

BIRD SONGS

Newsletter of the North Lakeland
Discovery Center Bird Club

June 2023; Volume 19,
Issue 2

Sarah Besadny, Editor
sbesadny@gmail.com



Officers

Mark Westphal, President
Debby Wilson, Secretary
Carne Andrews, Treasurer
Meg Sanders, Membership Director
Amy Sheldon, Program Director

President's Message

Article and Photos by Mark Westphal

As the calendar changes from June to July, birding activity in the Northwoods is reaching a crescendo. While some young birds have already fledged and a few birds are just beginning to nest, many species of birds are in the midst of taking care of growing families. Young eagles are peaking over the edges of their giant nests, young loon chicks can be seen swimming along side their parents, and gangly Sandhill Crane colts are eagerly keeping up with their parents as they search for food in the tall grasses of summer. Now is a great time to go birding!

Our Bird Club continues to lead Thursday morning bird walks in a variety of locations and habitats. I hope you will join the fun and comradery as we learn more about the birds of northern Wisconsin. Thanks again to Donna Roche for putting our outing schedule together. Don't forget to check your Sunday emails for details about upcoming bird walks.

Our next monthly meeting will be held at the Discovery Center on Monday, July 10th. Active Bird Club member, Deb Simek, will share her photos and experiences as she presents her program entitled “Exquisitely Beautiful and Unique Birds of Panama and Ecuador”.

Other dates to mark on your calendar include our Bird Club annual meeting to be held on August 7th (details to follow), our September 11th program with Licia Johnson entitled “Courtships and Mating Rituals”, and our October 2nd program with our friend, Dr. Thomas Nicholls, about the importance of northern Wisconsin habitats for migration.



A Cedar Waxwing take advantage of twine provided for nest building

As you enjoy this summer’s birding season, take a moment to reflect upon your observations. Are you seeing as many birds this year as you have in previous years? Are you seeing new species in your backyard? Are some species missing? Birding is a fun activity, but your observations and records also help to recognize changes in bird populations, habitats, and the environment. As you share your enthusiasm about birds with friends and family members, you are also being an advocate. Your enjoyment of our feathered friends not only brightens your day, but can also help to provide a better future for the birds we love.



An Eastern Kingbird surveys the nearby field from a garden fence

On Rare Birds

By Frank Schroyer

One thing that immediately captivated me about birding was the chance to find species that are uncommon, or rare, at a certain time or in a certain place. The rush I (and many others) feel when finding something extraordinary can't be compared with much else. Nowadays we have numerous experts and committees that vet rare observations to determine their validity, and photo and sound documentation are only becoming more important to obtain when a rare bird is encountered. The bird club's early May outing to Powell Marsh presented our group with an opportunity to observe something incredibly rare here in the Northwoods, but we were just a tick slow with our identification and cameras, leaving us to conclude that we had only *possibly* just watched a Neotropical Cormorant fly overhead.

The hike started like many other bird outings; except I always find our time together at Powell extra special. Many club members typically show up for the occasion after either overwintering here in the Northwoods or further south, and it makes for a cathartic social experience, seeing everyone back in one place. After catching up with everyone, we started birding. The list grew rapidly, as we were barely able to move on from the parking area because of all the bird activity. I began to get a gut feeling that we were in for an exciting outing.

We moved along down the trail, adding numerous species to the list, and encountering many first of the year birds. As I remember it, Meg said something to the effect of, "There's a flock of something flying toward us." The group was able to quickly get eyes on the flock, flying in perfect v-formation. As soon as I was looking at them, I noticed an oddball.

I said, "From this distance it's difficult to say, but they certainly resemble Canada Geese. Is anyone else noticing how that bird 3rd from the left is quite a bit smaller than the rest?"

Many noticed, and at that point it felt like the whole group was fixed on this smaller bird.

I followed up with, "If these are in fact geese, then it's likely the smaller one is a Cackling Goose, which is quite rare, but they're really too far for me to tell yet." I learned that this should have been the point at which I grabbed my camera, as a Cackling Goose would almost certainly require photo or sound documentation to be an accepted record. But I of course didn't, and stayed fixed on the bird through binoculars.

The flock drew closer, and someone in the crowd said, "Those don't look like geese." Again, the group locked in on the flock, and several folks began to agree that this flock was in fact not geese. And then someone really raised our attention when they said "They look like cormorants!"

Typically, the cormorant species we expect to see here in Wisconsin is the Double-crested Cormorant. A large, goose-sized, black bird with a snake-like neck and long tail that make it

resemble a cross when in flight. The closer they came the more apparent it was that our group was watching cormorants, not geese, fly overhead. The flock flew over the group, and disappeared over the tree line. Thankfully, Dave W. was able to snap one distant photo before the flock was gone.



The smaller bird, circled in red, no longer third from the left as they had changed their formation after flying past us

We came to a consensus that we had just observed a flock of Double-crested Cormorants, but the smaller bird remained a mystery. I had a feeling that something quite rare just graced our presence, and began mentally sifting through memory files on what that small bird could possibly have been. It looked just like the other cormorants in flight, so it must have been a cormorant of some kind. That small size... what other cormorant species are even possible to find in Wisconsin? I remembered – a Neotropic Cormorant! I genuinely began to shake with excitement at this thought.

I consulted with others after the epiphany, and asked to see Dave's photo hoping it was able to capture the stark size difference. It did show the bird was smaller, but the angle made it difficult to make out the proportions of the birds. Ultimately, we decided to list 12 Double-crested Cormorants (DCCO), and 1 cormorant species (sp.), leaving open the possibility of changing that bird upon further investigation. Was our lone photo and verbal recount of the situation going to be enough to convince experts and eBird reviewers that we saw a Neotropic Cormorant?



Dave's photo cropped to highlight the bird in question (second from the right)

Dave graciously shared his photo and allowed me to post it to a birding group on Facebook for second opinions. I also sent the photo to renowned birder Ryan Brady for his opinion on the bird. While waiting on responses, myself and others did more digging into Neotropic Cormorants. Here are some of the interesting facts we found:

- Neotropic Cormorants (NECO) are not migratory, but are expanding their range north- in the U.S., they can be found along the Gulf and southern Atlantic Coasts, which is the northern edge of their range. Inland records are considered rare.
- NECO are distinguished most easily from the DCCO by their smaller size (~8 inches 'shorter') and less expansive, triangular, throat patch bordered with white feathers.
- Some records exist of 'runty' DCCO, or birds that were much smaller than normal. There have also been extremely rare instances where NECO and DCCO have hybridized.
- If this record was acceptable, it would be the 4th most northern record EVER, and the first time EVER this species would have been documented in Vilas County, though they are seen every few years (including 2023) in southern Wisconsin.

In short order I began receiving the opinions of others. The overwhelming sentiment can be summarized as this:

Based on your account and the photo, it is highly likely the bird you saw was a NECO; however, the extreme rarity of this bird, and lack of better photo documentation, make it unlikely this observation will be 'accepted' in eBird, or by the Wisconsin Bird Records Committee.

SO CLOSE. After hearing this simultaneously encouraging (my gut tells me we did see a NECO) and discouraging news, I did my best to quickly move on. In reflecting I feel I learned quite a bit from the experience, the most important lesson being: If your gut tells you it could be a rare species, start taking as many photos as you can before it flies away. It also goes to show how important it is to study every bird in the guides, even those not shown to be in your area, because you never know when something rare could show up. So, while I wait to add Neotropic Cormorant to my life list I'll be studying Cinnamon Teal, White Wagtail, and other birds that would be extremely rare, but plausible, to find here in the Northwoods. So, after all the research our species list will remain "...12 Double-crested Cormorants, 1 cormorant sp."



Double-crested Cormorant



Neotropic Cormorant

Photos from eBird

Species Profile: Sharp-tailed Grouse **(*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)**

Article and Photos by David Wittrock



Our group met in the cool, dark early morning hours of a northern Wisconsin April day. We were there to see the mating display of the sharp-tailed grouse and the Namekagon Barrens is one of the places where this spectacle can still reliably be observed in Wisconsin. The previous week there were still 20 inches of snow on the ground in the Barrens, but a several day stretch of hot weather had melted the snow and allowed us to access the site. We did not know whether those conditions had encouraged the sharp-tails to begin the mating season, but were hopeful that we would be able to see their display.

The sharp-tailed grouse is a bird of grasslands that have some trees and bushes. The birds will actually perch and feed in trees, although much of their life is spent in the grass, and their mating leks require an open, grassy expanse. The sharp-tailed grouse was once fairly common across much of Wisconsin. However, habitat loss has greatly reduced their range; it is estimated that only 1% of the pine and oak barrens preferred by sharp-tailed grouse still exists. It is currently believed that there are only about 1,000 of these birds left in the state. The primary population at this time is in the Namekagon Barrens and at Crex Meadows, two sites in northwestern Wisconsin, with possibly populations at a few other scattered sites.

When not displaying, the sharp-tailed grouse, like many grouse species, is a mostly brownish chicken-sized bird. Unlike its close relative the prairie chicken, it is spotted on the chest and white on the belly, rather than streaked. In flight, it has a long, pointed tail and white on the underside. In display, males have orange “eyebrows” and a purplish air sac on their cheeks (in contrast to the orange air sacs of the prairie chicken).

In order to minimize disruption on the mating ritual of the birds, we were instructed to be in our blind by 4:00 am. In mid-April, that meant we had an extended time to sit in the dark and a great opportunity to listen to the early morning bird (and coyote) chorus begin. By 5:15, we could clearly see the surrounding landscape, but we had not yet had any indication of sharp-tailed grouse presence. Finally, at about 5:30 we began to hear the distinctive cooing and cackling of grouse and a few minutes later the first sharp-tailed grouse appeared on the lek. Before long, we had 14 males dancing and sparring around us (over the course of the next couple hours they were joined by 4 females). The morning was filled with face offs between birds, “dancing,” stare downs, and occasional pursuit of a female (we saw no actual matings), interspersed by periods of silent stare downs and a few periods of scattering when a northern harrier flew over the lek. Quite a display of sights and sounds!

Although the mating display seems somewhat chaotic and random, there are some general “rules” for the display. Males have a territory on the lek that they actively defend (although, to this untrained observer, these areas seemed a bit more fluid than those of greater prairie chickens, which seemed to never leave a particular territory during a morning’s display). More mature, dominant males have spaces near the center of the lek, the males on the periphery were smaller, possibly younger males. At some points during the display males clearly display their eyebrows and cheek sacs, fan out their wings, tilt forward, throw up their tails, and stamp out a little dance, sometimes just a few steps, sometimes an extended set of steps. At times this ended up in them directly facing a rival. This could then lead to these two birds crouching on the ground and staring at one another for several minutes. At times, the interaction between males can take an overtly physical turn, with males pecking at each other with one male suddenly leaping into the air. Of course, all of this is designed to gain the attention of the females. On the morning we were there the females primarily remained on the periphery of the lek, not interacting with the males and avoiding the pursuit of males when that did occur.



Male Sharp-tailed Grouse displaying



The crouching / stare down behavior of the Sharp-tailed Grouse

By around 7:45 am, the activity was beginning to wind down. The number of males on the lek slowly decreased until only one bird was remaining at around 8:10. We were instructed to remain in the blind until the birds had left the lek, this bird did not want to leave and finally, at about 8:20 we decided it was appropriate to leave. It was a truly remarkable experience to be able to watch these birds engage in this ritual, one that I hope many of you will be able to enjoy at some time.

Paddling and Birding on the Wisconsin

By Judy Cassady

Jon and I have enjoyed kayaking on the Wisconsin River twice this month. On Sunday, June 4, as we were preparing to launch at the boat landing on County D, I saw a Great Blue Heron flying downriver. A short while later, a hawk - medium sized, mottled brown feathers - flew across the parking lot, too fast for an ID.

As we entered the river, six mallards near the opposite shore protested the intrusion. The river is quiet in this section, and we soon saw a family of four Bald Eagles in various stages of feather maturation. During the 6 hour trip, we saw 6 more Bald Eagles, not all at the same time, and in various places. They seemed to be leading us down the river. Another raptor, perched in a tree next to the river, was quite a surprise --a Turkey Vulture?? His bald red head was unmistakable. (Aren't you supposed to be flying over a field? There are no dead fish around here.) Later Jon spotted two Sandpipers: Least, and a little while later, a Semipalmated. Other birds that blessed our trip were 3 Grackles, 3 Red-winged Blackbirds, 1 Eastern Bluebird, 2 Kingfishers, 1 Eastern Kingbird who was sitting high in a tree pumping his tail. We heard a Chestnut-sided Warbler, a Common Yellowthroat, a Great Crested Flycatcher, and more than one Red-eyed Vireo.

With the gentle breeze, even though the temperature was in the 80's, mosquitoes were few until the late afternoon. The dragonflies had been busy and helpful, but they seemed to have taken a break before we reached the McNaughton Bridge where we landed.

The morning of June 9, Friday, we launched near the McNaughton Bridge where we had completed the previous paddle. We saw two Robins, and heard a Red-eyed Vireo as well as a Great Crested Flycatcher as we entered the quiet river. Watching us from the marsh were three Sandhill Cranes. Two Canada Geese families kept their goslings close to shore. Three Great Blue Herons were flying together and three more were sighted in various locations. Twice we saw a pair of Mallards - one pair on the river and another pair in flight. The best "Blue Ribbon" view goes to a pair of Eastern Kingbirds. They flew out to a large snag at the edge of the river, momentarily flitting from branch to branch. Paddling the part of the marsh easily seen along HWY 47., a Red-eyed Vireo, a Common Yellowthroat, a Great Crested Flycatcher, our normal musical accompaniment was joined by a Song Sparrow. Bald Eagles were seen in four different locations during this paddle.

As we neared the public boat landing off Apperson Road, a Great Blue Heron flew from the shore to the marsh. Then I noticed the ventilated wooden box one of the people on shore picked up from the beach. So the Great Blue Heron had evidently been released by a bird rehabilitation organization. Unfortunately we were too far away from the landing to read the insignias on their shirts or vehicles. I'll watch for an article in one of the local newspapers.

Jon is already planning more kayaking trips on the Wisconsin. Anyone who enjoys kayaking or canoeing and birding would be welcome to join us.

Avian Keratin Disorder

Article and Photo by David Wittrock



In April of this year, I noticed a Hairy Woodpecker at my feeders with a severely deformed beak. It appears to have Avian Keratin Disorder. This disorder was first documented in Alaska in 2010 and has spread from there. It is believed the disorder is caused by a virus. The disorder causes

uncontrolled growth of beaks and has been reported in woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, jays, hawks, and possibly finches. It is not known at this time how the virus is contracted, as a result, there are no recommendations for how to prevent the spread of the disorder. If you do see one, it would be prudent to disinfect your feeders frequently or possibly consider taking them down. For more information, this link has the best information I can find at this time: <https://goldengateaudubon.org/blog-posts/solving-mystery-deformed-beaks/?fbclid=IwAR2SCuFDUJ2F2BZ-bPNh3gevmgGhGSXmF8bDjy2H57rfobmM1GqrM4kZcBA#:~:text=So%2Dcalled%20%E2%80%9Cavian%20keratin%20disorder,death%20by%20starvation%20and%20hypothermia>

To report a sighting of a bird with a deformed beak, go to this site:

https://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/landbirds/beak_deformity/observerreport.php

Up North Hammerheads Great Wisconsin Birdathon Recap

By Sarah Besadny

On May 22nd, 7 Bird Club members and a friend of the Club joined together as the Up North Hammerheads to participate in the 2023 Great Wisconsin Birdathon. The Great Wisconsin Birdathon is an event sponsored by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin to raise money for various bird protection initiatives. This was the 8th year that the Up North Hammerheads have participated in this event. Each team selects a day between April 15th and June 15th to head out birding to see how many species of birds they can spot and they seek support in the form of donations. Since we bird on behalf of our Bird Club half of the money we raise comes back to the Club to help support our monthly programs and to help support the improvements and general maintenance of the bird feeding area at the NLDC.

May 22nd was a gorgeous day for birding! The day started out with layers of fog “pillows” that were just spectacular to look at while the sun was still below the horizon but whose rays were intersecting the “pillows” – just gorgeous! As the day progressed we had a beautiful sunny, windless, not too hot, not too cold day. The leaves weren’t fully out on the trees yet making it easier to spot birds – yay! I’d like to say there weren’t even any bugs but that surely wasn’t the case, especially when we hit the Presque Isle Ponds. More on that later.

We gathered at 6:00 a.m. at Powell Tribal listening to a morning chorus of songbirds, the winnowing of several Wilson’s Snipe and the *BLOONK-Adoonk* song of the American Bittern. We kept on picking up new species as we hiked the dike roads through the marsh. By about 8:30 Linda D. announced that we had already reached 10,000 steps. Although “steps” weren’t our goal for the day, we certainly logged quite a few before our day was over.

After leaving Powell Tribal on our way over to Powell Vista we made a quick stop at Sherman Lake and picked up a few new species for our day’s checklist. Powell Vista is always rich with birds and our visit there did not disappoint. We added several different species of sparrows, Horned Larks, and various species of waterfowl to our checklist.

With our 8 years of Birdathon experience under our belts, we know what species to expect at various places during the course of our day. By mid-morning it was time for a rest stop so we headed to the Manitowish Waters Community Center. Would we see the Eastern Bluebird that has been spotted at our rest stop in prior years? Yes we did! Frank's keen eyes spotted a male Eastern Bluebird flying up and down off a far-off fence post.

For the first time in our birdathon history we decided to head up to the Presque Isle Ponds. From a birding perspective this was a great choice. From a bug standpoint I'm surprised we all made it around the pond before calling it quits. The bugs were HORRENDOUS. However we added Hooded Merganser, Spotted Sandpiper, Northern Waterthrush, Eastern Kingbird and Green Heron to our list so it was worth the welts that were beginning to form on our skin. One memory that still brings me delight was when the Green Heron flushed up and over our heads while we were walking and our whole group in unison shouted, "Green Heron!". What fun it is to bird with such an enthusiastic group!

Our lunch spot is always at the picnic tables on the end of Cathedral Point in Boulder Junction. After the bug experience at Presque Isle Ponds we were a bit hesitant to think about picnicking but once we got there we were pleased to find that the bugs weren't too bad. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird and a handsome Yellow-rumped Warbler kept us company as they foraged among the nearby bushes as we ate our lunches. It goes without saying that more eyes spot more birds. While many of us were enjoying the food in our lunch bags and a brief chance to sit, Jon C. was still paying close attention for birds and spotted two Common Mergansers off on another point on Trout Lake. Yay, another species added to our list! We also always hope to pick up a Ring-billed Gull at this spot and sure enough, we spotted one before heading over to Allequash Lake.

Allequash is our mostly likely spot for Black Tern. Frank S. and Mike P. quickly spotted a small flock hawking bugs just above the water at the very far end of the lake. While they were watching the Black Terns two Virginia Rails were calling back and forth in the tall reeds right in front of where they were standing. All of us were able to hear the rails and most of us were able to see the terns, but speaking for myself, longer legs for a better view over the reeds would have added to the enjoyment of the rail/tern treat.

Two more stops were on the schedule before we'd call it a day. The Fish Hatchery/Woodruff Road area is always a good stop for birds, but it's also a nice treat after 9 hours of birding since the trees/bushes along Woodruff Road aren't too tall and allow for relaxed birding and no strain on the neck.

Our final stop is always in Downtown Minocqua. Target birds are Chimney Swift and House Sparrow. The Chimney Swifts made a showing before we were even able to park the cars. While on the hunt for a House Sparrow, Frank S. spotted several House Finch. Another species for our day's list. Onwards we went in pursuit of a House Sparrow. No luck for that species but to our delight a small group of Rock Pigeons were hanging out in the parking lot of the Campanile Center. It was about 6:00 p.m. and the House Sparrow wasn't going to grace us with its presence so we decided to call it a (GREAT) day. After our 12 hours of birding we had hit our goal of 100 species. We were thrilled. As we shared our highlights for the day there was a common theme — how much fun it is to bird as a group and work together to ensure everyone sees as many birds as possible that were added to our checklist. Delightful birding for sure! We're already looking forward to next year to help raise funds for the birds that bring us so much joy.

Thanks to everyone who donated to the Up North Hammerheads, we raised \$1,680. And as of this writing, the Great Wisconsin Birdathon has broken another fundraising record of \$120,931. A big boost for birds!!



The Up North Hammerheads, photo taken by team member Donna Roche

Our list of 100 species:

Canada Goose	Green Heron	Black-capped Chickadee	Red-winged Blackbird
Trumpeter Swan	Turkey Vulture	Tree Swallow	Brown-headed Cowbird
Wood Duck	Osprey	Barn Swallow	Common Grackle
Blue-winged Teal	Northern Harrier	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Ovenbird
Mallard	Bald Eagle	Cedar Waxwing	Northern Waterthrush
Green-winged Teal	Broad-winged Hawk	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Golden-winged Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Rough-legged Hawk	Winter Wren	Black-and-white Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Great Horned Owl	Sedge Wren	Nashville Warbler
Common Merganser	Belted Kingfisher	Gray Catbird	Common Yellowthroat
Ruffed Grouse	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	European Starling	American Redstart
Pied-billed Grebe	Downy Woodpecker	Eastern Bluebird	Northern Parula
Rock Pigeon	Hairy Woodpecker	Veery	Blackburnian Warbler
Mourning Dove	Northern Flicker	Hermit Thrush	Yellow Warbler
Chimney Swift	Pileated Woodpecker	American Robin	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Merlin	House Finch	Blackpoll
Virginia Rail	Eastern Kingbird	Purple Finch	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Sora	Eastern Wood-Pewee	American Goldfinch	Palm Warbler
Sandhill Crane	Alder Flycatcher	Chipping Sparrow	Pine Warbler
Killdeer	Least Flycatcher	Clay-colored Sparrow	Yellow-rumped Warbler
American Woodcock	Yellow-throated Vireo	White-throated Sparrow	Black-throated Green Warbler
Wilson's Snipe	Blue-headed Vireo	Savannah Sparrow	Scarlet Tanager
Spotted Sandpiper	Warbling Vireo	Song Sparrow	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Ring-billed Gull	Red-eyed Vireo	Lincoln's Sparrow	
Black Tern	Blue Jay	Swamp Sparrow	
Common Loon	American Crow	Eastern Towhee	
American Bittern	Common Raven	Baltimore Oriole	

A Nest Box Story

Article and Photos by Donna Roche



A number of years ago with the assistance of Ryan and donated wood pieces at a NLDC Bird Festival, I put together a nest box for small birds. For the years between then and this year, the box hung around at several locations in my yard....empty and unused in its purpose. This spring I set it up on this double shepherds hook with thoughts of putting some other decorative item on the other side. A little later, since I don't have a timetable for this story, I noticed a Black-capped Chickadee come near and then hop into the small entrance hole. Later again, there were two chickadees not only near, but bringing 'stuff' into the box. Happy! Then no other action occurred. Hmmm, I thought, knowing that chickadees may build several nests, they must have chosen another nest site. A few days later, I decided to put the suet feeder onto the other hook, walked over to do so... and, wow, a chickadee flies out of the box!! Yikes!! I hung up the feeder, crept away, and stayed away! For the next while, I watched the comings and goings of the two birds through my kitchen window and with binoculars pointed at the entrance while seated in a chair some distance back. Later last week, activity seemed to intensify with easily identified grubs being brought in and fecal sacks being carried out. The birds chirped and called flight/task signals to each other all the time. I wondered if they talked to their unhatched eggs while incubating, hmmm. Alas, too late for that this nesting season... I was seeing a bird face through the entrance! Early Saturday morning the calls and activity still increased with something new... a bird face was pushing farther out the hole, only to be pushed back by an adult with more food. When the parent left, the perfectly identifiable chickadee face, then head came back and, oh my, within a second, the bird is out of the hole! How does it do that? I wonder. Well, it does, the wings work, flapping like mad and the little guy gets to a branch, wobbles a sec AND there he is... FLEDGED! Soon a parent is there and gets the bird to move/fly/flitter to another spot. Over the next hours, more activity, calls, faces in the hole and birds out of the box. I'm in and out of the house, so I don't know what I miss along the way. My guess is that there were 4 to 6 young. By late afternoon, all is quiet at the box, but chickadees can be heard and sometimes seen in trees nearby. Throughout all this time, the parents were in and out of the box

and in the trees attending and feeding their little guys.... amazing! I'm sure their work will continue now that all are out of the nest box, as they find each bird and feed it and encouraging it to find its own tasty grubs. I'm thrilled that I got to see that the young look exactly like the adult Black-capped Chickadees except that the tail seems shorter. I sincerely hope all is well as I write this on Sunday... we had a pretty hard rain last night and it's raining again now. I do trust that those good parents will continue to do all they can for their brood!! I didn't take any photos while the action was going on. I just watched and enjoyed as the story unfolded. Later, a full day after all activity ended at the nest box, I took it down and opened it to find this housekeeper's ideal of perfection.



Friends and Neighbors

Article and Photos by Mark Westphal

As the years go by, I've gotten to know some great friends and neighbors. I look forward to their return each spring after many of them have spent their winters soaking up the sunshine in much warmer climates. In case you haven't guessed it, I'm talking about my bird friends. While the Northwoods is alive with the sights and sounds of many different bird species, there are a few bird families that I look forward to watching each year. I have been watching several families for as many as five years. The question I sometimes ask myself is "Am I watching the same birds this year as I watched last year or the year before?" Without the presence of leg bands or electronic identification devices, there is no way to know for sure if I am viewing the very same birds each year. All I know is that certain behaviors and nesting site selections could indicate that these could be the same birds returning for multiple seasons.

For the past five years a pair of Eastern Phoebes has been one of the earliest spring arrivals at our house. Each year they have nested on the same deck support beam. With aerial acrobatics and bobbing tails, they are a welcome presence around our house as they forage for insects to feed their growing family. Am I looking at the same Mr. and Mrs. Phoebe each year? Could it be

one surviving adult with another mate or even an offspring of a previous nesting pair? Since they don't wear name tags and I don't speak "Phoebe", I can only offer conjecture.



Eastern Phoebe

This spring around mid-May a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird appeared at our dining room window as if to say, "I'm back. It's time to get the feeders out!" Is this the same hummingbird that visited our sugar water feeders last year expecting the same food service this year? It is simply amazing to me that this tiny little bird could travel thousands of miles and end up in front of the same window eight months later.

As I sit here composing my thoughts, a pair of Eastern Bluebirds are busy making frequent trips to a nearby nest box to feed five recently hatched chicks. With nine nest boxes to choose from, the same box has been occupied by bluebirds for several years in a row. Are they the same bluebirds choosing the same box year after year? They certainly seem familiar with the neighborhood.

As May rolls around, I habitually glance up at a nesting platform that is on my way as I travel to the nearby town of Minocqua. A pair of Osprey have occupied this nesting platform for at least five seasons. The platform was placed alongside a county highway to actively encourage the use of the platform for nesting instead of the nearby active electric utility poles. Like some of my human friends, these Osprey may have spent their winter in Florida or even as far away as South America. Last year they fledged two out of three chicks. This year I am still waiting to see how many chicks are in the nest. Whoever is growing up inside that big basket of sticks is still too small to be seen from below. I only know that regular fish deliveries to the nest indicate there is at least one hungry mouth to feed. Through the years I have spent many hours observing the osprey that occupy this platform. As I have become more familiar with them, have they become more familiar with me? So far their piercing stares have not communicated any warm, fuzzy feelings. Maybe next year!



Osprey

Other bird friends that I enjoy keeping tabs on include an Eagles nest in Boulder Junction, a Sandhill Crane family near Minocqua, and a Trumpeter Swan pair at Powell Marsh. All these birds seem to be the same adult birds returning to the same nesting spots multiple years in a row. Each year I look forward to their return. I appreciate the insight they give me into their lives and the stories they allow me to share. No, these birds are not “friends” in the true sense of the word, but nevertheless there is a sense of connection. Whether these same birds will be back again next year, only time will tell. For now, I will enjoy watching their families grow and wish them well on their future journeys.



Adult Sandhill Crane with a colt

DC Bird Club Thursday Outing Recaps- Spring 2023

with Photos of the Birders!

By Donna Roche

Introduction: Once again, I hope that you will enjoy a review of what the DC Bird Club Thursday outing groups have accomplished, where they have gone and who went on these outings. I would like to start here with 'the spring collection' of birders in 'fashions for the season' that only our BIRD SONGS (magazine) would publish! The birds are always well dressed especially in the spring... were we??

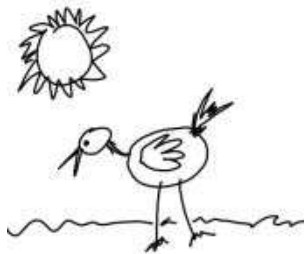
I hope you have fun finding yourself, seeing what you wore, remembering all the birds that you identified, what you learned and generally recalling a good time and experience. Almost all the outings were covered... sorry, I missed 2 :(Here we go!!



Recap of April 27th outing to Lac Vieux Desert: *The lake was still iced over enough to keep lots of birds near the shore and within scoping range, so that our group of 14! birders was able to view many species of migrating waterfowl. Thank you, Sarah B., for suggesting this destination, for all the checking out of lake conditions and leading the group! It was also interesting to be at the actual source of the Wisconsin River. From the parking area, we walked to the lake along a wooded trail that led to where the river starts. It's a lovely spot with a small dam and dedication signage. We started hearing and seeing birds from the parking lot (Common Merganser), along the trail (Evening Grosbeaks) and at river source (Belted Kingfisher). We quickly set up scopes and put eyes on binoculars to look out onto the large lake. The birds we saw were in the nearby open water (Horned Grebe), along the edge of ice-covered water (Greater Scaup), on the actual ice (Bald Eagles) and in the air (Tree Swallows). There was a lot going on at the same time... one had to choose where to look... and it was exciting to see so many birds. You'll get an idea of the number of birds with the Species List below. Thanks Sarah and Carne for keeping the Club List with total of **35 Species!***



Recap of May 4th outing to Powell Marsh Vista Dike: *The area of Powell Marsh that our group walked and birded looked more late winter than early spring. The shrubs at water's edges showed very little budding out and the grassy plants were too matted down to invite any sparrows or warblers. However, as our great group of 18 gathered for a few words from me and a photo opportunity at 8 a.m., it was obvious that birds were around. Maybe twenty minutes later when we actually walked down the path to the dike, a sizable list of species were already seen or heard. We spotted a pair of Trumpeter Swans building a nest, a single Common Loon who spent some time, later decided to move on and a number of Sandhill Cranes were seen farther out in the marsh. The water level was high and provided good space for the 10 species of duck plus Pied-billed Grebe and American Coot that were seen. Sharp-eyed birders found a single Wilson's Snipe and American Bittern along the way. However, the birds that were spotted in the sky were really the stars of the day for me. Five species of raptors, a couple species of swallows and Horned Larks were identified quickly, but it took a little time for us to confirm a group of Double-crested Cormorants silently flying high in V-formation with their distinctive shape as a good ID clue. We had a terrific birding time and enjoyed the camaraderie of getting together after the long winter. Thanks to Carne and Frank for keeping ebird lists. **Total 45 Species***



Recap of May 11th outing to Willow Flowage: *We were a small group on a day during a busy, birding week with NLDC and other activities. However, we had a great outing with beautiful weather and many birds for our eagle eyed and enthusiastic birders. I'll mention names-- John,*

Lori, Debbie and Connie because I did forget to take a photo :(I am glad there wasn't much need for the spotting scope because I took on the job of ebirding! I was kept busy with this task as we started hearing and seeing birds in the busy boat landing parking lot from our start! It is so interesting that the edge areas of this 'lot' always provide us with a rich variety of bird species. Sparrows and warblers were in the shrubs as was a Winter Wren... what a beautiful song! A Baltimore Oriole was a great view spotted on a tree top. After finding no birds in the roaring water pool below the dam, we moved on the Nature Trail. We had a relaxed-paced walk with sounds of spring peepers and Ovenbirds plus sights and sounds of several other warblers. I don't know if we've seen a Scarlet Tanager on this trail before, but we had great views of one on this day. **Total 32 Species**



Recap of May 18th outing to Beaver Creek Hemlocks: This was the second time Frank S. led our Thursday outing group at Beaver Creek and the site was maybe even more impressive in the spring than it was in the fall. The variety of habitat areas provide places to find many different bird species... there's something for many birds here. Since there was a pretty stiff, cold wind on this day, Frank suggested that we make stops along the trail and take a little time to watch and listen for birds. This worked very well as our group of **12 birders found 32 species of birds**. The main trail goes along and above the creek so you often have a view of it as you walk through some younger vegetation and then into the grandeur of the large areas of big hemlocks and yellow birch. So we found ducks and rails on one side plus Winter Wrens and Blackburnian Warblers on the other! Frank and the group found 8 species of warblers and were very surprised to hear a bluebird! We had questions and Frank had lots of answers about this area's history and the importance of protecting and preserving properties like this one. Thank you, Frank for sharing BCH with us! We'll be back. Thank you to Carne A. and Liz S. for keeping ebird lists.



Recap of May 25th outing to Little Turtle Flowage with Manitowish meet-up: It was another icy-wind morning! However, a group of 11 DC birders put on another layer of warm clothing and got out there to bird! Even John Bates came out of his house to give support and help. The Ding-a-Ling owners always help with their humming bird and seed feeders. So we did find a nice assortment of bird species.

At the Turtle Flowage, we were glad to find that the water level was somewhat up and we found several Black Terns along with the many nesting Tree Sparrows. We walked along the outer edge of the wooded trails to the right of the parking lot in order to have a walk that moderated the wind with the mosquitos. We found a number of interesting bird species including warblers, thrush and cuckoo. The Golden-winged Warbler has been heard several places this spring and this was one where it was seen!

Thank you to Liz S. for keeping ebird list at our first stop **Hwy 47/51 Species 18** and to Carne A. for keeping the list at **Little Turtle Flowage Species 37**.



Recap of June 1 outing to Ashland day trip: Thank you to Colleen Matula for leading this outing in Ashland and for adding Tim Oksiuta to the leading team! It was a GREAT DAY to be along the lake front and finding birds. We had a quick meet-up with Colleen at Bayview Park where we saw 2 species of terns and a few others, but Tim wanted us to get right to Prentice Park for his favorite place! Our group of 13 enjoyed hearing and/or seeing 37 species of birds while walking the interesting grounds of Prentice! Most folks heard a Sora and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak a couple of times. We got good views of Spotted Sandpiper, Common Yellowthroat and American Redstart. After a good, almost 2 hours, we moved on, across Hwy 2, to Maslowski Beach. The beach was bare of the usual gull population with only a few on a rock outcropping, but a Herring Gull had joined a few Ring-necked Gull so we got 2 species of gull! We found a few scaup and redheads in the bay and a few interesting shorebirds along the water's edge adding more species to our lists. From here, we drove to the hiking path by the Long Bridge and had a pleasant (mosquito free!) walk. Some of our favorite birds were Warbling Vireo, Veery and our first Great-blue Heron! It was getting close to noon, so at our next stop we brought our lunch bags with us into the Northern Great Lakes Visitors Center along with our binoculars. As we ate our lunches on the outdoor deck, David W. alerted all to a Yellow-headed Blackbird at a seed feeder. It moved as we did, but landed nearby in a conifer tree. So everyone got great, pretty close looks at the bird. David and Mark W. were able to get photos of what, I'm sure, was the day's favorite find! The total for the day by my count was **62 species** which I hope is pretty correct since I kept all five of the species lists. See them below. Thanks John and Jon for carrying the scope. Thanks to David and Sarah B. for teaching me about inserting photos into ebird. :)



Recap of June 8 outing Vandercook Road area, Arbor Vitae: Thank you to Sarah B. for leading us again at this interesting area and for some terrific birding! The day did not start out promising... it was cold and the mosquitos were ferocious. We hoped to hear and get quick looks at some of the target birds that were known to have been in this area of young, but getting more mature, aspen trees. We were very rewarded and glad to have come birding this day. We not only saw birds, we had long looks at birds. Hard to find birds posed for us and showed off all their best characteristics!! Rose-breasted Grosbeak, American Redstart, Golden-winged Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Eastern Wood-pewee and Scarlet Tanager choose tops of snags and in open places to sing out their best songs. These were the stars of the day. However, not to be overlooked, **eleven birders found a total of 35 species of birds** in the 3 locations we visited. The day did warm, the mosquitos did lessen and the last bird of the day, a Bald Eagle landed in a somewhat nearby tree and showed off its magnificent profile! Thanks Sarah B. for also keeping the 3 species lists.



Recap of June 15 outing Pipke Park, Presque Isle. If you came to this outing and stayed for all or most of it, YOU deserve special recognition for bravery and stamina!! That's you - Jon C, Judy C, Linda D, David W, Debbie W, M.E., Lori M. and me! It was cold, windy, misty and did not get better at all. Plus, the mosquitos were as bad as ever... However troopers that we are, we did see and hear **28+ species of birds** during the walk around both pools at Pipke. With the water level as low as I've seen, there weren't the numbers of geese or loons as we usually see, but there were opportunities to find shorebirds. We did find some shorebirds. We also found a number of warblers

and others who needed to get out there to feed themselves and their families. Perhaps the best memory of an uncomfortable birding day, was the view of a mother Hooded Merganser sitting or squatting on a log with 6 duckling tucked under her.



Recap of June 22, 2023 outing Dove Road, Lake Tomahawk. My first record of going to the Tomahawk demonstration area is in 2012 when we went there on June 21 with Amber Roth. At that time I didn't write up 'recaps' or show Species Lists, so I am only going by memory that we did hear and see Golden-winged Warblers on that day and for many years since then. Merlin App was the only one to hear one this year, but it doesn't count for our records! The point here is that as habitats change, so do the habits of specific bird species. We've been witnesses that strategies of harvest and regrowth of forests help to encourage specific species of birds. Not to be overlooked, this area also has other naturally evolving habitats that continue to provide good birding experiences for us including Veery, Hermit Thrush and several species of Warblers. It's a treat at this time of year to observe breeding evidence seeing birds with food for their young in their mouths. Note in the photo that several folks are wearing mosquito-head nets... we needed them!! A few of us moved on to the small park nearby. Here we were pleased to find an Indigo Bunting! That brought **our total to 22 species**. Thanks Liz for coming today and keeping the lists. Best wishes for Dick's knee surgery. The club has missed a few others for medical reasons... get healthy and get back birding with us!!

You will have to excuse any lack in the later 'Spring Fashion'. Unfortunately, the insects, particularly mosquitos made wearing short sleeved shirts, short pants and sandals impossible #+#! And for some reason designers haven't come up with fashion-forward "net-ware".*

I really appreciate the contributions of other leaders, those who keep the species lists and help out in any way to make the outings enjoyable for all. A big thank you once again to John Randolph for keeping the communication between all of us so smooth, easy and dependable!! And as always, thank you to all of you who come out to participate in Thursday outings , to actively bird, to call out the birds you find, to share your expertise in all areas of nature, and to share the joy of birding!!

Almost all of the photos were taken by Donna R. (Clip Art did the rest)
More to come... stay tuned for the next announcement!!

Life List Quarterly: Second Quarter 2023

By Sarah Besadny

I echo Donna's thanks to all who keep our weekly birding checklists. These checklists, entered into eBird, are available to anyone – researchers, students, or anyone interested in seeing what birds are being spotted, and when and where they have been spotted. These checklists also get entered into the Bird Club's records. Long-time Bird Club member, Guy David, created the template that we use to keep the Club's records. It's well organized and includes each outing's location and species lists going all the way back to 2004.

Our general rules for determining what birds make it into our records are that at least two people heard/saw the species and that the species was found on a Club-sponsored outing/event. So, included in the species lists so far for 2023 are all of the Thursday Bird Outings through June 22nd as well as the Open House Liz Stone and Dick Theile hosted for Club members to come see the Tufted Titmouse that was visiting their feeders (1/21/23), the Namekagen Barrens outing hosted by Dave Wittrock to see Sharp-tailed Grouse on their lek (4/14/23) , as well as the Great Wisconsin Birdathon (5/22/23). These outings have resulted in 140 different species seen so far this year by the Discovery Bird Club. We still haven't added a new species to our overall Life List, but we have many opportunities to change that before our birding season is over for the year.

List of the 140 species seen this year and the date of the first sighting of the species.

Canada Goose	4/14/23
Trumpeter Swan	4/27/23
Wood Duck	4/14/23
Blue-winged Teal	5/4/23
Northern Shoveler	5/4/23
Gadwall	4/27/23
American Wigeon	4/27/23
Mallard	4/14/23
Green-winged Teal	5/4/23
Redhead	5/4/23
Ring-necked Duck	4/27/23
Greater Scaup	4/27/23
Lesser Scaup	4/27/23

Bufflehead	5/4/23
Common Goldeneye	4/27/23
Hooded Merganser	4/14/23
Common Merganser	4/27/23
Red-breasted Merganser	4/27/23
Ruffed Grouse	5/18/23
Sharp-tailed Grouse	4/14/23
Pied-billed Grebe	4/27/23
Horned Grebe	4/27/23
Rock Pigeon	5/22/23
Mourning Dove	5/18/23
Black-billed Cuckoo	5/25/23
Chimney Swift	5/22/23
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	5/22/23
Virginia Rail	5/18/23
Sora	5/18/23
American Coot	5/4/23
Sandhill Crane	4/14/23
Semipalmated Plover	6/1/23
Killdeer	5/4/23
Dunlin	6/1/23
Semipalmated Sandpiper	6/1/23
American Woodcock	4/14/23
Wilson's Snipe	4/14/23
Spotted Sandpiper	5/22/23
Greater Yellowlegs	5/4/23
Ring-billed Gull	5/22/23
Herring Gull	6/1/23
Black Tern	5/22/23
Common Tern	6/1/23
Forster's Tern	6/1/23
Common Loon	4/27/23
Double-crested Cormorant	5/4/23
American Bittern	5/4/23
Great Blue Heron	6/1/23
Green Heron	5/22/23
Turkey Vulture	4/27/23
Osprey	5/22/23
Northern Harrier	4/14/23
Bald Eagle	4/27/23
Broad-winged Hawk	5/4/23
Rough-legged Hawk	5/4/23
Belted Kingfisher	4/27/23
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	5/22/23

Red-bellied Woodpecker	4/27/23
Downy Woodpecker	1/21/23
Hairy Woodpecker	1/21/23
Pileated Woodpecker	1/21/23
Northern Flicker	4/14/23
American Kestrel	4/14/23
Merlin	5/22/23
Eastern Wood-Pewee	5/22/23
Alder Flycatcher	5/22/23
Least Flycatcher	5/11/23
Eastern Phoebe	5/4/23
Great Crested Flycatcher	6/1/23
Eastern Kingbird	5/22/23
Yellow-throated Vireo	6/1/23
Blue-headed Vireo	5/18/23
Warbling Vireo	5/22/23
Red-eyed Vireo	5/18/23
Blue Jay	1/21/23
American Crow	4/14/23
Common Raven	4/14/23
Horned Lark	5/4/23
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	6/8/23
Tree Swallow	4/14/23
Barn Swallow	5/4/23
Black-capped Chickadee	1/21/23
Tufted Titmouse	1/21/23
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1/21/23
White-breasted Nuthatch	5/11/23
Winter Wren	5/11/23
Sedge Wren	5/22/23
Marsh Wren	6/1/23
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4/27/23
Eastern Bluebird	5/18/23
Veery	5/22/23
Swainson's Thrush	5/25/23
Hermit Thrush	5/11/23
American Robin	4/14/23
Gray Catbird	5/22/23
Brown Thrasher	4/14/23
European Starling	4/14/23
Cedar Waxwing	6/1/23
Evening Grosbeak	4/27/23
House Finch	5/22/23
Purple Finch	5/11/23

American Goldfinch	1/21/23
Chipping Sparrow	5/4/23
Field Sparrow	4/14/23
American Tree Sparrow	5/4/23
Dark-eyed Junco	4/27/23
White-throated Sparrow	4/27/23
Vesper Sparrow	4/14/23
Savannah Sparrow	5/4/23
Song Sparrow	4/14/23
Lincoln's Sparrow	5/22/23
Swamp Sparrow	5/4/23
Eastern Towhee	5/22/23
Yellow-headed Blackbird	6/1/23
Eastern Meadowlark	4/14/23
Baltimore Oriole	5/11/23
Red-winged Blackbird	4/14/23
Brown-headed Cowbird	6/1/23
Rusty Blackbird	4/27/23
Common Grackle	4/14/23
Ovenbird	5/11/23
Golden-winged Warbler	5/22/23
Black-and-white Warbler	5/11/23
Nashville Warbler	5/11/23
Mourning Warbler	6/8/23
Common Yellowthroat	5/18/23
American Redstart	5/11/23
Northern Parula	5/18/23
Magnolia Warbler	5/25/23
Blackburnian Warbler	5/18/23
Yellow Warbler	5/18/23
Chestnut-sided Warbler	5/11/23
Blackpoll Warbler	5/22/23
Palm Warbler	5/11/23
Pine Warbler	5/11/23
Yellow-rumped Warbler	5/4/23
Black-throated Green Warbler	5/11/23
Scarlet Tanager	5/11/23
Northern Cardinal	6/1/23
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5/11/23