

Chequamegon Chirps



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It has been a bit of an awkward shift from regular library meetings to zoom sessions, then to outdoor gatherings. The July session will have all three aspects. Will it work? It might. This is what will happen. We will gather at the bridge on the west side of the Medford city pond at 6 P.M. on Monday, July 18 for a short birding walk on the boardwalk that leads to the library. Then we will gather at the library at 6:45. The room we will use is in the library and to the right. This room closes at 8:00 so we need to start on time to get some brief business taken care of and find out What's Around. If it is raining or threatening weather, we will meet at the library instead at 6:00. In addition to being an in-person meeting, it will also be a zoom session that can be accessed at 314 090 6270, thanks to Scott and Peggy Stalheim. Zoom, bird walk and an in-person meeting should offer something for everyone. Hope to meet or see you on Monday July 18th at 6:00 P.M.

Summer Musings

Summer is in full bloom. Warm, sometimes hot and muggy days, strong crop growth thank to local substantial rains. When possible, it is a good time to sit out on a porch or by an open window with your morning cup of coffee as you are serenaded by nearby birds. If you are more of an evening person, how can beat sitting on a porch swing or rocker in fading light as the last birds are saying good night to the day.

Change is happening of course. Day length is now getting slightly shorter as days get warmer. Southward migration has begun. Yep, it has. While some species have yet to begin to fledge or possibly even lay their eggs, others such as shorebirds have completed another breeding cycle and are starting back to their other territories. The earliest departers aren't in a rush and often travel in small groups or even individually. The larger flocks of other species are at least a month away from their gathering in conspicuous groups before leaving this area.

When talking with several other club members, the general consensus is, "Things are pretty quiet." That's true in spite of area bird numbers being at their peak due

to recent fledglings adding to the totals of spring arrivals. Being less obvious has several advantages for the current residents. Full foliage helps to hide nests and young birds that are learning to fly and offers extra protection as they learn to avoid predators. Most adults have quit advertising how wonderful they are to attract mates. Many species are in the process of replacing breeding plumage with more drab colored feathers. And there are those fledglings whose markings and colors at first can be so different from the parents. The following information is from an article Tom Carpenter wrote in 2004 for the Wisconsin Trails magazine.

First Look Take a quick note of the entire bird.

Size Robin-sized? Sparrow sized? Chicken-sized? Somewhere in between?

Sound What does the sound or call sound like? Any sound when the bird flies?

Flight Fast? Slow? Fluttering? Swooping? Like a roller coaster?

Movement Does the bird walk, run, hop, scratch, or shuffle?

Color Does any color predominate or stand out?

Critical Details Quickly pick apart the bird's features

Eyes Any stripes? Through, above, or below the eye? Ring around the eye?

What color? What color are the eyes?

Wings Any bars, stripes, or special colors? When the bird flies, are the wings

Pointed or rounded? Long or short?

Breast and Below What color is the bird's underside? Is it solid, striped, mottled or spotted?

Beak Pointed? Rounded? Hooked? Thick? Thin? What color? Are the upper and lower beaks colored differently?

Tail Feathers Barred or otherwise marked? Are the outer tail feathers different from the inner ones?

Crest Does a crest or cap stand out?

Throat and Nape Any distinctive markings or colors on the throat or nape?

Additional Tools for Your Bird Identification Kit

Field guides are essential. Detailed illustrations emphasize parts of the bird that will help you identify the species you saw. More and more Apps are now available for identification by sight and sound. Photos and detailed descriptions of each bird's habits, habitat, life cycle, and where they are likely to be found at what time of the year are all helpful. However, birds are not known to read books or check Apps. You could come across something that is way out of its territory or in an area at a most unusual time. It is sort of like winning a lottery. It probably won't happen, but it could. Photos and detailed notes are excellent for learning and documentation.

Quality binoculars of eight to 10-power are another essential tool for your kit. Invest what you can in a name-brand pair that gathers a lot of light and won't exhaust your eyes. Good field glasses will last for decades and help you enjoy beautiful details your eyes alone can't see.

Choosing a pair of binoculars is a daunting task. There are more than 60 brands and 1,000 models on the market. How much do you want to spend? You probably won't be satisfied with a \$20 pair you find at the bottom of a bargain bin. Would you want to spend \$3,000 for the very top of the line? Obviously, there are a lot of differences between these two extremes. Good quality models can be purchased in the \$100 to \$200 range. Yes, optics improve as prices go up, but it is a personal decision as to what is the most practical and affordable.

Whatever the purchase price, there are several basic considerations to consider. First of all, I would suggest you discuss this with other birders and what they have found most convenient and reliable for them. If you are comfortable with a knowledgeable salesperson who has access to various models, ask for their advice. Do they feel comfortable in your hand? Consider their weight. You may find out that carrying binoculars on a strap around your neck can cause soreness after a while. Do you wear glasses? This can add a whole other complication, especially if you have bifocals. Personally, I find myself fumbling around putting my glasses in a pocket or on my head when I would rather be focused on some bird.

Using field guides, Apps, binoculars and whatever else works for you improves with practice. Enjoy the learning process and give yourself credit for what you have learned.

Editor

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July and August Events

Full Moons July 13 (buck)

August 12 (sturgeon)

Wild berry patches

Fresh garden produce

Meteor showers

County fairs

