



Chequamegon Chirps

Newsletter of the Chequamegon Bird Club

Medford, Wisconsin

August 2010

Volume 29 Number 8

NEXT MEETING:

Date: Monday, August 16, 2010

Time: 7:00 p.m.

**Location: Medford Public Library
400 N Main St
Medford**

**Program: Wild Rice at Birding Hotspots
Jon Zellmer**

Refreshments: Chris Finkler & Larry Ruhde

Please bring your own mug for beverages.



Wild rice blossoms
(left) and finished rice
(below)



Wild Rice – Manomin (The Food that Grows on the Water)

In addition to being a delicious and nutritious food, highly valued by both Native Americans and others, wild rice is extremely important for wildlife, especially waterfowl. It has other ecological benefits, as well. At our August meeting Jon Zellmer will discuss wild rice at two of the Birding Hotspots –

Chequamegon Waters and McMillan Marsh Wildlife Area. Harvesting wild rice provides a great opportunity to bird watch and to get outdoors in late summer and early fall. It is also very satisfying to take part in a long tradition that is performed much like it has been for centuries.



Photos from Wild Rice brochure (MN DNR, WI DNR, GLIFWC)

Molts & Other Confusing Identification Issues

The idea for this article came from the most recent issue of the Wausau Bird Club's *Nuthatch News*, which included an article about molts, the periodic loss and regrowth of feathers. It is a rather complicated topic, with different species going through different molt patterns. Molts can make identification difficult at different times of year and at different life stages of the birds. Like our clothes, the feathers of birds wear out and are replaced with new ones. One of the issues bird watchers in this area face is identification of immature (first year) birds, adult females, and, in some species, adult males who have molted into drabber feathers, especially in fall. In some species colors may change significantly. To further complicate the molting discussion, some species may go through several molts during their early years, with birds changing appearance each

change much when they molt. Other species look very different. Adult male Scarlet Tanagers are noted for their bright red feathers set off by black wings and tail. This is their breeding (alternate) plumage. In their non-breeding (basic) plumage the red feathers are replaced by olive-green feathers. During the molt they have a mix of red and olive-green body feathers.

Adult male
Scarlet
Tanager
In non-
breeding
plumage



Adult male
Scarlet Tanager
in breeding
plumage

Although molts and feather wear may present challenging identification problems, these changes in appearance are also an interesting part of the natural history of birds.

year for several years. Gulls and Bald Eagles are two examples of this. Feather wear also changes the appearance of birds. Together, molting and feather wear present identifications challenges; birds often do not look like a field guide picture. This makes fall an especially challenging time of year. Just when we've learned to identify a few of them, they change clothes – and different species may wear similar outfits.

We tend to think of North America as being the “home” of neo-tropical migrants, including many warblers, and we also think of their adult summer plumage as their “regular” plumage. A more accurate perception might be to see them as visiting here for breeding and raising young before going home to Central and South America for the winter. While here, breeding adults males typically have quite vivid feathers. The appearance of some species does not



Herring Gull at several
different ages.



**BRING YOUR
FIELD GUIDE(S)
FOR
DISCUSSIONS**

Bird Reports (June - July 2010)



Checklist observers: *Rhoda Barbe* , *Connie Decker* , *Ken Luepke* , *Doug and Willa Pledger* , *Claire Romanak* , *Larry Ruhde* , *Cam Scott* , and *Ron Shiffler* .

Total Number of Species Observed this month is: 145

(Note: Only observers for rare or unusual sightings are listed below.)

- Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal , Green-winged Teal , Redhead , Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser (Shiffler)
- Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Greater Prairie-Chicken (Luepke), Wild Turkey
- Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant
- American Bittern, Least Bittern (Luepke), Great Blue Heron, Green Heron
- Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk (Decker / Luepke / Scott), Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel
- Virginia Rail, Sora, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Whooping Crane (Decker/Luepke), Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock
- Ring-billed Gull, Black Tern
- Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Black-billed Cuckoo
- Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl
- Common Nighthawk, Chuck-wills-widow ** (Multiple observers), Whip-poor-will
- Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher
- Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker
- Eastern Wood-Pewee, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird
- Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo
- Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark
- Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow
- Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper (Pledger)
- Carolina *Wren (Decker/Luepke), House Wren, Winter Wren, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
- Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin
- Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher
- European Starling, Cedar Waxwing
- Tennessee Warbler (Ruhde (early)), Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Pine Warbler, Kirtland's Warbler ** (Luepke), Black and White Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat
- Scarlet Tanager
- Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow
- Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel
- Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Northern Oriole
- Purple Finch, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow

Bird Note: As birds start gathering into larger flocks, often perching on wires, you may notice that most of them are facing the same direction. The reason: birds usually land and take off into the wind, and they usually sit facing into the wind. Watch to see if on calm days, you see more of them facing both directions.

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«FIRST_NAME» «LAST_NAME»
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Club Officers 2010-2011

President – Claire Romanak

Vice-president – Connie Decker

Secretary – Gayle Davis

Treasurer – Cam Scott

Other Club Contacts

Web site: www.chequamegonbirdclub.org

Email: info@chequamegonbirdclub.org

Newsletter Email: newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org
(Cathy Mauer, editor)

Bird sightings: Connie Decker

August - September Outdoors

- Full moon – August 24
- Snapping turtle eggs hatching
- Ruffed Grouse broods disperse
- Ruby-throated Hummingbirds begin southern migration
- White-tailed bucks begin shedding velvet
- Migrating Canada Geese begin arriving
- Hawks begin migrating
- Blue-winged Teal begin migrating



Birder's Bookshelf

Forest Raptors & Their Nests in Ontario: A Guide to Stick Nests & Their Users

Kaydyd Szuba & Brian Naylor

This field guide from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources “covers how to find and identify stick nests and the birds that build or use them.” It also includes behavior, habitat requirements, and protection guidelines, as well as field marks of adults and identification tips for immature birds. The text is well-illustrated with black-and-white drawings of the nests and the birds. Though from Ontario, the species are also found in Wisconsin.

The small spiral-bound guide is a convenient size to carry in the field. For information on purchasing a copy or to borrow one, contact Cathy Mauer, *Chirps* editor.