

Chequamegon Chirps



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Sunday, March 8th, with sunshine and unusually warm weather brought home the realization that we are soon to be invaded. In fact, it was obvious birds were moving north that day as some new species were showing up in significant numbers. Robins seemed to be appearing in many places and Blackbirds, Grackles, Canada Geese, Harriers, Meadowlarks, Mallards, and Wood Ducks. Trumpeter Swans and Sandhill Crane were seen or heard in the Spencer area. Looking out my kitchen window, it is obvious there is much more bird activity. The winter or year round residents have lots of new visitors. What's Around should have plenty of new additions by March 16.

Members who attend meeting are roughly along Highway 13 from Marshfield to Phillips which is about 75 miles. That should provide some interesting variation about which species arrive at certain dates and/or how quickly some birds are traveling.

Along that theme, the March 16th meeting of the Chequamegon Bird Club at the Medford Library at 7:00 P.M. will center around bird identification. Newest apps available will be discussed along with lots of member input. What works for you? What are your favorite bird ID books? How do you identify songs? Which ones in particular give you the most trouble? How do you use habitat to narrow down the list of possibilities when you spot a bird? Expect some valuable tips in these areas, plus any questions you have are most welcome.

Last month 25 members enjoyed Connie Decker's presentation of four different albums of club history. I admire how she can take a subject that could be boring and make it come alive with her enthusiasm and many details. These books are available if individual members would like to learn more about any particular aspects of club history or how the club started through the efforts of Sam Robbins and events, trips and activities that have occurred over the first 39 years. Loretta talked about the Kuse nature preserve and how available it is to members. You can get more information at www.kusemuseum-naturepreserve.org. Several different members also talked briefly about their experiences with snapshot cameras in recording wildlife appearances. These are available through the DNR. This could be an interesting and informative topic for a future meeting.

How Juncos Changed Their Migration, Behavior and Plumage in a Matter of Decades

Juncos, one of my favorite birds, have disappeared from my yard as they head north after their winter vacation in this area. Consistency in actions, coloring, travel, nesting, and migration are all consistent bird factors—usually. Studies conducted by the Cornell Lab and researchers including Pamela Yeh, Ellen Ketterson and Trevor Price have documented significant behavioral and physical changes with Juncos in some limited areas. Some other species have shown trends also, but Juncos have been the most documented due to where these changes started some 40 years ago. At that time it was noticed by bird watchers that Juncos started staying around the University of California, San Diego Campus during the summer rather than migrating to higher elevations at the nearby Laguna Mountains. As these birds stayed around during the summertime, they exhibited a whole batch of changes. They were less aggressive with each other and more comfortable around people. Males were singing higher pitched songs. Females were building nests in places up off the ground, in trees and on buildings instead of their usual ground nesting. Their plumage changed, with duller black in the head and smaller white flashes in the tail. Males were spending more time tending to nests and more monogamous. The heart of these changes seems to be lower peak levels of testosterone in the males. Whatever the factors, this group of birds has demonstrated a remarkable amount of change in a short time. This can be a good thing as rapidly changing climatic and environmental conditions will doom some bird species who don't adapt. Dark-eyed Junco overall population declined by some 168 million in the last 50 years. If, however, they are able to adjust to changing conditions, their chance of survival definitely increases. Such an adjustment is also happening in Ohio where some are not returning to Canada, but staying on their wintering grounds. The Ohio Juncos are in the early stages of study which should eventually determine if those are similar changes to California

What Bird Am I Seeing?

American Tree Sparrow and Chipping Sparrow

The winter plumages of Chipping Sparrows and American Tree Sparrows look very similar. The ranges of these species typically overlap only during migration, but Chipping Sparrows seem to be increasingly found north of their traditional winter range. The usually reliable distinguishing mark—a breast spot on the tree sparrow where there is none on the Chipping Sparrow—can be deceptively unreliable.

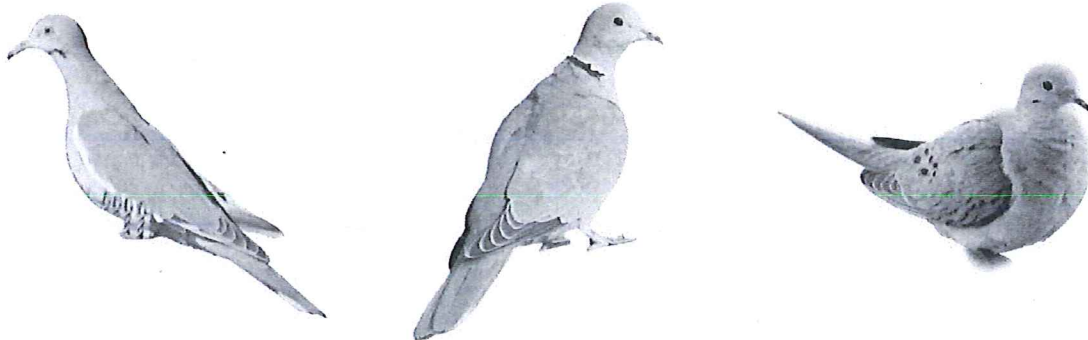
FIELD MARKS



Field Mark	American Tree Sparrow	Chipping Sparrow
OVERALL	This sparrow (6.25" long, 16 cm) looks similar in summer and winter. It has a rusty cap and a rusty eye line, a bicolored bill, and a breast spot that is sometimes hidden.	In summer this slightly smaller sparrow (5.5" long, 14 cm) has a chestnut cap, a distinct white eyebrow and black eyeline, and a dark bill. However, in winter the striping is much duller, the chestnut cap is typically obscured, and the bill may look pink.
CROWN	Cinnamon rust year-round with faint gray streak down middle in winter.	In winter more tan/brown than rufous with some streaking.
EYELINE	Rusty brown eyeline	Black or dark brown eyeline
BILL	Bi-colored bill, dark upper mandible, yellow lower mandible	Pinkish bill in winter
BREAST	Grayish breast with central, isolated, breast spot (sometimes hidden)	Grayish breast with no breast spot
SHOULDER	Rusty patch on shoulder	Plain gray shoulder
WING BARS	Two white wing bars	Two buffy wing bars

Common Doves

Mourning Doves have long been one of the most common species seen at feeders in much of North America. Eurasian Collared-Doves are spreading across the continent at a remarkable rate after first being spotted nesting in Florida in 1982, presumably having reached North America from the Bahamas where many individuals were released. Although not as dramatically as Eurasian Collared-Doves, White-winged Doves are also expanding their range. Historically, White-winged Doves were found in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, reaching north only as far as Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Early in the 21st century, FeederWatch participants began observing the species as far north as Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska, documenting the dove's northern expansion.



White-winged Dove by Pam Koch, Eurasian Collared-Dove by Patricia Jones-Mestas, Mourning Dove by David F. Smith

Field Mark	White-winged Dove	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Mourning Dove
SIZE & SHAPE	Similar in size to Mourning Dove (12") but chunkier.	The largest of the three species, about 13" long, larger and heavier than Mourning Dove.	The smallest of the three doves, about 12" long.
NECK	Brown neck with a spot on the side.	Distinct black ring around the back of the neck.	Brown neck with a spot on the side.
WING	Large, white patch along the edge of the wing that is visible when the bird is at rest.	All brown wing with brown edge.	Brown wing with a few black spots.
...	Blunt tail tip.	Blunt tail tip.	Distinctly long, tapered tail that comes to a point.

Editor Chequamegon Chirps

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Club Contacts

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March and April Events

Full Moons March 9 and April 8

Spring Equinox March 19

Enjoy our new residents

Marvel at the wonder of migration

Eagles are laying eggs

Great Horned Owls have hatched



"JUST BE GLAD YOUR BREEDING HABITS AREN'T DESCRIBED IN A BOOK!"