

Chequamegon Chirps



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The August Chequamegon Bird Club meeting will take place at 7:00 P.M. on Monday, August 17th. Again, this will be a Zoom session. If you get an email version, Cam will include the Zoom connection you need. If you receive the paper edition, you can get your needed information by going to the Facebook page.

We would like to have participants to be ready to nominate their favorite bird and why.

Ron Dreger, Vice-president, will conduct the meeting and present material on Snipe vs. Woodcock.

What's Up?

One answer is, not as much as there was a month or so ago. The bird activity level now is less noticeable, even there are more birds around now due this year's hatch. Some fledglings are completely independent while others are still getting as much assistance as possible from their parents. Still others are second or even third attempts at nesting so those babies have to grow up quickly. Here are some observations from different members.

Member Observations

Joe Scott, who is now in California as a fire fighter (after a three day ride in a firetruck) mentioned there were about ten people that Cam Scott hosted at last month's picnic. Birds, while not plentiful, did produce at least these individuals with a visit to a nearby gravel pit giving the best results. Song Sparrow, Indigo Bunting, Bluebirds, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, Black-throated Warbler and Mourning Dove were species he could remember. While at work—or wandering around—sometimes he does both at the same time, he encountered these birds among more common individuals; Red-shouldered Hawk, Northern Flicker, juvenile Ravens, Chickadees White-breasted Nuthatches and many Cedar Waxwings feeding on berries along a pond.

Cathy Mauer has suet out and has had an adult Pileated Woodpecker feeding its recently fledged young. Speaking of suet, I've had some packages out which have attracted Hairy, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers as well as Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches.

Visitors I didn't expect were a family of Baltimore Orioles, both adults and two or three young. Usually they will feed on suet for up to week when they arrive in spring, but this the first time I've seen them feed so consistently at this time of year.

Jeff and Lynn Dodge have four Sandhill Cranes coming to a field near them in addition to Bluebirds, House Wrens and fledged Robins. This year bears and skunks aren't tearing up their lawn as much as last summer feeding on grubs. Lynn would spray the lawn with a mixture of one cup of Irish Spring to two gallons of water which seemed to help. However, recently when they went to town briefly in the middle of the afternoon they came back home to discover a bear had devoured the lettuce in their garden and a four foot tall maple tree also was gone. Perhaps it was used as a toothpick? Jeff was going to take down a Wood Duck nest and discovered a sting or two later it was being used as a bees nest. Connie had a similar experience while checking a Bluebird box a few years ago.

Nadine Willett, who sets up the Zoom program, has had Brown Thrashers, Barn Swallows, Goldfinch, Ruby-throated hummingbirds, Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, Song Sparrows, Mourning Doves, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Flickers and Killdeer at their farm. She and Dean also have a 22 year old goose that is a story in itself that I'll provide more details next month. That tidbit makes a logical lead in to the following story.

Survival and Longevity

Many eggs are produced each year and most of them hatch. In varying levels of beauty, strength and development, they grow at a remarkable speed and are soon ready to explore a new world. But, it is a tough world for them. Many don't live into adulthood. Predators, harsh weather, food shortages, diseases, parasites, accidents, climate change, farming practices and changing habitat all cause fatalities. There are records of remarkable longevity, but these are almost always of captive individuals. A Siberian Crane named Wolf at the Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin lived to be at least 83 years old. Stan Temple had a falcon trained Red-tailed Hawk that lived for 28 years. These birds didn't face the long list of hazards listed a couple sentences earlier.

Survival rate is measured as a percentage of the individuals at the start of a year that are alive one year later. Several different methods are used to determine this with banding a stable and particular bird population and then recording how many banded birds are left after each year until there are no survivors with bands.

Another approach is to record the time of banding until death of individuals over many years. A profile of the time from banding until death will result and it is possible to calculate the annual rate of survival.

A third approach is to fit birds with miniature radios that tracks their movements until death. After a number of birds have been fitted with radios, the cumulative data of their life spans will be used to calculate average survival rate. Those same figures can be used to determine maximum life spans. Stan Temple and Margarete Brittingham banded 162 Black-capped Chickadees in 1982 at his house. They calculated the annual survival rate at 48%. Their annual lifespan was just under two years and the projected maximum longevity was nine years. Much of this information came from material written by Stan Temple—Department of Wildlife Ecology—University of Wisconsin.

Migration and Travel

Some warblers and shore birds have already headed south. Not nearly as noticeable when they arrive; they and many others aren't around anymore. When did that happen? Little by little is one answer. It seems as if the earlier deportees aren't in as much of a rush or as noticeable of later leavers. The sequence of those leaving doesn't change as much as the departure dates as climate changes. Again, as with many things in nature, there is consistency, but not absolutes. Never and always will get you in trouble when talking about nature because there are exceptions. Always, if not never.

Along that theme was a Bluebird from the far west that came to the Gilman area and mated with an Eastern Bluebird to raise a brood. And there are visitors who may be many states away from what is there usual territory. Why? Maybe they didn't listen to their spouse's directions. I've heard that sometimes happens with other species, too. A broken compass? A desire to see new country? Who knows? Some species are more prone to drift further off expected trails.

One such recent happening—which delights birders who are sometimes willing to travel many miles to see an oddball and add it to a life list. This special visitor was a Green Violet-ear Hummingbird also known as a Mexican Violet-ear Humming bird which showed up in southern Wisconsin. (It must have flown over an impenetrable wall.) Almost twice the size of our usual hummers, this beauty caused quite a stir. Did anyone from the club go to see it? A picture is on page four.

Editor Chequamegon Chirps

103633 Fence Road

Abbotsford, WI 54405

Club Contacts

Website: Chequamegonbirdclub.org

Information: [info@chequamegonbirdclub](mailto:info@chequamegonbirdclub.org)

Newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org

Bird sightings: connie1@charter.net

August and September Events

Full moons August 3 and September 2

Southbound migration increases

Including Monarch Butterflies

Birds in Art Exhibit 9-12 through 11-29

Google Birds in Art for more details

Stay healthy

