

# **BIRD SONGS**

## **Newsletter of the Discovery Center Bird Club**

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### **Officers**

Judy Cassady, President

John Randolph, Secretary

Jon Cassady, Treasurer

Jim Krakowski, Program Chair

Linda Dunn, Membership



### **President's Message**

By Judy Cassady

Hello, Bird Club Members!

The first month of our calendar year is named for Janus, the Roman god of doorways and beginnings. He is represented as having a head with two faces looking in opposite directions.

Looking back through the doorway of our 2010 Bird Club year, we remember many new experiences as well as favorite birding activities that we participate in year after year. New to some Bird Club members were the Prairie Chicken courtship viewing from blinds in the Stevens Point area organized by Guy David. Jim Krakowski planned a wonderful weekend for us at Horicon Marsh, and Carne Andrews introduced us to the Tiffany Bottoms Wildlife area and train ride. Donna Roche's Thursday Morning Birding Hikes included Copper Falls, a place Jon and I kept saying we'd go to "sometime". The creative planners we have in our Bird Club actually make the "sometimes" happen.

Looking forward to 2011, we are already planning for "A Big Year" thanks to Jon's contest for recording the birds you see in your backyard, the Northwoods, the State of Wisconsin, the U.S.A. and even the World if you are fortunate enough to go birding outside the borders of our 50 states. Also, before Jim Krakowski left for warmer climes, he lined up some great programs for our monthly meetings. We'll learn about "Forest Management for Birds" from Ron Eckstein in February, and in March Jim Woodford will present a program on the Northern Goshawk to name the first two. Our thanks also to Jim Krakowski for being instrumental in getting Manitowish Waters named as a "Bird City".

Our Birding Festival, May 20-21, is shaping up nicely with Laura Erickson as our keynote speaker, thanks to Discovery Center Naturalist Licia Johnson. Even before that we'll welcome and count the Sandhill Cranes at our International Crane Count in April organized by Citizen Science monitor and D.C. Naturalist Zach Wilson.

What I look forward to in 2011 more than anything is getting together with our Bird Club members at meetings, at Thursday morning birding hikes, on field trips, and surveys. Whether you are a beginning birder or experienced, our Bird Club

members treat everyone with respect and with a joy of sharing knowledge and common interests. I look at our Bird Club as a large fun-loving family. I hope that the Bobcat Cabin will be crowded this winter with more members participating rather than simply paying their dues. We have plenty of chairs. Next spring, summer and fall, I hope we'll need to meet in the Lodge because we'll need more space. Please don't hesitate to speak up if you don't like to drive at night, or in bad weather, or don't like driving long distances. We often car-pool. After all, we're a family, a community who loves learning about birds.

## Life List Quarterly

By Guy David

### Life List

At the conclusion of our 2009 birding year we had recorded 218 species to our life list. With the addition of nineteen new species that have been added to the Discovery Center Bird Club Life List during 2010, our Life List now stands at 237 species!

Following is a list of the species added to the bird club life list in 2010.

Location	Date	Species
Mead Wildlife Area	4/22/2010	Ruddy Duck
Buena Vista Grasslands	4/21/2010	Greater Prairie-Chicken
Horicon Marsh	6/5/2010	Least Bittern
Horicon Marsh	6/5/2010	Glossy Ibis ^
Horicon Marsh	6/5/2010	White-faced Ibis **
Horicon Marsh	6/5/2010	Common Moorhen
Horicon Marsh	6/5/2010	Black-necked Stilt **
Horicon Marsh	6/5/2010	Ruddy Turnstone
Horicon Marsh	6/5/2010	Forster's Tern
Waupun	6/4/2010	Common Nighthawk

Horicon Marsh	6/5/2010	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Riley Lake Area	5/27/2010	Golden-winged Warbler
Horicon Marsh	6/5/2010	Henslow's Sparrow
Fish Hatchery Rd Woodruff	10/21/2010	Fox Sparrow
Amnicon Falls	9/24/2010	Harris's Sparrow
Horicon Area	6/5/2010	Dickcissel
Buena Vista Grasslands	4/21/2010	Western Meadowlark
Mead Wildlife Area	4/22/2010	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Horicon Marsh	6/5/2010	Orchard Oriole

This achievement is remarkable in that the club has already recorded so many of the species commonly found within our normal bird outing area, the beautiful north woods. Three more of these species were recorded this year. The Fox Sparrow, a fairly common spring and fall migrant through our area, was finally recorded during an outing in the Woodruff area this fall. The Golden-winged Warbler, a species found in our area more commonly than we knew, was recorded during an outing in the Chequamegon National Forest in late May. The Common Nighthawk, a bird that is easily found in our area during their annual migration, especially during the evening transition to nightfall, has been missed until a group sighted them during an evening outing in the Waupun area.

The remaining 16 new species required us to travel at the right time to where they could be found. Field trips to Horicon Marsh, Mead Wildlife area, and Buena Vista Grasslands during times of peak bird activity in those areas resulted in outstanding additions to the club Life List as well as our annual list.

Three of the new species that the club recorded this year were uncommon for Wisconsin and it could be some years before they may be present to be observed in the State again! For example, the Glossy Ibis is rated by the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology as "Accidental" meaning that it has been recorded an average of only 1 time in every 5 years or so. The White-faced Ibis and Black-

necked Stilt are not quite as rare and are rated by the WSO as “Casual” meaning that they are recorded on average only once in every 1-5 years.



Trumpeter Swans relax on a sunny day below the New Page Mill dam in Stevens Point, WI  
Photo by Guy David

Some of the other species recorded by the club this year are common in Wisconsin but are not typically found in the north woods. They either occur in more southern regions of the State or required specialized habitat that is not found in our home area. The effort by several club leaders to organize field trips at the right time to the right regions and the right habitats has paid handsome dividends in our effort to keep adding to the club life list. Thank you to all who contributed to organizing all of our outings and field trips in 2010!

**So, is that it? Is our life list maxed out? Nah...**

The official Wisconsin taxonomic list includes 426 species recorded in the state of Wisconsin and verified by the WSO Records Committee. Some of those species, like the Passenger Pigeon and Carolina Parakeet are listed as extinct, but we have at least another 180+ other Wisconsin species to be working on!

Annual List

The bird club’s annual list for 2009 also is quite impressive since we were successful at observing, identifying, and recording 169 species! A year ago in this column I reported being impressed by that productivity. For 2010 we eclipsed that record by

recording 193 species! Check out this seven year record!

Year	Number of Species	Number of Outings	Average Number Participants
2004	111	13	10.00
2005	150	29	11.86
2006	158	40	9.08
2007	150	40	8.35
2008	154	25	11.88
2009	169	38	9.87
2010	193	37	9.73

Effort! That is the only way to explain this achievement! During 2010 our outing and field trip leaders did an outstanding job of expanding our horizons and thus our productivity and, more importantly, our enjoyment. Thank you!

This means that we are getting more efficient too! This year the club recorded 193 of the 237 species on the club life list. This means that we recorded 81.4% of the species on our life list this year alone! Visiting outstanding birding hotspots outside of the club’s normal home range certainly contributed much to this success, but another factor that must be mentioned is an increase in the club’s birding activity during the winter while certain species are more easily found in our area.

By the end of September 2010 the club had already recorded 183 species and in my October Life List column I expressed the belief that fall and winter outings would add to the list. I was right! October outings netted Lapland Longspur, Fox Sparrow, and Rusty Blackbird to the club’s annual list. The Christmas bird counts also added the final 7 species of the year including Barred Owl, Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing, Snow Bunting, Pine Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill, and Common Redpoll. Birding in all seasons DOES make a difference!



Winter Visitors—Redpoll, Pine Siskin, Goldfinch  
Photo by David Foster

During 2010 we came very close to hitting the 200 species mark that I have been hoping for. It might have happened this year...except for the late summer rains. As has been the case the past couple of years, we missed badly on the shorebird migration, probably due to high water in the area and the lack of mud flats. There were 6-8 species of shorebirds that are on our life list that were missed again this year. But then, there also were a few other species that we have recorded almost every year but missed this year...like the American Woodcock!

No matter, all in all it was a great birding year for the Discovery Center Bird Club!

### **It's Going To Be A Fun Year !!**

*By Linda Dunn*

I am very excited about the coming birding season--Judy, Jon, Jim, John, and I are planning some fun new activities. We hope you will want to attend and bring your friends. The Discovery website is new and our page is being worked on to provide all the information you need about our activities. Be watching as we add details.

Jim Krakowski has lined up very interesting programs for our monthly meetings. Please invite your friends.

We will also have our usual Thursday morning hikes, plus a couple of Saturday morning hikes for our working members.

New activities we are working on:

- An evening hike -- birding in the moonlight in search of owls.
- A pontoon boat ride on the Minocqua Chain of Lakes or some other lakes (we would share the cost).
- Trips to Ashland and to Hawk Ridge.
- A Spring trip to Horicon Marsh and a Fall trip to the Tiffany Bottoms area. We would set up the best rate at an area motel.
- Dinner and a Movie. We have some fine bird films we would show along with pizza or a spaghetti dinner.
- A Big Birding Bash at the Discovery Center on a Sunday afternoon. We would have a cookout, a used book sale, "big sit" bird watching from the lodge or some other fixed location, along with hiking the trails.

As always, we welcome your feedback and ideas as to how we can improve our club.

### **Birding for a "BIG YEAR" Contest**

*By John Cassady and David Foster*

The year 2011 will be a "Big Year" for anyone interested in birds and birding in the northwoods area! Sponsored by the Discovery Center Bird Club, the 2011 "Big Year" birding contest gives everyone who watches birds the chance to identify, record, and compare their sightings during 2011.

The rules are simple. Participants are asked to record each species of bird they observe throughout

the year, noting date, time, and location of the bird. How the bird was identified will also be important—i.e. by call, sighting or both. There need not be verification by another person—participants are on their honor as birders.

Participants should report their tally of species to the contest moderator each month, on or before the 10<sup>th</sup> of the following month. The moderator will keep a record of all observations reported.

There will be five birding areas each contestant can enter:

- A. Backyard Birding - you must identify the bird while you are on your own property.
- B. The Lake Superior/ Northwoods area beyond your backyard.
- C. The State of Wisconsin beyond the Northwoods area.
- D. The United States outside the state of Wisconsin. Your bird can be anywhere in the 50 states outside Wisconsin for this category.
- E. No limit Birding. You can reports birds from anywhere in the world beyond the United States.

Participants may count the same species each time they identify it in a different area. For example, if an observer enters three categories--Back yard birding, Great Lakes/Northwoods, and State of Wisconsin--and identifies a robin in each area, the robin will count as three sightings. At the end of the year, all results will be tallied and winners reported on the North Lakeland Discovery Center website and at the 2012 Discovery Center Bird Club winter social.

You may enter as many areas as you like, at \$5 per area. To enter, please contact Jon Cassady at [joncassady@frontier.com](mailto:joncassady@frontier.com) or by phone at 715-356-6230. Entries are still being accepted, but participants must enter the contest before they start their count. Each month, starting in March 2011, monthly results will be posted at the Bird Club's monthly meetings and on the North Lakeland Discovery Center's website. However, since the results of the previous month need not be reported until the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month, the results reported

may not include the all the birds observed during the previous month by participants.

## Manitowish Waters Becomes A "Bird City" By David Foster



From left: Henry Bauers, John Hanson, Carl Schwartz, Judy Cassady, Jodi McMahan.

Photo by Guy David

On December 6, 2010, the town of Manitowish Waters was named a distinctive "Bird City" by the Bird City Wisconsin Project. At a celebration in Manitowish Waters town center sponsored by the NLDC and the Discovery Center Bird Club, Bird City Wisconsin's coordinator Carl Schwartz presented town chairman John Hanson with official Bird City recognition, in the form of street signs, a flag and a plaque.

Manitowish Waters was particularly recognized for the diversity of its bird habitats, the network of trails in and near the Discovery Center campus, the annual Birdfest sponsored by the Discovery Center and the MW Chamber of Commerce, and the town's work in controlling invasive species.

The award resulted from an extensive application process led by **Jim Krakowski of the Bird Club**, Jodi McMahan of the MW Chamber of Commerce, Sarah Johnson of the Discovery Center, and others who lent significant support. So far, Manitowish Waters is the smallest of the 15 communities to be selected as a Bird City—others include Stevens

Point, Green Bay, Muskego, Oshkosh, and River Falls.

The Bird City Project is funded by *TogetherGreen*, a five-year joint initiative of the Audubon Society and Toyota to recognize conservation commitment in the United States. The Bird City logo was designed by Wisconsin landscape painter Tom Uttech and his wife, designer Mary Uttech.



John Hanson receives the Bird City Sign from Carl Schwartz.

Photo by Guy David

## Christmas Bird Counts, 2010

By Guy David

Thank you to all of the bird club members who helped with our annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) efforts. It was another grand effort and outcome!

The Minocqua count was first completed in 1982 and was intermittently conducted since then. The Discovery Center Bird Club assumed responsibility for this count in 2006 and we now have performed this CBC for 5 years in a row. 2010 was the thirteenth year for the Minocqua CBC.

Over 13 years there have been 48 species of birds recorded during the Minocqua CBC. For 2010, counters recorded 25 species. This was a good result in that the greatest number of bird species ever recorded for the Minocqua CBC was 27 species in 2008 and 2010 was only second to that outcome.

While the Minocqua CBC had good results for the number of species that were found, the results for total number of birds (686) was the lowest in the past 4 years. As the counters gathered for lunch that day and discussed their findings it was generally agreed upon that we were having a slow day for unknown reasons. The data regarding our effort showed that we put forth about the same amount of effort compared to recent years. Following are a few interesting facts regarding the historical data for the Minocqua CBC.

- Bird species recorded in all 13 count years = 3 (Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch)
- Bird species recorded in 12 of the 13 count years = 3 (Hairy Woodpecker, Common Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch)
- Average number of species recorded over 13 count years = 18.6
- Average number of individual birds recorded over 13 count years = 534 (while 2010 results were 'down' they still were above average)
- Number of species recorded only 1 time in 13 years = 10 (Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, Red-headed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, American Tree Sparrow, Red Crossbill, Common Grackle)
- Most recent new species added to the count record:
  - Wild Turkey = 2008 was the first record, recorded annually since then
  - American Robin = 2008 which was the only record so far
  - Cedar Waxwing = 2008 which was the only record so far
  - Red Crossbill = 2008 which was the only record so far
  - House Finch = 2008 and again in 2010

The 2010 Manitowish Waters CBC recorded the highest number of species in the history of the count at 31 species and the fourth highest count of total birds at 1692 individual birds! I participated in both the Minocqua and Manitowish Waters CBC again this year. Even though the Manitowish Waters CBC was only one day after the Minocqua count

day, the birds seemed to be more active and able to be found on that day.

Large flocks of birds also seemed to be more evident for the Manitowish Waters count day. For example, there were no White-winged Crossbills reported for the Minocqua CBC but I found 17 of them in 2 flocks for the Manitowish Waters CBC. Also, Common Redpolls were missed for the Minocqua CBC but I recorded a flock of 80 for the Manitowish Waters CBC. I actually estimated that flock at 120-150 birds but I couldn't definitively count them so I recorded a very conservative number. Anyway, "go figure"!



Guy David, John Randolph, and Jon Cassady enjoy viewing a flock of Bohemian Waxwings during the Minocqua CBC. Photo by Guy David

It is interesting to do a little comparison of the results of the Minocqua and Manitowish Waters CBC. For 2010 the Minocqua CBC reported 25 species, 2 of which were observed during the count period but not on the count day. The Manitowish Waters CBC reported 31 species, all of them were observed on the count day. Combining all of the recorded for 2010. Both counts recorded some species that were missed on the other count. species observed from both counts during the count period there were 37 species of birds in total. Species recorded for the Manitowish Waters CBC but not the Minocqua CBC included: Trumpeter Swan, Barred Owl, Northern Shrike, Gray Jay, American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Purple Finch, White-

winged Crossbill, Common Redpoll, and Evening Grosbeak.

Species recorded for the Minocqua CBC but not the Manitowish Waters CBC included: Golden-crowned Kinglet, Bohemian Waxwing, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, House Finch, and House Sparrow.

Seeing the overall result from 2 local CBC's reinforces the importance of continuing both counts well into the future. One would have to study the data for both counts more intensively to discover reasons for the differences in CBC outcomes for 2 adjacent count areas but I will venture a couple of guesses.

First, there are habitat and accessibility differences. The Manitowish Waters area has more forest and marsh expanses and open water areas than does the Minocqua count area. The Minocqua count area is considerably more urban than is the Manitowish Waters area. It is divided up with more roads and there are more landscape plant features such as fruit bearing trees. Aside from habitat, there may be a difference in effort between the 2 counts too. The Manitowish Waters CBC has been organized for 18 consecutive years, the Minocqua Count for 5 consecutive years. During the time of the Manitowish Waters count there may have been more successful feeder counter recruitment than is true for the Minocqua count.

Regardless of the differences in outcome, both counts yield a lot of enjoyable hours of birding for all participants. That is why those days go on my calendar before other events do.

SAVE THE DATE!  
7th Annual Birding Festival  
May 20-21, 2011.

The North Lakeland Discovery Center & Bird Club are planning another fantastic Birding Festival, and we hope you are able to participate. It features A great line-up of presentations and expert trip leaders.

New this year, the committee is offering Birdfest sponsorship opportunities to individuals and families. Sponsorships are \$100 and include: one free registration to the event, thank-you listing and verbal acknowledgement on event day, recognition in the Discovery Center newsletter, and the knowledge that you have provided extra support to a premier event!

To support the festival in this fashion, fill out the insert included with this newsletter and return to Licia at the Discovery Center, PO Box 237, Manitowish Waters, WI 54545.