

Chequamegon Chirps



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To continue with our “summer away from the library” series, we will meet at the Kevin Paul farm which is several miles south west of Stetsonville at W6235 Elm Avenue. This road is one mile north of the Taylor County line and a couple miles west of Highway 13 on the south side of the road. **We will gather at 6:00 P.M. and will be able to meet inside if there is rain. Picnicking is optional.**

Kevin has farmed for 27 years and was among earlier converts to intensive rotational grazing on his dairy farm. Two hundred acres are owned plus more land rented to sustain approximately 100 milking cows. The cows are moved to new pasture every twelve hours and are milked in a swing parlor. Preferably, cows calve in March and April to take full advantage of lush spring growth of a mixture of different grasses and clovers. After weaning, calves go to a neighboring farm and then return to the home farm at a later date.

Intensive grazing produces a much more biodiverse environment for bird nesting and survivability than large fields of weed free row crops and early mowed hay fields. This farm has fence rows, two ponds and a swale that runs across the farm. We will be able to get a close up view of these various micro-environments with about a half mile of walking. This land has been a mecca for grassland bird species. These birds have had drastic declines due to earlier and more often mowing practices to harvest higher protein hay and haylage on conventionally farmed acres. Currently a bobolink or meadow-lark sighting is rare compared to these once common birds. Kevin has many of these birds on his pasture land. We may or may not to see bobolinks as they are on the verge of leaving on their long journey to southern South America. Meadowlarks which are among the first spring arrivals and leave as late as November will be present. You will find Kevin an enthusiastic bird supporter and good teacher as he gives you more details of his particular farm and experiences from more than a quarter century of being a caretaker of natural resources while providing a living for his family.

Think of a southern location for our Aug. or Sept. meeting. Suggestions welcome.

June Business

380 fifth grade students participated in 24 different learning activities at the Taylor Expo. Cam, Chris, Joan and Connie volunteered their time to organize and run the successful event.”

“President Scott Stalheim initiated the Zoom meeting at the beginning and discontinued it at approximately the one hour mark. Then after ending the first Zoom it was reopened five minutes later.

Peggy presented information about marbled murrelets which is a West Coast bird whose habits raise all kinds of speculative questions. Why does a sea bird who spends its life at sea build their nests up to 45 miles inland high up in tall trees? Why is their breeding plumage much less colorful than non-breeding feathers? This, to me, is one of those cases where it seems the more we find out about something, the more unanswered questions there are.

The Westboro Library has asked for help at a bird education and awareness event they will hold Aug 2nd or 3rd at 6 PM. The event will be geared toward ages 8 and younger, and last about an hour. The library will provide a snack, show a video and provide a coloring project. They could use a couple members for guidance on a short walk on the Pine Line Trail and to help and provide ideas for a simple craft project to make a feeder or house with recycled materials. (They can tell parents what to bring from home.) If you can help, contact member Celia Sturzl at celiasturzl @ gmail.com. She will coordinate with the library.

The Plight of Grassland Birds Nesting in Farmed Areas

Grassland bird numbers continue to drastically decline, especially due to two major factors. They are threatened by an invasive species and habitat change. The invasive species causes habitat change. That’s us. You, me, mankind in general. This isn’t meant to be a tirade where there is a blame factor. I’ll just try to lay out a few facts as they are without having good versus bad implications.

It is thought that 99% of species have become extinct since they came into existence. They hang around for a million years or so and then disappear for whatever reasons. Estimating human generations at 25 year cycles, that would take 40,000 generations to hit the seven figure mark. In the larger scheme of things, that

makes each generation of us kind of puny in spite of what we are doing. Each species' main emphasis is in preservation. Pure and simple. Mankind, with its larger brain, is trying to undo some of the damage we have caused. To a degree. Restoration, while a conscience issue, is still driven by our own survival as a species. There are endless degrees of variances and ways to accomplish such means. We, as other living species need food to survive. If that next meal is an endangered species, that wouldn't be a factor in most instances for non-humans. Well, humans too, if it is a choice to kill potential prey or go hungry.

Since we are a bird club, let's take a look at one speck in the almost uncomprehensible larger scheme of things. Bobolinks. We might see them Monday night if they haven't left for their other summer home in southern South America. They nest in coarse grasses and weed stalks, lined with finer grasses in slight depressions, sometimes in tractor or combine ruts. The female incubates 4-7 eggs that are pale gray to brown irregularly blotched with browns, purple and lavender for 13 days. Both parents feed the young for 10-14 days. Row crop fields and early cut hay doesn't allow this to happen. Their numbers have dropped dramatically the last 75 years in this area. Many farmers realize this, but earlier cut hay produces better milk yield. Milk income pays the mortgage, bank loans and family groceries. Our children survive to produce another generation. Life goes on.

Gregarious bobolinks and their bubbling songs are a spring favorite as they bless us with their songs to impress females so they can produce another generation. In summer they eat beetles, alfalfa weevils, caterpillars, grasshoppers, seeds of barnyard grass, smartweed, ragweed and some grains. They gather in flocks of thousands for southern migration and can be destructive to unharvested crops. In the 19th and early 20th century, millions would decimate rice crops in South Carolina, causing immense damage losses to farmers. They were killed by the thousands and sold in markets of Philadelphia, Boston and New York as rice birds. Rice culture has declined along its main northern migration route and they are now protected by law, but their numbers have never recovered from those earlier mass killings. Similar killings currently exists on expanding rice plantations on wintering grounds in South America. Yet they persist and grace Kevin's pastures each spring to sing their courting songs for all our pleasure, bring bugs for their hatchlings while the bugs try to escape them to produce their future generations while this thing we call life goes on. It is amazing. See you Monday at 6 pm, rain or shine.

editor

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Club contacts

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July and August events

Already past, but the July moon was super

Sturgeon moon August 1

Look for Northern Lights July 12 and 13

Find a high, light free area on a clear night

Prime viewing between ten PM and two AM.

Southern migration is in progress

Support your local fairs

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BOBOLINK The male (6 in.), the only North American songbird that is light above, all-black below, is easy to identify. However, the female and the male in fall are sparrowlike, with buff breasts and black-and-buff stripes on the crown. In summer it eats insects in hayfields, but in fall it may damage rice crops. The other grains it eats are of no commercial value. The Bobolink winters in South America. Its song is one of the most beautiful of bird songs.

