, the Blanding Turtle, Golden Eagles in the winter, and a very healthy population of mosquitoes in the summer!



. John Randolph, Karin Randolph, and Cynthia Krakowski , and Linda Dunn at Willow Reservoir
Photo by Judy Cassidy

The ride included several stops reflecting a variety of ecosystems from savannas and flood-plain prairies to duckweed covered sloughs and closed canopy forests. We soon learned that between 1920 and 1940, the timber was logged by the area's namesake, H.O. Tiffany. Gary described how the area's hunting and fishing rights were fought over by the native Ojibwa and Sioux tribes, then homesteaded by white settlers raising cattle and farming until the mid-30's when the land became too wet due to the new lock and dam system built on the Mississippi River. He explained how recently native prairie plants are being restored and maintained with periodic burns in the Native American tradition. Plants seen of particular interest were short and long blue stem, horse or dotted mint, lead plant and bottle gentian.

The railroad history dating back to when the track was laid in 1882 was provided by Terry Yust, Engineer and Director/Treasurer of the Chippewa Valley Motor Coach Association (CVMCA). The freight line was operated by Milwaukee Railroad operated between Minnesota and Wisconsin until

1977 when an ice dam caused an irreparable damage to the track and a derailment. The railroad was abandoned and laid dormant until the non-profit CVMCA was formed in 1985 and began to clear the track with a handful of volunteers. Today the association membership consists of only 32 families. Membership, volunteer, donation, future trip schedules, and additional information can be found at www.chippewavalleymotorcoachassociation.ellawis.com.

After a leisurely ride and lunch stop out into the Tiffany Bottoms to the end of cleared track, the return was a jostling ride at speeds up to 20 mph. At the end of the line about 2:30 PM, we said goodbye and thanked our hosts for a wonderful time. Bird sighting had been pretty slow all day so we decided to try along the Mississippi River with a first stop at the Nelson Dairy and Creamery at the south end of the Tiffany SWA where we each enjoyed their renowned \$1.00 a scoop ice cream cones. We continued north along the Mississippi River to Alma with stops at Riecks Lake Park (the best place along the river to see migrating Tundra Swans during peak spring and fall migration in mid-October), and to Buena Vista Park with a spectacular view of the river from 500 feet above Alma. Before returning to Durand, we enjoyed a delicious supper at Kate and Gracie's Restaurant, reflected on a great day, and posed on the patio for a group picture. Considering the slow start to the day, we were content with 37 species common in the north including an olive-sided flycatcher, large flocks of tree sparrows, and Northern rough-legged swallows.

On Sunday morning we left Durand just after 7 AM under clearing skies traveling west on Hwy 10 turning south Cty Highway N south along the western Chippewa River Valley. Birding stops included the Arkansas Creek Park, a roadside stop along open farm land, a historical wayside overlooking the valley, and a walk on the Five-Mile Bluff Prairie Trail. The morning excitement was the sighting of 2 perched eagles that generated a lot of discussion, scoping, and guide referencing trying to decide if they were immature Bald Eagles or Golden Eagles to finally add to our club list. Their identity was to be determined at the National Eagle Center in Wabasha, MN, the final destination of the

weekend.

We traveled south to Lake Pepin, then east on Hwy 35 through Nelson and Tiffany Bottoms on MN Highway 60 built on the old railroad grade across the Beef, Pontoon, and Indian Sloughs to Wabasha, Minnesota's oldest town and new home of the National Eagle Center (NEC). The NEC,



John Randolph, Jon Cassidy, and Karin Randolph on the Kawaga Bridge

Photo by Judy Cassidy

overlooking the Mississippi River, is filled with creative educational exhibits, interpretive programs, and indoor and outdoor observation sites where we spotted migrating flocks of White Pelicans and 2 Great Egrets.

Shortly after arrival, we attended an informative classroom presentation and observed Columbia, a Bald Eagle, enjoy a scrumptious rat for lunch. Soon after, we met up with the other resident rehabilitated Bald Eagle ambassadors tethered in an open display--Angel, Harriet (thought to have been hatched in St. Germain in 1981 and injured in a 1998 MVA near Woodruff, WI), and Donald, a Golden Eagle. Read about each eagle's intriguing biography and the NEC at www.nationaleaglecenter.net.

Scott Mehus, Education Director and Golden Eagle Specialist, then listened to our descriptions and scrutinized our pictures of the mystery eagles sited earlier that morning. He explained why he believed them to be immature Bald Eagles versus Golden

Eagles, based on head and beak size and the fact that Golden's do not typically arrive for the winter until mid-November. Anyone interested in learning more about Golden Eagles or participating in the 6th Annual Golden Eagle Survey in January should contact him at scott@nationaleaglecenter.org. In fact, this would be a great club activity for a winter field trip!

The weekend wrapped up over lunch on the outdoor deck at the nearby Flour Mill Pizzeria overlooking the Mississippi River. We had managed to hunt down 42 species, but found no species to add to the club life list. We agreed our timing wasn't the best...too late for neotropicals and too early for fall migration. Overall, we had a grand time exploring a new region of the state filled with unique habitats and scenic vistas, riding the rails, enjoying each others' company, and discovering in the great outdoors!!!

Weekend participants: Judy and Jon Cassidy (their friends Rex and Carol Percelle joined us through the train ride); Linda Dunn; Katie Foley; Joan and Dean Galloway; Jean Hanson and her sister Jane Spaeth; Elaine Kotlarek; Betty Murphy; and Carne Andrews, trip organizer

Postscript: After torrential rains in Durand on Friday, September 24, the Chippewa River peaked at 16.7 feet in downtown Durand, flooding main street businesses including the Riverside Grill. The Tiffany Bottoms train rides have been cancelled for the season.

Hawk Ridge/Wisconsin Point Trip

By David Foster

Once more to the heights! So vowed the hardy band gathered at Hawk Ridge on Saturday, September 25 to watch the raptors following the flyway down the shore of Lake Superior. The weather was good and the temperatures mild, but the hawks were in somewhat short supply. Like last year, the most plentiful species were broad-winged and sharp-shinned hawks and bald eagles, with smaller numbers of harriers, turkey vultures and falcons. One spectacular kettle of broad-wings

spiraled down and drifted southwards across the ridge.

Jaegerfest at Wisconsin Point also drew club members, who spotted many ring-billed and herring gulls, as well as some double-crested cormorants and a great blue heron. Also spotted on one of the Point trails were numbers of white-crowned and white-throated sparrows. A particularly noteworthy sight, a Harris' sparrow, was a new bird for the club list. A group of American pipits and some savannah sparrows were also seen.

Some club members birding at Amnicon Falls State Park saw hermit thrushes and a golden-crowned kinglet as well.



Photo by kind bystander