

Chequamegon Chirps



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March is another zoom session. 7:00 P.M. on the third Monday, March 15. The What's Around section will probably include a batch of new arrivals or pass overs noted by various members. Hope you have a chance to join in. Last month for the first time, I tuned in, too. It wasn't difficult or painful and nice to see people's faces that I hadn't seen for up to a year or more in addition to the fun of sharing recent happenings. This month's topic will be eBird For Beginners presented by Jon Roti-Roti, a lifetime club member and birder who lives in Green Lake. Your go to number for this Zoom session is 982 349 0317.

Odds and Ends

For two months I've messed up getting Dickcissels and Grasshopper Sparrows on the 2020 list of yearly totals. Hope your 2021 lists are growing. While they won't count on Wisconsin lists, Judy Rau took some really nice bird photos and posted them on Facebook when she was recently in Florida. Maybe a future in person meeting could include bird pictures by members while traveling.

Wisdom and Longevity

Wisdom, a 70 year old female Laysan Albatross, continues to make history. She is connected to the club because she was first banded by Chandler Robbins, Sam's brother, in 1956. Remarkably, Chandler again captured this female in 2002 when she was on the Mid Way Islands which are north-west of Hawaii. Not only is she still surviving, she is thriving as she again laid a fertile egg in late February which hatched recently. It is estimated she has laid 30 to 36 eggs and flown more than a million miles over her lifetime. The pairs take turns foraging for their chicks and may travel more than 1,000 miles over several days to bring back proper nourishment to their latest offspring.

Almost Spring

Today, March 9th, is about 80 degrees warmer than one month ago today. Last year we had about a foot of snow Easter Sunday. It's gotta be tough being a bird headed north with the intent to arrive at a nesting territory early and not into dangerous weather conditions.

Whatever happens, we are on the cusp of the spring migration flood. Such an exciting time as arriving or passing through species appear.

This morning when I went outside to fill feeders a really loud male cardinal saluted the day as he advertised what a fine fellow he is and inviting a lucky female to join him. What a nice start to the morning for me, and I hope for him, too.

This incident was kind of unique for me because I never saw the bird, but was comfortable knowing what it was. I'm really bad at identifying birds only by sound for a couple reasons. First of all, I never was particularly successful in learning calls and songs, but now, with significant hearing decline, I don't hear many sounds at all. It is awkward at times when I'm with a birder who is identifying many different birds that I don't hear. Hearing aids help, but not that much for me. Good birders ID species by ear which is much more efficient than by sight alone. There are specialty hearing devices, which aren't cheap, that improve hearing higher pitches and sounds in directed ways that improve bird identification.

Significant developments help with unknown bird sounds and songs. Birds don't always cooperate as they have a multitude of sounds and songs, and that doesn't include competing sounds in the area. Phone apps for bird identification are increasing dramatically, both in number and information they provide, especially when you add details such as colors, location and habitat. Here is a partial list of current apps available: Song Sleuth, ChipOMatic, Bird Song ID USA, Smart Bird ID, Bird Genie, Bird Net, and Merlin. Google them for more information.

High-Tech Tracking

Scientific knowledge, inventions and knowledge are increasing at ever faster rates. This wealth of information is adding dramatically to previously unknown facets of nature. Citizen scientists have been a major contributor in collecting data about what we are learning about bird travel and general trends. Now, there is amazing equipment available to collect precise bird information that didn't exist that many years ago. The following information is from an article in the January/February 2021 issue of Bird Watching by Marina Richie.

“High-tech bird tracking is taking rapid flight in an era of global scientific cooperation. Birds as small as warblers are signaling their locations from breeding and wintering grounds, from stopovers along migrations thanks to ever-more-sophisticated miniaturized tracking devices. Scientists harness the power of the sun, satellites, automated radio telemetry, and even the International Space Station to follow birds like never before.”

“At stake? The future of bird life on earth. Three billion birds lost since 1970 in North America is incentive alone for scientists coming together and to assure that critical technology is affordable and accessible.”

“The technology relies on small radio nano-tags placed on birds, as well as butterflies and dragonflies. When a tagged animal flies past a Motus Tower, its location is noted. After its modest 2013 beginning in Canadian Maritimes and New England States, the more than 900 stations track birds from at least 24,500 individuals of more than 225 species on four continents around the globe.” The Motus tracking system involves towers that pickup information from tags transmitted on the same frequency. The tags unique code and fixed rate, a burst interval, sends a signal that identifies an individual. Anyone can put up a receiving station that is, in turn, available to others with registered tags. A station costs from \$5,000 to \$10,000 depending on the setup. After tag detection, files upload to the central database, researchers receive a summary usually within minutes.” From what I could determine from a Google map, these stations appear to be along flight ways and the eleven in or along the edges of Wisconsin are clustered along Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and the Mississippi.

“Radio transmitters weigh as little as 0.2 grams (which is equal to 1/175 of an ounce), [a personal thought here—How the heck is that possible?] light enough to trace even monarch butterflies and darner dragonflies. The batteries on the tiniest tags last up to one month and the largest up to three years.”

“Among thrushes tagged in South America, Motus located about 40% in North America. For other species, it is as high as 60 to 70 percent. Consider how that compares to bird banding. Since 1963, more than 3,200 Swainson’s and Gray-cheeked Thrushes were banded on their Columbian wintering grounds. Only six have been encountered again.”

“Across the world, birds bearing minipacks with antennae are serving as nature’s reporters and ambassadors. Every bird is a messenger. In this bright age of tracking, scientists have taken a cue from the birds that freely cross political borders. Their collective international work is vital for conservation and for telling the spellbinding stories of birds on the move.”

Expanding human knowledge, while highlighting expanding information, also makes one more appreciate how much more there is that we do not yet know or understand. Enjoy and marvel at our great unknown as well as what we understand. The stories of what lies ahead are so breathtaking. Behold the miracles of every arriving or visiting arrival in spring migration.

Editor Chequamegon Chirps

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March and April Events

Full moon March 28

March 14 Daylight Savings Time starts

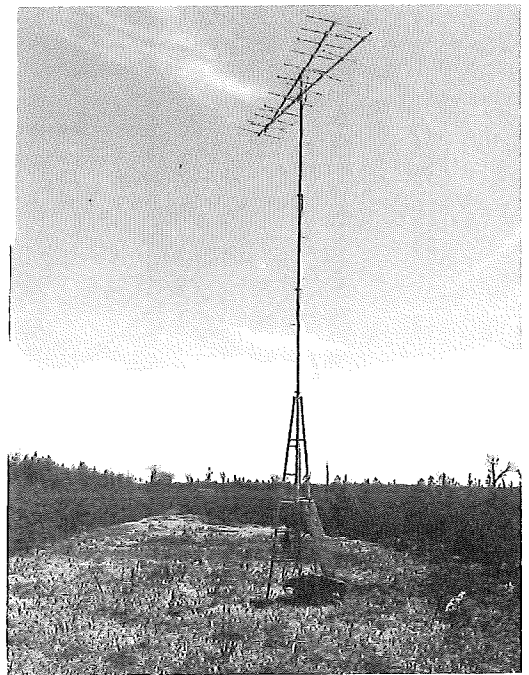
March 20 Spring begins (on the calendar)

Great Horned Owls have hatched

Bald Eagles start nesting

Early migrators arriving

Enjoy our daily miracles



Radio nanotag and Motus tower