

BIRD SONGS

Newsletter of the North Lakeland
Discovery Center Bird Club

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President's Message

Carne Andrews

The Joy of June

It seems I've fallen into a pattern of using each edition of Birdsongs to reflect on recent Bird Club events and my personal bird watching. Contemplating June is no exception! With spring migration almost complete and breeding season underway, the beginning of the month spearheads one of the most, if not the most exciting, times of the year for birdwatchers in northern Wisconsin.

The first week of June proved to be a busy one for the club, starting with John Bates informative presentation on "Fostering and Sustaining Wild Birds with Native Plants". Thanks, John! Another very helpful resource to find specific plant/shrubs to attract specific species of birds to your yard is www.audubon.org/native-plants/zipcode.

A couple days later, the club participated in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon, collectively identifying over 90 species and exceeding our highest fund raising effort for the Wisconsin Natural Resources Foundation Bird Protection Fund. Thanks, Sarah for organizing this event and to everyone who generously donated to support Wisconsin's birds and our club!

Each week, Thursday morning outings continue to be a highlight for those who attend. Exploring a variety of familiar and new habitats holds our interest while local avian researchers and citizen science projects provide intriguing learning opportunities. Thanks, Donna, for coordinating and keeping us engaged as we look forward to the coming weeks.

On a personal note, the coming of June livens up the neighborhood and property with bird song as highly anticipated spring arrivals the likes of sparrows, thrushes, flycatchers, sapsuckers, flickers join year-round residents seeking mates and securing breeding territory. My earliest June joys are the evening peeting of American Woodcock, the clear whistling call of the Eastern Whip-poor-will even at 5 AM, and the kek-kek-kek rattle of Belted Kingfisher along the banks of the Manitowish River. This year, the yard burst into the best June in memory fledging Black-capped Chickadees from 2 nesting boxes, 4 Chipping Sparrows from a garden shrub, 9 Hooded Merganser ducklings for the first time from a box that's stood empty for 3 years, a family of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker chicks begging almost non-stop from sunrise to sunset, and a first time observation of a female Mallard cruising high speed downstream with 3 ducklings on her back!

June has also evolved into my best month of personal breeding bird atlasing in 4 years having observed 10 breeding confirmations in the past week! What a learning experience and thrill to observe these diverse wonders of nature while contributing to the current biggest citizen science project in Wisconsin and collaborating with fellow Bird Club members. Thanks especially to Guy, Sarah, Cynthia, and Denise who have willing share checklists and their expertise.

June 2018! What an incredible month! Does it get any better than this? Can't wait to see what's in store in July, August, and September! Bird when you can! EN-JOY!!!

The Value of Perspective

Guy David

As we wander together in various birding habitats we invariably encounter a bird that everyone gets to see but then we disagree over what we have seen. Then we consult the field guides and discuss how the observed bird looked or didn't look like the one pictured in the book. In the end we try to come to an agreement and some level of satisfaction that we know what we are talking about! Sometimes, it's even worse! I may record the bird in eBird and then be contacted by an eBird reviewer questioning the report based on a written description!

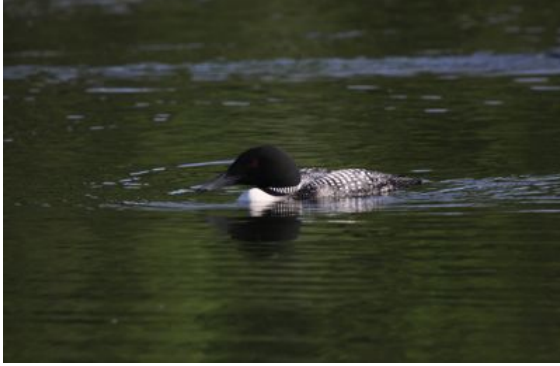
Well, sometimes it is just a matter of perspective. Take the Common Loon as an example. All of us know a Common Loon when we see one, right? If I were to quiz a group and ask a question such as what color adult Common Loons in breeding plumage are the response probably would be black and white, and some may mention that they have red eyes. If I were to ask that group about the shape of the head of a Common Loon the response may be "long and sloping". All of these answers would be true, depending on the perspective that the viewer had of the bird that was observed.

I had a great opportunity to photograph a pair of loons that decided to hang around my pontoon boat on Crawling Stone Lake recently. As I reviewed the photos it struck me how different they looked depending on the distance the birds were from me, angle of the light that illuminated the scene and the direction that the birds were facing when I took the photographs. I included a few photos with this article to make my point.

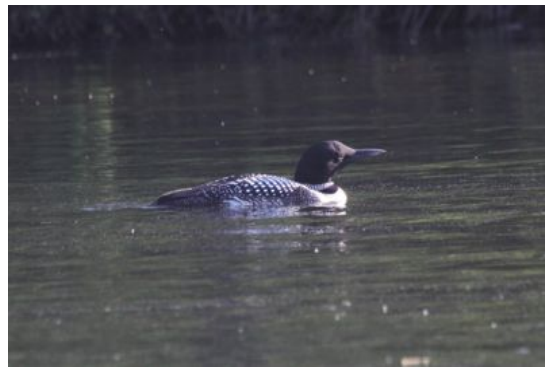
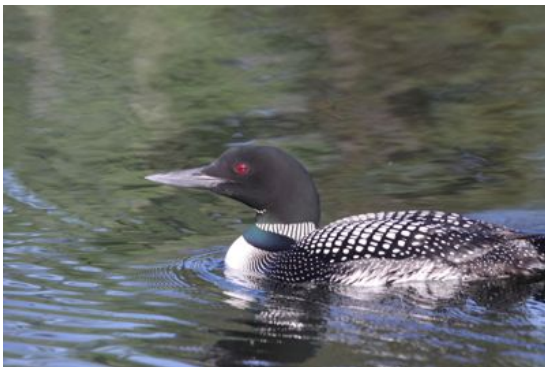
In some photos the birds clearly showed dark eyes, definitely not red. In those cases if I had only a quick glance at the bird to gather information for describing them, I would not have reported red eyes.



In some photos the birds clearly have the long sloping profile from the top of the head to the tip of the bill as Common Loons often are portrayed. However, in other photos, the Common Loons display a lumped forehead rather than the long slope.



In some photos the bird's feather coloration definitely is a stark black and white. However, in some photos there is a distinct green sheen or sometimes the black actually appears to be a grayish color.



So, if you only had a quick look at one of these birds and it was a rarity that needed to be confirmed to be accepted for an eBird record, what would you report in your written description to convince the eBird reviewers of the species of bird that you are describing?

I submit that when our group observes a bird, or when we are describing a bird to one another, the result often is influenced by perspective.

All photos in this article are from Guy David

Eagle on Trout Lake

Liz Stone

On April 30, Dick Theile and Elizabeth Stone were walking along the thawing shoreline of Trout Lake at Red Arrow Camp, located at the intersection of Us HWY 51N and Day Lake Roads. Sadly, they found a dead bald eagle lying facedown in the icy water of the shoreline. The cause of death of the eagle was not obvious. Liz initially phoned the Wisconsin DNR Wildlife Tipline, but when no one had picked up the eagle after about 24 hours, she sent out an e-mail to the Discovery Center Bird Club. Carne Andrews recommended contacting Michelle Woodford, the DNR biologist for Powell Marsh, who has the appropriate permits to possess a bald eagle. Michelle retrieved the unfortunate eagle, which was then sent to the national eagle repository in Colorado for scientific study or use by Native Americans. Hopefully, the cause of the eagle's death has been determined. Thank you, Michelle!



Photo by Liz Stone/Dick Theile

The Great Wisconsin Birdathon

Cynthia Krakowski

On June 6th our Club's team, the Up North Hammerheads, ventured out to complete our third Birdathon where participants attempt to identify as many species of birds as possible in one day. The majority of the team first met at 6 am along highway 47 to trek into the tribal section of Powell Marsh. But many had already checked their birdfeeders & neighborhoods prior to arrival so a sizeable number of species had already been tallied. The morning began with overcast skies with the potential of thunderstorms. Hiking back to our cars at Powell Marsh Vista in mid-morning, the stormy weather arrived. Thus we took cover at the Discovery Center for a while but not without adding a few more birds including red crossbills! Back on the road we headed east to more hotspots on Trout Lake, Allequash Lake, Gross Road, the fish hatchery and Dove Road. Some of us ended our adventure in Minocqua at 7:45 pm when the estimated tally was 91 species. Others were going to seek out some of the crepuscular birds at a potential site before calling it a day. And what a wonderful day it was communing with nature, birds and our fellow birdwatchers! There were many highlights of the day. The one that stands out most for me was the pair of black-billed cuckoos in willow shrubbery along one of the Powell Marsh Vista dikes.

Editors Note: As the captain of the birdathon team (although I missed the day due to an illness), I am thrilled to report that the team of 15 birders ended up with 94 species and raised a remarkable \$3070!

The National Resources Foundation of Wisconsin coordinates the Great Wisconsin Birdathon. Money raised supports various bird protection initiatives (see details at wibirdathon.dojiggy.com). Since we bird on behalf of our Bird Club, half of the funds we raise comes back to our Club and helps us support various bird-related not-for-profit organizations as well as our monthly programs that are open to the public as a means for sharing our love of birds and educating people about birds and their habitats. Thank you to everyone who supported the Up North Hammerheads – and your support of the birds!

Species list for the Up North Hammerheads during the Great Wisconsin Birdathon on June 6th:

Canada Goose	Alder Flycatcher
Trumpeter Swan	Least Flycatcher
Wood Duck	Yellow-throated Vireo
Mallard	Blue-headed Vireo
Blue-winged Teal	Red-eyed Vireo
Redhead	Blue Jay
Ring-necked Duck	American Crow
Hooded Merganser	Common Raven

Ruffed Grouse
Wild Turkey
Pied-billed Grebe
Mourning Dove
Black-billed Cuckoo
Common Nighthawk
Eastern Whip-poor-will
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Sora
Sandhill Crane
Killdeer
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Wilson's Snipe
American Woodcock
Greater Yellowlegs
Ring-billed Gull
Common Loon
Great Blue Heron
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Broad-winged Hawk
Belted Kingfisher
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Palm Warbler
Pine Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Chipping Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow

Tree Swallow
Bank Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
House Wren
Winter Wren
Sedge Wren
Marsh Wren
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Hermit Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
Purple Finch
Red Crossbill
Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch
Ovenbird
Golden-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Mourning Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
American Redstart
Northern Parula
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow Warbler
White-throated Sparrow
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Red-winged Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird
Common Grackle
Baltimore Oriole

2018 Birding Festival Birding Results

Guy David

The 2018 version of the Northwoods Birding Festival has concluded and it was a wonderful event. One of the traditional aspects of the festival is to get patrons out in the field to look for as many birds as they can find and then to tally the results on the Big Board in the Main Lodge. At the conclusion of the festivities the tentative cumulative total of the birds recorded on the Big Board is announced.

As I have become accustomed to doing, I collected all of the data sheets (15 this year) and entered all of the data into a cumulative record of birds observed during every Birding Festival since the first one in 2005. Two forms of data are kept, one via eBird entries and another in an Excel spreadsheet. I always find it to be interesting to look at the data trends and now we have 14 years of Birding Festival data. In this article I will highlight items that I find to be interesting in hopes that our readers will also enjoy.

Participants in the 2018 Birding Festival tallied 85 species. This figure translates into 2018 being about average in productivity for festival birding outcomes. The statistical average over 14 festivals computes to 87.5 species per festival with a range of 74 species in 2005 to 100 species in 2007. There were 9 festivals that tallied more species than 2018 and 5 that tallied 85 or fewer. Our 2017 festival tallied 93 species and the year before that the tally was 76. Hmmmm...and last year we had snow squalls...and more species! Go figure! Regardless of conditions, it appears that in the second or third week in May our expected overall birding outcomes are likely to be somewhat similar from year to year.

When one looks closer at the data one can fairly conclude that the total number of species tallied during a given annual event isn't the most meaningful thing to be learned. It is an entertaining figure for a group of patrons and provides a certain level of group satisfaction of something that was collectively accomplished.

For example, while 85 species were tallied in 2018, were they essentially the same species as 2017? Are the same species recorded year after year for 14 years? Did the various birding groups experience the same species as previous groups in other years? When 100 species was tallied in 2007, did that list of species represent all of the species ever recorded over 14 years? Our cumulative data reveals answers to such questions.

Comparing our 2018 outcome to 2017, the data shows that there were 9 species tallied in 2018 that were not tallied in 2017. Those species included Wood Duck, Common Merganser, Wild Turkey, Pied-billed Grebe, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Ring-billed Gull, Snowy Owl, and Barn Swallow.

Comparing our 2017 outcome to 2018, the data shows that there were 15 species recorded in 2017 that were not in 2018. This means that there certainly is a considerable overlap of species found in both years but there also is variation from one year to another. In fact, there were 74 species that were recorded both years. So, are those 74 species our “old reliables” that we know will appear for birding festival every year? The short answer is “NO”!

Reviewing the overall data I found 35 species that have been recorded every year so far! A list of our true “old reliables” follows. Also included in the table are lists of species that were recorded 13 out of 14 years and 12 out of 14 years. I suppose that this could lead one to conclude that we can count on about 55 species being recorded “quite reliably”.

35 Species Recorded for 14 Birding Festivals	11 Species Recorded for 13 Birding Festivals	9 Species Recorded for 12 Birding Festivals
Canada Goose	Trumpeter Swan	Wood Duck
Mallard	Osprey	Turkey Vulture
Ring-necked Duck	Merlin	Northern Harrier
Hooded Merganser	Sandhill Crane	Mourning Dove
Ruffed Grouse	White-breasted Nuthatch	Hairy Woodpecker
Common Loon	Brown Creeper	Blue-headed Vireo
Bald Eagle	Winter Wren	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Belted Kingfisher	Sedge Wren	Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Northern Parula	American Redstart
Northern Flicker	Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Pileated Woodpecker	Purple Finch	
Eastern Phoebe		
Blue Jay		
American Crow		
Common Raven		
Tree Swallow		
Black-capped Chickadee		
Red-breasted Nuthatch		
Hermit Thrush		
American Robin		
Nashville Warbler		
Yellow Warbler		
Black-throated Green Warbler		
Pine Warbler		
Black-and-white Warbler		
Ovenbird		
Common Yellowthroat		
Chipping Sparrow		
Song Sparrow		
Swamp Sparrow		
White-throated Sparrow		
Rose-breasted Grosbeak		
Red-winged Blackbird		
Common Grackle		
American Goldfinch		

With 55 species of birds being “quite reliable” from year to year, how does that square with the fact that in that same span of time we normally tally well over 80 species almost every year? Well, to begin with, there are the “rarities” and “incidentals” or birds that have only occurred once, twice or thrice over 14 years. Consider the data in the following table.

31 Species Recorded for only 1 of 14 Birding Festivals (Year)	19 Species Recorded for 2 of 14 Birding Festivals	10 Species Recorded for 3 of 14 Birding Festivals
Gadwall (2016)	Red-breasted Merganser	Warbling Vireo
American Wigeon (2014)	Cooper's Hawk	Marsh Wren
Common Goldeneye (2009)	Red-tailed Hawk	Swainson's Thrush
Sharp-tailed Grouse (2011)	Peregrine Falcon	Wood Thrush
Horned Grebe (2013)	Least Sandpiper	Cedar Waxwing
American White Pelican (2011)	Long-billed Dowitcher	Cape May Warbler
Cattle Egret (2005)	Snowy Owl	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Green Heron (2010)	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Bay-breasted Warbler
Northern Goshawk (2011)	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Blackpoll Warbler
Golden Eagle (2014)	Bank Swallow	Eastern Meadowlark
Virginia Rail (2011)	Cliff Swallow	Eastern Meadowlark
Semipalmated Plover (2017)	Brown Thrasher	
White-rumped Sandpiper (2009)	Tennessee Warbler	
Pectoral Sandpiper (2014)	Wilson's Warbler	
Short-billed Dowitcher (2016)	Canada Warbler	
Franklin's Gull (2009)	Northern Cardinal	
Chimney Swift (2015)	Indigo Bunting	
Olive-sided Flycatcher (2008)	Bobolink	
Willow Flycatcher (2008)	Rusty Blackbird	
Great Crested Flycatcher (2011)		
Yellow-throated Vireo (2007)		
Gray Jay (2011)		
Northern Mockingbird (2017)		
American Pipit (2015)		
Orange-crowned Warbler (2009)		
Eastern Towhee (2017)		
American Tree Sparrow (2013)		
Le Conte's Sparrow (2007)		
Fox Sparrow (2013)		
Lapland Longspur (2015)		
Pine Grosbeak (2009)		

In 2007 the Birding Festival species tally included 100 species. So were almost all of the species ever recorded over 14 years recorded in 2007? The short answer is “NO”!

During any given birding festival we typically can record 80 to 90 species, more or less. When all of the data for all of 14 years of birding festivals are accumulated though, it is revealed that a total of 170 species have been recorded. Wowser! Thus the Birding Festivals Life List stands at 170 species. Interestingly, there were no new species added to the Birding Festival life list in 2018. Just like the bird club’s lifelist of bird species, any given year there may be 180 to 200 species recorded over all of the outings but, over the club’s life time, we have recorded 266 species so far. Every year is unique but it all adds up over time.

So, is there anything to do about all of this? Sure! Get out there and go birding as often as you can in as many places as you can. I don’t know if anybody else is actually interested in all of this birding data analysis, but it is part of the fun for me. The best part of birding, including during birding festivals, is that we are guaranteed to observe a wonderful variety of birds each and every time. During any given time though, we might chance upon something exciting or unusual. Such as it was for myself and 22 other participants in the Powell Marsh field trip when we took a side trip to find a Snowy Owl that was reported in a Cranberry Marsh. Word was passed along to us that we were welcome to come and that marsh personnel would actually guide us to the bird’s location. All we really need to know is that was FUN and EXCITING! Not only that, but I also got a nice photo, a copy of which is included in this newsletter. Many other participants got nice photos as well. Never mind that the Snowy Owl wasn’t new to the birding festival life list, one was also recorded during our first birding festival in 2005.



Snowy Owl



Bruce Bacon banding a Mourning Dove

Photos by Guy David

Photo Journal

Photos by Mark Westphal

Donna Roche, our Thursday morning field trip coordinator, scheduled Anna Burkhardt, Anna's husband and Vanessa Haese-Lehman to meet us at Dove Road to watch Anna and her team capture and band a Golden-winger Warbler.



Golden-Winged Warbler



Anna Burkhardt with a male Golden-winged Warbler

This outing to Dove Road also resulted in a Red-eyed Vireo being captured in the mist net. It's not often you actually see the red eye!



Red-eyed Vireo

Mark has been enjoying watching the bluebird nesting box out in his field this summer.

Grasshoppers are a favorite menu item.



Male Eastern Bluebird



Killdeer

A pair of Killdeer nested on the dike road at Powell Marsh. Although the nest wasn't successful, it provided a great look at the nest and the birds.



Killdeer nest (shallow depression in the gravel) with eggs



Once a rare sight on local lakes, the future looks bright for trumpeter swans in northern Wisconsin.

Life List Quarterly

Guy David

As of this writing in the second week of June, the Discovery Center Bird Club now has 8 outings and 2 events completed so far for the season. It is hard to believe that we already have around one-third of our birding activities already completed for 2018.

Our basic eBird statistics reveal that the club Life List remains at 269 species since there have been no additions to this list since our last newsletter. However, since our March 2018 BIRD SONGS we have witnessed the annual spring migration of birds and now we have 124 species of birds for our 2018 annual list. To accomplish this our club has had very good success at finding and recording bird species during our weekly outings, the Northwoods Birding Festival, and our June 6 participation in the Statewide Birdathon project.

We are well on our way to equal the 161 species that the club recorded during our 2017 birding year. Hmmmmm...I wonder when and where we will find the 37 other species to achieve last year's success?

We certainly will bolster our numbers as summer progresses and then when the fall migration gets under way in a couple of months. Last year the club overnight trip to the Green Bay area was a really productive event in terms of finding new species. Without that trip our club experience would have 9 species less since that many species were located and recorded during that trip that we had not encountered anywhere else during 2017.

We know that there are more species of birds out there to be found and Donna Roche has been hard at work getting us to really great birding sites every Thursday. So, be sure to join in the fun as we all work to improve our birding identification skills and our proficiency at finding as many kinds of birds as we can!