

# BIRD SONGS

## Newsletter of the Discovery Center Bird Club

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### **President's Report**

By Judy Cassady

The summer of 2009 has been interesting and exciting. I appreciate the vote of confidence when I was elected your Bird Club president. I am fortunate to have two veteran board members to work with - Betty Murphy as Treasurer and Jon Cassady as Program Chairman. Ann Swift and John Randolph are new to the board, but quite capable, bringing experience and new ideas to our board meetings. Cynthia Krakowski expressed an interest in being a board member at large, and joined us at our June meeting.

Jon and I have been busy this summer - first with traveling to Glens Falls, NY to visit our daughter and to attend our grandson's 3rd birthday on July 3. My thanks go to David Foster who conducted the July meeting, and Guy David who presented the program.

Later in July my sister Larain and family came from Ohio to visit for several days. When Larain, her daughter Mikaela, and I were having lunch at McDonald's, we saw a Sandhill Crane family at the northeast corner of the Nightfall Motel across the street. A couple weeks later our Oklahoma friends, Terry and Ellen joined Jon and me on a canoe trip on the Bois Brule

River. Besides the three Great Blue Herons we saw in three different locations, we were treated to the sight of flocks of Cedar Waxwings crisscrossing the river after some kind of insect hatch. When our Nebraska friends were here last week, Jon and Rex watched flocks of Common Nighthawks in three different locations - Horsehead Lake, McGrath Lake, and near Winger Concrete on Hwy 51 in Hazelhurst - during two early evening fishing trips. In flight, Common Nighthawks, which are insectivores, hold their long pointed wings angled and raised displaying the white bars near the base of the primary feathers. So although we haven't been able to attend all the Thursday morning birding hikes, we have enjoyed some memorable sightings. Suffice to say we are very busy this summer, with bird outings each Thursday and several special projects that will keep us going throughout the summer.

### **Board of Directors and Committees**

**Judy  
Cassady**  
President

**Betty  
Murphy**  
Treasurer

**John  
Randolph**  
Secretary

**Jon Cassady**  
Director and  
Program  
Committee  
Chair

**Ann Swift** -  
Director and  
Membership  
Committee

**October Club Meeting**—Monday  
October 5, 7 PM, Bobcat Cabin.  
A video program entitled "On The  
Trail" will be presented. Jo Ann  
Garrent conducts a tour of sites on  
the Great Wisconsin Birding  
Nature Trail. welcome.

The shoreline birding at the Bird Club's trip to Ashland was shortened by a driving rain. However, we arrived at the Northern Great

Lakes Visitors Center just in time for an interesting and informative program presented by Kevin Lowry of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Our next outing will be at Hawk Ridge in MN. Other interesting adventures and meetings are in the planning stages. The 2010 Birding Festival planning committee will be meeting this month. Put May 14 and 15, 2010 on your calendar for the Birding Festival. John Randolph is doing a great job getting announcements and information to Bird Club members via email. David Foster will continue to publish the Bird Songs Newsletter which can also be found on line at the North Lakeland Discovery Center Bird Club web site. Another source of information on Bird Club activities is the Discovery Center office, or you may contact me at 715 356-6230 or [jacquilt@verizon.net](mailto:jacquilt@verizon.net). Jon's email is [joncassady@verizon.net](mailto:joncassady@verizon.net)

I'm looking forward to more birding fun and wonderful learning experiences! How about you?

Birding at Fallison Lake



Photo by Linda Dunn

## Life List Quarterly

*By Guy David*

As of September 21, 2009 the NLDC Bird Club's Life List stands at 217 species. This means that 3 new species have been added since May 21, 2009. On May 29, 2009 the Bird Club was invited to join an Elderhostel group for an outing on Powell Marsh. The seventeen people who participated in

that group, which was lead by Troy Walters, were able to enjoy the presence of a Virginia Rail.

On June 18, 2009 Troy Walters once again lead the Bird Club on one of our regular Thursday morning outings. This time the club visited the Conover, WI area which was new area for the Bird Club. While this trip required traveling a longer than normal distance for our weekly outings, the group was greatly rewarded. Participants were able to add the Boreal Chickadee and Vesper Sparrow to the club Life List.

Following is the summary of the new species added to our life list since my last report.

Location		Date	Species
Manitowish Waters	Powell Marsh	May 29, 2009	Virginia Rail
Conover Area	Conover Area	June 18, 2009	Boreal Chickadee
Conover Area	Conover Area	June 18, 2009	Vesper Sparrow

Frankly, I am surprised that the club has been able to add 11 new species to our Life List in 2009. It becomes harder to locate and identify new species as the club nears the completion of a list of birds that are known to normally be found in the general geographic area where we visit during our outings.

Sometimes it is a matter of good fortune to find a new species in an area where we have visited many times before. Such was a case with the discovery of a Virginia Rail in Powell Marsh, which probably is the club's most oft visited local bird habitat. In this case, the difference maker probably was the trip leader who possesses a unique set of skills and knowledge in bird identification. Were it not for that, the group may have observed the bird and ended up with wondering, "What was that bird?", thus missing a life opportunity.

Another example of simple good fortune was the unique combination of low water in the Presque Isle Ponds and the availability of a club member who also is experienced with studying shorebirds. Being able to add the Long-billed Dowitcher during the Birdfest outing to Presque Isle Ponds was the result of many shorebirds being attracted to the

muddy exposed pond bottom and Darwin Wile being available to join the group. With either condition lacking, the club might not have been able to add that species to our list.

As I have said in past columns, adding a new life bird to our list is more likely when we visit new habitats other than where we normally go. There are bird habitats in the Conover area that yield species of birds less frequently found in our more local birding areas. Our chances of discovery are greatly enhanced when we can benefit from the knowledge of another person who knows the areas well that are new to us. Having Troy Walters lead us to an area new to us but familiar to him greatly enhanced our chances of finding new species.

It seems unlikely that the club could possibly add another 10 new species during the upcoming year, but it could happen. This year we found birds that are infrequent visitors (Varied Thrush), are present but hard to locate and identify (Virginia Rail), are more easily found outside of our normal birding area (Boreal Chickadee, Vesper Sparrow), or are not uncommon but just haven't crossed our path (Chimney Swift, House Wren).

I know club members have many reasons for participating in club outings. I am thankful for all of those reasons that result in successful and well attended weekly outings and field trips. Adding to the club life list may not be high on the list of club members' reasons, but I hope that these reports do add interest. For me, finding new species of birds and even finding a species for the first time in a given year, is part of the intrigue of birding.

In future newsletters, I would enjoy reading the accounts of some of our members regarding why you enjoy club outings. Listing birds observed is one of my things...how about you?



Photo by Guy David's camera

## The Hawk Ridge trip—when the day that wasn't became the day that was.

By David Foster

On a recent warm Saturday, bird club members hoping to see a river of hawks flowing down the Lake Superior shore journeyed to Hawk Ridge north of Duluth. The weather couldn't have been nicer—gentle southerly winds made the ridge top seem like a day at the beach. Alas, migrating hawks were not in the mood for a suntan that day. With the calm wind from the south, few hawks came, mostly sharp-shinned, with a few assorted others. When the Bird Club group left in early afternoon, only about 50 hawks had been tallied. In past years on a late September day—indeed earlier in this week—several thousand hawks of all kinds had flown by. Discovery Center birders found the basic truth of birding reinforced—namely, that birds can show up anytime, anywhere—or not.

Parasitic Jaeger



Photo by Dennis Paulson, courtesy of Birdweb.org from Seattle Audubon

But all was not lost. On the same day, across the water on the Wisconsin shore of Lake Superior, the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology was sponsoring a watch for the Parasitic Jaeger, a species of skua which occurs along the Great Lakes during migration. A line of birders with scopes stared at flocks of gulls offshore, waiting for a jaeger to do his thing—harassing gulls aggressively in hopes of stealing their food.

Sure enough, gulls repeatedly jumped into the air in front of us as a jaeger darted among them, flying at first one and then another until the air was full of alarmed gulls trying to get out of the way. Club members had good long looks at a fascinating bird that for some, including me, was a new addition to the life list. Yes indeed, on any given day, good things can happen for lucky birders!

## A Jewel in the Rough

By Ed Marshall

On a recent camping trip I found a small camp ground that I think is unique and provides activities different from most commercial spots. At Canton, Missouri, a small old town on the Mississippi River about 30 miles south of Keokuk, there is a small park on the bank of the Mississippi. It is Canton's town park. It provides access to the river bank; it has a small play ground and it has about 20 RV pads with full hookups (electric, water and sewer). The rate for the RV sites is nominal (\$15 a night) There is a train track behind the park, but the trains are not frequent or annoying.

The bank of the river has quite a bit of bird life. There are numerous Gulls and Swallows. I saw one White Pelican feeding all by itself. The locals said that the area often has large flocks of Pelicans during the migration. The area is host to large numbers of Bald Eagles during the winter season. A local birder who was apparently very knowledgeable was certain that they spotted a Mississippi Kite. This spot is on the north edge of the territory for that species.

Canton is the site of lock and dam # 20, and the park is about one half mile below the lock. It is entertaining to watch the river traffic entering and leaving the lock. One half mile south of the park there is a ferry that transports vehicles from the size of bicycles to 18 wheelers across the river. For the average car or pickup the cost is \$9 for a round trip. This ferry gives you access to the flood plain on the Illinois side of the river. There are very rich agricultural fields and meadows with native bird life, since it is on the north end of the Great River National Wildlife Refuge. This Refuge has large areas of low land forests and there is a primitive camp ground

(operated by the Army Corp of Engineers) with a boat ramp that gives access to the sloughs of the Mississippi River on the Illinois side.

## Great Blue Heron



Photo by Linda Dunn

A quick trip on highway 61 to the south of Canton brings you to Wakonda State Park. This Missouri Park has several small lakes that are separated by meadows and small wood lots. The site was a rock quarry and the quarries were allowed to flood to make the lakes. This little state park has a lot of varied bird habitat. It also has a nice camp ground.

Canton is also the home of Culver-Stockton College. It is the oldest co-educational college west of the Mississippi, dating from 1853. The Canton area can provide an adventuresome birder with an RV a very interesting experience--it's little town park that's a real jewel!

The next *Birdsongs: Newsletter of the Discovery Center Bird Club*, will be published in January, 2010.

Contributors may send articles and photos to [davdfost@aol.com](mailto:davdfost@aol.com) by early January, 2010.

