

# BIRD SONGS

Newsletter of the North Lakeland  
Discovery Center Bird Club

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Sarah Besadny, Editor  
[sbesadny@gmail.com](mailto:sbesadny@gmail.com)



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## **President's Message: A Bird in the Hand**

*by Mark Westphal*

Today when I went out to fill my bird feeders, I was greeted with the usual flurry of activity. A dozen chickadees along with a handful of red-breasted nuthatches continued to feed despite the presence of a large human being in a puffy green coat. The beating of their wings sounded like little motors as they flew back and forth to nearby shrubs or from one feeder to another. The chickadees were cautious but willing to overcome their fears to snatch another sunflower seed at the feeders. I was truly amazed at how brave those wild little birds were as they flew within inches of me.

Although I had thought about it before, I had never tried feeding a wild bird from my hand. In the spirit of the moment, I decided to put a few seeds in my mitten-covered hand. There I stood like a statue for several minutes as the little birds continued to flutter about. Finally, one brave chickadee landed on my hand, grabbed a seed, and flew off to a nearby shrub to crack open the tiny prize. For several more minutes I continued to stand next to the feeders. All total, the chickadee visited my hand five different times. Was it the same trusting chickadee that came back to my hand each time, or were they different individual birds? Did the birds even realize they were landing on a person, or was I just an inanimate object? I will never know. Although the weight of these one-half ounce birds was barely noticeable, they made an impression. For a few brief seconds I was part of another world. I had made a connection with a little wild bird.

When observing wild birds and animals it is easy to anthropomorphize their actions. Scientists would argue that their behaviors are most likely to be driven by their need for food or other survival instincts. I have no intention of trying to tame these wild chickadees. I will admit, however, that my experience with the chickadee had its own touch of magic. What is the worth of “a bird in the hand” ... something money can’t buy. It was a precious gift!

Merry Christmas Everyone!



## **Species Profile: Blackburnian Warbler** **(Setophaga fusca)**

*Article by Meg Sanders, Photos from eBird*

I would love to introduce you to my favorite warbler (although it's always hard to say I have a favorite), the Blackburnian Warbler! Adult males have some of the most beautiful features to me because of their distinctive flame-orange face and throat standing out from their black and white body plumage with a striking black cheek patch. Interestingly, they are the only warbler with an orange throat. Immature and female birds of this species can be described as 'washed-out' version of the males with a more yellow colored face and throat and dark cheek patch, but I still appreciate them!



These warblers are widely distributed across northeastern North America during their breeding season, but they primarily breed in the eastern half of southern Canada and the northern United States. We are fortunate enough to have these birds breeding in northern Wisconsin in the spring and summer! It's been recorded that male Blackburnian Warblers perform a sort of 'aerial ballet' of territorial defense against other males early in spring. If you're lucky, you might be able to catch this behavior as they circle above in the treetops, spin downward through the branches, glide with a raised and spread tail, and slowly flap in a "moth-like" flight.

Blackburnians are known for being creatures of the forest canopy, typically staying high in the treetops as they feed on insects. Unfortunately, this can sometimes make it difficult to see them, but it also makes me feel that much more special when one decides to show itself. You can try to keep your ears open for their call, too! The male's primary song doesn't have the most recognizable mnemonic device, but it can be described as a buzzy, rapid, "zip zip zip zip zip zip zip zip titititi tseeeee", with the final note being much higher pitched. If you can, check out their call online to help you be prepared for when you're out in the woods next summer!

While they can be found in just about any wooded habitat during migration, Blackburnian Warblers prefer conifers. Researchers have also designated these birds as hemlock obligates, meaning they require hemlock forests to survive. Coincidentally, hemlocks are also my favorite tree, and I've conducted research of my own to help better protect these important trees from an invasive insect, hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA), that threatens hemlocks in eastern North America. Blackburnian warblers have significantly declined in forests with hemlock mortality caused by HWA such as areas of the Appalachians, so I work to protect and promote hemlocks as well as old-growth forests in general.



Blackburnian Warblers could be considered a 'snowbird' like many in the Northwoods because they head South for the winter. More specifically, they overwinter in South America, so they make quite the trek back and forth each year. Both adults and immature birds begin their migration South in August or September, making it to their destination any time from September to November. While winter is only just now getting started up here, I know it won't really be long before these beautiful birds re-arrive in April – May.

Bibliography: Cornell University Macaulay Library; National Audubon Society; American Bird Conservancy; Allegheny Forest Health Collaborative-Birds of Hemlock Forests

## **Disappointment But Also Delight:** **The Minocqua Christmas Bird Count 2022**

*Article by Sarah Besadny, Photos from Feeder Counters*

What are the chances that the Minocqua Christmas Bird Count (MCBC) would encounter adverse weather issues two years in a row? After the freak storm last year that led to cancelling the Count except for those who count feeder birds, this year Donna and I thought we were safe when we scheduled an additional "snow date" just in case. Our original date for the MCBC was December 15, 2022. As the 15<sup>th</sup> approached there was a chance for snow overnight into the 15<sup>th</sup> and it didn't seem wise to assume that roads would be cleared by early morning so we postponed the MCBC until December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Well, Donna and I touched based on December 22<sup>nd</sup> and once again, due to the impending snow storm that was going to disrupt at least half the country, we decided to let people make their own decision about how to tackle the CBC but we knew that it was unlikely many people would be able to drive around the Count Circle. Bummer!! I know I'm not the only one who really enjoys participating in a Christmas Bird Count. It's always a challenge: where might we spot the elusive winter species; will the folks who typically have feeders up have them up again this year and actually have seed/suet in them; will it be one of those days where the wind chills have your fingers and toes numb in minutes? It's always a really fun

day and of course it's fulfilling to participate in this long running (123 years!) volunteer effort to record bird species.

Even though only one of our 4 teams was able to head out via car to bird, we also had very dedicated people counting birds at their feeders. As the data began to come in after December 23<sup>rd</sup>, I kept uttering words of amazement and sharing in the delight voiced by the participants that spotted a "special" bird at their feeders.

This year we had two species that had not been reported on the MCBC since 2006 when the Discovery Center Bird Club began supporting the MCBC. Additionally, we had one species this year that was only spotted one other year since 2006. The two "new" species for our MCBC were the Carolina Wren and the Tufted Titmouse!! Both of these birds had been visiting feeders for a while and how lucky we were that they were spotted on the Count day. Another feeder counter had been seeing two Red-headed Woodpeckers at their feeders for a few days leading up to the Count and happily they showed again on Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup>. Red-headed Woodpecker was only reported one other year, in 2018.

A big thank you goes out to our one team that hit the road and our 9 feeder counters. Here are the results for the 2022 Minocqua Christmas Bird Count.

American Goldfinch	101
Black-capped Chickadee	61
Blue Jay	47
Red-breasted Nuthatch	32
Bohemian Waxwing	25
Mourning Dove	22
White-breasted Nuthatch	21
Downy Woodpecker	18
Hairy Woodpecker	15
European Starling	15
Pileated Woodpecker	13
Red-bellied Woodpecker	13
Northern Cardinal	12
American Crow	11
Dark-eyed Junco	11
Wild Turkey	9

Red-headed Woodpecker	2
Bald Eagle	2
American Tree Sparrow	2
Common Raven	1
Brown Creeper	1
Carolina Wren	1
Tufted Titmouse	1



Tufted Titmouse

Red-headed  
Woodpeckers





Carolina Wren

## **Life List Quarterly – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2022**

*by Sarah Besadny*

Another year has passed where the Bird Club did not add a new bird to its Life List, but the birding season of 2022 was filled with a wide-range of bird sightings, exploring some new birding spots and as always, great fun with friends looking for birds, helping with bird ID and just a generally fun time!

The Bird Club went on 24 outings this year and ended up seeing a total of 148 different species during the outings from May through October. That's compared to 121 total species seen the year before, and last year had 4 more outings than we had this year.

Just like last year, the last few outings of the season brought us some new birds for the annual list. In the last two outings this year we added Red-bellied Woodpecker, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, American



Pipit, Snow Bunting, American Tree Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco to our annual list.

Last year I looked to see what the most commonly spotted bird species were during our season of outings. Once again, this year was very similar to last year with one notable exception. During our 24 outings this year, the Black-capped Chickadee was spotted the most often, having been spotted on 20 of our outings. Next was the Blue Jay (19 outings), American Crow (18) and American Robin (16). These were the same top 4 species that we seen in 2021. The one notable deviation from last year was the American Goldfinch. Last year Goldfinch were seen on 16 outings and this year it was seen on just 9 outings.

What were your favorite birding experiences this year? Did you pick up a new species for your personal life list or annual list? Hopefully so, but even if you weren't seeing new birds, I know I can speak for everyone who attended an outing (or all of the outings!) – being outside with the Discovery Center Bird Club is a wonderful way to spend a Thursday morning. **Many thanks again to Donna Roche for her leadership, for organizing where we go/when we go/and how to get there, and her welcoming spirit to all who participate.**

Here are the 148 species of birds the Bird Club had the joy of seeing at least once during our birding season and the first date it was seen in 2022:

Canada Goose	5/5/22	Blue Jay	5/12/22
Trumpeter Swan	5/5/22	American Crow	5/12/22
Wood Duck	5/19/22	Common Raven	5/23/22
Blue-winged Teal	5/5/22	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	6/9/22
American Wigeon	5/5/22	Tree Swallow	5/5/22
Mallard	5/5/22	Bank Swallow	7/14/22
American Black Duck	6/9/22	Barn Swallow	5/23/22
Northern Pintail	5/5/22	Cliff Swallow	7/14/22
Green-winged Teal	5/5/22	Black-capped Chickadee	5/5/22
Canvasback	8/18/22	Red-breasted Nuthatch	5/23/22
Ring-necked Duck	5/5/22	White-breasted Nuthatch	5/23/22
Greater Scaup	6/9/22	House Wren	6/9/22
Bufflehead	5/5/22	Sedge Wren	5/5/22
Common Goldeneye	5/5/22	Marsh Wren	5/23/22
Hooded Merganser	5/19/22	Golden-crowned Kinglet	5/23/22
Common Merganser	5/23/22	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5/5/22
Ruffed Grouse	5/23/22	Eastern Bluebird	5/23/22
Pied-billed Grebe	5/5/22	Veery	5/19/22
Rock Pigeon	5/23/22	Gray-cheeked Thrush	9/29/22

Mourning Dove	5/23/22	Swainson's Thrush	9/29/22
Black-billed Cuckoo	6/2/22	Hermit Thrush	5/5/22
Chimney Swift	5/23/22	American Robin	5/5/22
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	5/23/22	Gray Catbird	5/19/22
Virginia Rail	8/4/22	Brown Thrasher	7/14/22
Sora	5/5/22	European Starling	5/5/22
Sandhill Crane	5/5/22	American Pipit	9/22/22
Killdeer	5/19/22	Cedar Waxwing	6/2/22
Dunlin	5/23/22	Purple Finch	5/19/22
Least Sandpiper	5/23/22	Common Redpoll	5/5/22
Pectoral Sandpiper	5/23/22	American Goldfinch	5/23/22
Short-billed Dowitcher	5/23/22	Snow Bunting	10/27/22
Wilson's Snipe	5/5/22	Chipping Sparrow	5/5/22
Spotted Sandpiper	5/12/22	Clay-colored Sparrow	7/14/22
Greater Yellowlegs	5/5/22	American Tree Sparrow	10/27/22
Lesser Yellowlegs	5/5/22	Dark-eyed Junco	10/27/22
Ring-billed Gull	5/5/22	White-crowned Sparrow	9/22/22
Herring Gull	6/9/22	White-throated Sparrow	5/23/22
Black Tern	5/23/22	Vesper Sparrow	7/14/22
Common Tern	5/23/22	Savannah Sparrow	5/5/2022
Forster's Tern	5/23/22	Song Sparrow	5/5/2022
Common Loon	5/5/22	Lincoln's Sparrow	5/23/22
Double-crested Cormorant	6/9/22	Swamp Sparrow	5/5/22
American Bittern	5/5/22	Eastern Towhee	5/23/22
Great Blue Heron	5/23/22	Baltimore Oriole	5/23/22
Green Heron	8/18/22	Red-winged Blackbird	5/5/22
Turkey Vulture	5/5/22	Brown-headed Cowbird	5/23/22
Osprey	5/19/22	Rusty Blackbird	9/29/22
Northern Harrier	5/5/22	Common Grackle	5/5/22
Sharp-shinned Hawk	8/18/22	Ovenbird	5/12/22
Cooper's Hawk	8/4/22	Northern Waterthrush	5/23/22
Bald Eagle	5/5/22	Golden-winged Warbler	6/2/22
Broad-winged Hawk	6/2/22	Black-and-white Warbler	5/23/22
Rough-legged Hawk	5/5/22	Tennessee Warbler	5/23/22
Belted Kingfisher	5/12/22	Nashville Warbler	5/12/22
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	5/19/22	Mourning Warbler	6/23/22
Red-bellied Woodpecker	9/29/22	Common Yellowthroat	5/12/22
Downy Woodpecker	5/5/22	American Redstart	5/23/22
Hairy Woodpecker	5/12/22	Cape May Warbler	5/23/22
Pileated Woodpecker	5/12/22	Northern Parula	5/12/22
Northern Flicker	5/5/22	Magnolia Warbler	5/23/22
American Kestrel	8/18/22	Blackburnian Warbler	5/12/22
Merlin	5/23/22	Yellow Warbler	5/19/22
Peregrine Falcon	6/9/22	Chestnut-sided Warbler	5/12/22
Olive-sided Flycatcher	8/18/22	Blackpoll Warbler	5/23/22
Eastern Wood-Pewee	5/23/22	Palm Warbler	5/5/22
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	6/2/22	Pine Warbler	5/12/22
Alder Flycatcher	5/23/22	Yellow-rumped Warbler	5/12/22
Least Flycatcher	5/23/22	Black-throated Green Warbler	5/23/22
Eastern Phoebe	5/12/22	Canada Warbler	5/23/22
Great Crested Flycatcher	5/23/22	Wilson's Warbler	5/19/22

Eastern Kingbird	5/19/22	Scarlet Tanager	5/23/22
Blue-headed Vireo	5/23/22	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5/12/22
Warbling Vireo	5/23/22	Indigo Bunting	5/23/22
Red-eyed Vireo	5/23/22	House Sparrow	5/23/22

## **Photo Journal**

*By Mark Westphal*

Many photos show the grace and beauty of birds or feature the habitat they occupy. These two photos only show "parts" of an immature bald eagle. A closer look at these photos help to illustrate what it takes to be an eagle. An amazing beak and powerful talons are just two of the adaptations they need to occupy their role in nature.

