



Chequamegon Chirps

Newsletter of the Chequamegon Bird Club

Medford, Wisconsin

January 2012

Volume 31 Number 1

NEXT MEETING:

Date: Monday, January 16, 2012

Time: 7:00 p.m. Meeting

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

Program: Monitoring Birds and Deer

- **Bird Counts**
Connie Decker & Ken Luepke
- **Wisconsin DNR Deer Study**
Tracy Swedlund

\$ Annual Dues \$

Dues will once again be \$18 per mailing address and may be paid at the January meeting or by sending a check, made out to *Chequamegon Bird Club*, to:

CAM SCOTT
CHEQUAMEGON BIRD CLUB
N3566 GROVER DR
WITHEE WI 54498

Your dues help cover the cost of printing and mailing the *Chirps* and providing speakers for meetings, as well as supporting the club's educational efforts and other activities in the community.

Counting the Birds

Many of us enjoy keeping track of the bird species we see, but we often don't try to count how many individuals there are, at least until we take part in a Christmas Bird Count or the Great Backyard Bird Count. It's not too hard to count a pair of Cardinals, or several pairs, that come to your feeder or to keep track of a few Downy or Hairy Woodpeckers on the suet. Chickadees, with their rapid comings and goings as they grab a seed and fly off to eat it, are a bit more problematic. Likewise, large flocks are hard to count – how do count 300 Snow Buntings or 3,000 Red-winged Blackbirds with any degree of accuracy? For the Christmas Bird Counts, participants count the number of individuals of each species that they see within their area in one day. For the Great Backyard Bird Count, participants count the largest number of individuals of each species that they see at one time. This may be done for each of four days or any shorter time within those four days.

No matter why you may be trying to count birds, a few hints may help make the task easier. eBird has a good article about counting at <http://ebird.org/content/wi/news/bird-counting-101>.



Though aimed at those who record their sightings on eBird, the ideas are useful for anyone counting birds. Here are a few hints, in part taken from the article:

Write it down. And do it when you see the birds. While you may recall seeing a flock of thirty-four Redpolls if that is the only flock you see in one day, you're not so likely to remember if you then see another flock of seventeen, followed by a flock of twenty-eight Siskins, a flock of ten Chickadees, etc. You can make that an easier task if you prepare ahead of time with a list or field cards of commonly sighted species, then all you need to do is fill in the numbers and details.

Be conservative. If you are counting birds at your feeders and you see a male Cardinal in the backyard and a short time later a male Cardinal in the front

Counting Birds (cont.)

yard, count it as one bird. But if you see a male and a female, count it as two birds. As mentioned previously, the busy Chickadees are a problem. Look in nearby trees and shrubs and try to get an idea of how many are eating a seed or waiting for their turn at the feeder. While Chickadees usually hang out in small family flocks, we once had a flock of thirty cross a road one at a time, making it easy to count them. It's not often they are that cooperative.

Count in groups. Counting by groups makes it possible to count very large flocks. Depending on the size of the flock, count out a group of ten or one hundred or some other reasonable number and estimate how many of those groups are in the flock.

Do the math and you have your estimate. While this is easier with flocks that are sitting, it also works for flocks in flight.

For large mixed species flocks: Count the number of each species within a small subgroup and estimate the same proportion for the whole flock. Probably not too precise but often close enough.

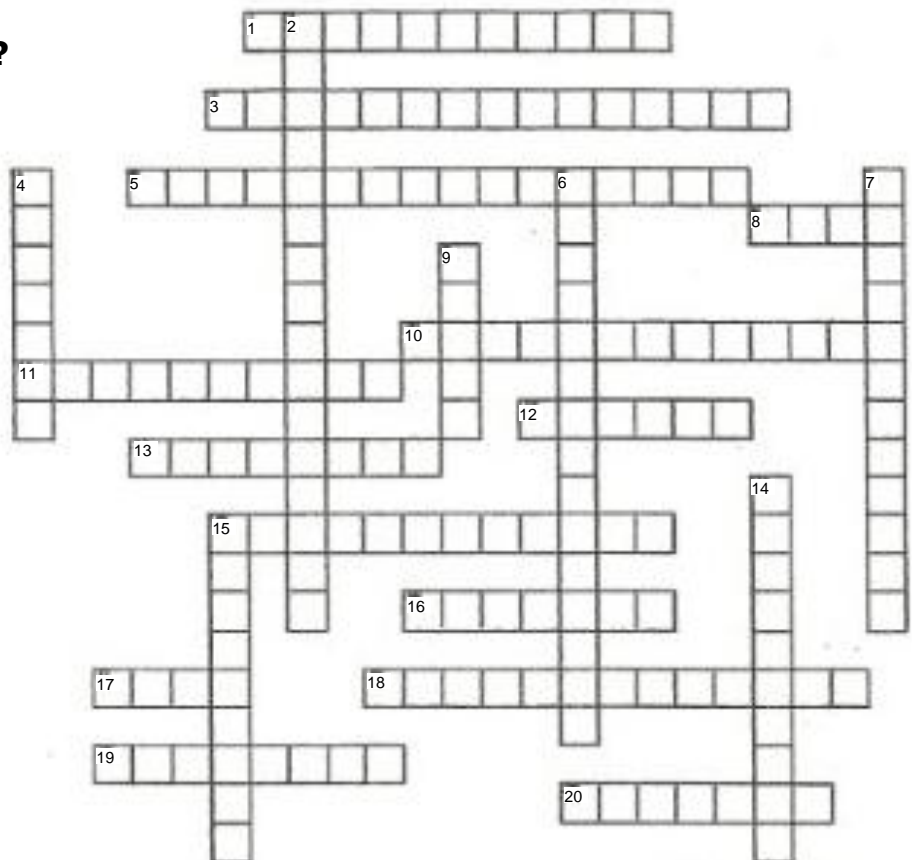
Don't imply too much precision. If you estimated four hundred Snow Buntings by counting four groups of one hundred (or forty groups of ten) and then you see three more join them, don't change your count to 403. Remember you were just estimating.

Do You Know Your Birds?

by Connie Decker

www.CustomPuzzles.com

Solution at next meeting



Across

- 1 a farm building to drink
- 3 a large finch
- 5 USA scarlet beginning
- 8 the fleshy corners of the mouth
- 10 chocolate colored grain harvester
- 11 a rat trap with wings
- 12 sandpiper w/wingtips extending beyond tail
- 13 stone pigeon
- 15 a coffee colored crawler
- 16 supercillium
- 17 to hunt insects from a perch
- 18 passerine cyanca
- 19 a new species to add
- 20 short necked, long tailed, bobbing sandpiper

Down

- 2 scolopax
- 4 our largest sparrow
- 6 a type of habitat grassland bird
- 7 the sides of the rump
- 9 a sharp-shin's preferred meal
- 14 royalty angler
- 15 an African American change of direction

Bird Reports (November - December 2011)



Checklist observers: *Gayle Davis, Connie Decker, Ken Luepke, Cathy Mauer, Gordy Ruesch, Joe and Joan Rickert, Claire Romanak, Cam Scott, Joe Scott, and Ron Shiffler.*

Total number of species observed this month: 58

(Only names of observers for rare or unusual sightings are included in the list below.)

- Cackling Goose (Decker/Luepke), Snow Goose, Ross's Goose* (Decker/Luepke), Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Tundra Swan, Wood Duck, Mallard
- Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey
- Turkey Vulture (Rickerts (late)), Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel
- Sandhill Crane
- Ring-billed Gull
- Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove
- Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl
- Belted Kingfisher
- Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker
- Northern Shrike, Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark
- Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet
- American Robin, Varied Thrush (Romanak), European Starling
- Cedar Waxwing
- American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow (Romanak), Dark-eyed Junco, Snow Bunting, Northern Cardinal
- Brown-headed Cowbird (Luepke)
- Purple Finch, House Finch, Red Crossbill (Decker/Luepke), White-winged Crossbill (Multiple observers), Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow

Spotlight on Crossbills

In addition to their crossed bills, our two species of Crossbills (White-winged and Red) have some other unusual characteristics.

- Both species may nest and raise young any month of the year if there is a sufficient food supply. Crossbills eat mostly conifer seeds, and they also feed conifer seeds to their young, unlike many other seedeaters who feed insects to their young. Because conifer seeds can be found year-around, Crossbills can have young at any time.
- White-winged Crossbills with lower mandibles crossing to the right are approximately three times more common than those with lower mandibles crossing to the left.
- A bird's biting muscles are stronger than the muscles used to open the bill, so the Crossbill places the tips of its slightly open bill under a cone scale and bites down. The crossed tips of the bill push the scale up, exposing the seed inside.
- A Crossbill can eat 3,000 seeds per day.



White-winged Crossbill
Ray's Wildlife meteo.psu.edu



Red Crossbill
Cornell Lab of Ornithology

- White-winged Crossbills prefer spruce and tamarack seeds while Red Crossbills prefer spruce, pine, hemlock, and, in the west, Douglas fir.

For a video of White-winged Crossbills feeding, go to <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/Page.aspx?pid=1125&ac=ac>

Information from Cornell Lab of Ornithology

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«FIRST_NAME» «LAST_NAME»
«STREET_ADDRESS»
«CITY» «STATE» «ZIP_CODE»

Club Officers

President – Claire Romanak
Vice-president – Connie Decker
Secretary – Gayle Davis
Treasurer – Cam Scott

Other Club Contacts

Web site: www.chequamegonbirdclub.org
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(Cathy Mauer, editor)
Bird sightings: Connie Decker

January – February Outdoors

- January 9 – Full moon
- Black-capped Chickadees start singing their 'fee-bee' song
- Red fox, wolves, beaver, lynx, squirrels, coyotes begin mating.
- Great Horned Owls begin courtship
- Horned Larks begin migrating north
- Northern Cardinals begin singing spring songs
- Time to get nest boxes cleaned and repaired or to build new boxes.
- Don't forget to watch the stars on these clear winter nights! Orion is easy to see.



Minnesota Ornithological Union

<http://moumn.org>

Birding information from our neighbors. *Birding.com* calls it the “best state ornithological web site”. The web site includes a link to birding hotspots in Minnesota with a map and brief description of sixteen sites, including the well-known Sax-Zim bog. There are extensive photo, video, and audio galleries. There are also links to checklists, rare bird alerts, distribution maps, and more. Among the “Other Online Resources” links is a latitude-longitude map, which allows you to find gps coordinates for any site on the map – and the map includes Wisconsin. Go to <http://moumn.org/maps/lat-lon.html>