

Chequamegon Chirps



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Gather around your phones, computers, laptops or whatever else you would prefer how to participate in the May meeting of the Chequamegon Bird Club on Monday, May 18 at 7:00 P.M. While it isn't recommended that we gather physically at this time, it still is a time to exchange information, ideas and whatever is timely. This will be done by zooming to the website www.chequamegonbirdclub.org. There will be more information available there how to make final connections to communicate with the group. Hopefully this will get you started, but if you have any questions, call Joe at 715-965-3498; Cam 715-785-7614; or Nadine at 715-207-1913.

What's Around

The quick answer is a whole lot species and while a few have left in the process of northern migration, more familiar and often colorful visitors are arriving on an almost daily basis. After a winter of many shades of white, it is so uplifting to see the brilliant colors of those first Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and watch the change of Goldfinches to a buttery yellow. Flying flowers are a welcome every spring, but even more so than ever this year.

This month I made some calls to members located in the more southern area to see if they have noted arrivals that may not have been seen yet further north. Randy Dreger who lives near Marshfield has 104 species on his yearly list when I talked with him on the 10th. Yesterday he saw his first Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Other highlights for him included seeing two pairs of Wilson's Phalaropes along with four warbler species. They were Yellow-rumped, Orange-crowned, Palm, and Ovenbird.

Nadine Willet also has had White-crowned Sparrows, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Baltimore Orioles come to her feeders.

Randy Dreger and John Zimmer were out this weekend and came up with at least 60 species. They saw a Barred Owl catch a vole and Ron was able to get a photo of Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs together. In addition to many common species, they also recorded Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Waterthrush, Marsh Wren, Swamp Sparrow, Solitary Sandpiper, Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Veery, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Least Flycatcher, Wilson's Snipe, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher and White Pelicans.

Joe Scott, in addition to the already mentioned species, has recorded Merlin, Chipping Sparrow, and Pine Warbler either in the Medford area or more north. Monday night there will be many other report of sightings, too. Hope you can participate then.

Chris Finkler saw Canada Goose goslings at the Medford Mill Pond this past week also.

The Marvel of Nests

Bird nests are fascinating. Size and building materials vary greatly of course. A Ruby-throated Humming bird's nest is about one inch deep and one inch across while one Bald Eagle nest in Florida was 20 feet deep and 9 ½ feet across. Building materials can be a collection of large sticks to combinations of exquisite arrangements of moss and spider webs. Some nests use no materials at all by laying eggs on flat roofs, on bare gravel, or among stones. Building time can range from minutes to weeks by one or both partners. Some nests are used for only one clutch, even when they raise multiple broods. Others can be used for decades.

How do different species construct nests that are duplicates of what they fledged from? Two words that I try to avoid when talking about birds or describing their behavior are **Always** and **Never**. Yes, building material and site location are remarkably consistent among different species. Why is

that? How is that possible? Sometimes the answer to such questions is more unanswerable questions. It makes me think the term “birdbrain” should be considered a compliment rather than a put-down.

Site selection has different criteria such as what’s available for building material if it is used at all. Some nests are nothing more than a shallow scrapes or saucer on bare ground, stones or ground litter. These are for mostly precocial hatchlings such as Killdeer, Ruffed Grouse, Turkeys, gulls among many others. Cup nests, built by many songbirds have a wide variety of craftman’s skills that may improve with future construction. Mud cup nests built by Cliff Swallows and Phoebes often grace areas under barn, garage or house eaves. Adherent nests are created when Chimney Swifts use saliva they produce to glue shallow cup nests to the inside of chimneys or hollow trees. Pensile and pendulous nests are produces by Vireos and Baltimore Orioles out on the far ends of slender branches.

Eggs and baby birds are a favorite of predators. Parents have various strategies to keep this from happening. First of all, nests are often well hidden or are in unaccessible places. Even when discovered, parents sometimes vigorously harass intruders without any regard to size. Hummingbirds, Kingbirds and Purple Martins are noted for this as well as Red-winged Blackbirds and Cooper’s Hawks. Actually, most birds will defend or try to distract intruders of their nests. Killdeer are known for “broken wing” displays to divert danger. Sometimes nests will be built near other species who drive off predators.

TV tip

Public TV has many impressive nature programs with NOVA presentations among the best. Eagle Power will be aired this Wednesday at 8 P.M. on Channel 20.1. The hour before that on the same channel there is a Spy in the Wild program where amazing photography taken by robots as they interact with different species.

Editor Chequamegon Chirps

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May and June Events

Full moons May 7 and June 5

Enjoy the color, aromas and spring beauty

Record arrival, nesting and fledging dates

We don't need to self-isolate from nature

