7 p.m. meeting Monday, July 16 at the Medford Library

Last month’s picnic location was a prime example of how a forest area can be enhanced for various kinds of wildlife and different species of birds. To follow up on this theme, Joe Scott will present a program about forest habitat and some of the considerations and input that go into management decisions for large tracts of land such as the Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forest in Wisconsin. These decisions, such as whether to clear-cut an area or when or how mature trees are harvested over hundreds of acres or to leave areas completely alone, can impact large areas. Should management include fire control? Should roads be developed? How much are decisions determined by financial consequences? Should some species, plant or animal, be sacrificed for the benefit of others? There are many decisions to be made, and whatever is resolved is probably not a decision that is the absolute best in all ways. We hope the decisions are made with best intentions based on well-thought-out and researched information, including immediate and long term implications. When many possibilities are considered, it is not a simple process. There is an old adage that goes something like this—if you have an easy answer to a complicated problem, you don’t understand the question.

Think about how you have impacted the immediate area where you live and how the neighborhood area has changed while you have lived there. Think about how bird species have changed. What isn’t around anymore or what do you see more commonly? How has some bird behavior changed in the last decade or so? Club members have many years of life experience to base such observations on.

Now back to last month’s picnic, hosted by Bob and Claire Romanak at their beautiful log home in a great location with abundant birds. Nearly 20 people attended the picnic and most went on an extensive woods walk on their established trails which highlight different mini-environments to attract different species. A big thank-you to them for hosting this annual event. Anyone interested in hosting next year? It is always educational to see what is done on a city lot or larger area to attract birds as a way to enhance the property and to add an enjoyment factor to daily living.
West Nile Virus

Here is a recent article from the Colby-Abbotsford newspaper. “Clark County residents asked to report dead birds. From now until October 31, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services requests that anyone who finds a sick or dead American Crow, Blue Jay or Common Raven report it to the Clark County Health Department at 715-743-5105. Birds will need to be collected and sent to the state lab to test for West Nile Virus (WNV).

“West Nile Virus is spread via the bite of an infected mosquito and can impact both humans and animals. Eighty percent of humans infected with WNV never experience symptoms; 20 percent may experience mild symptoms such as fever, headache, neck stiffness, tiredness and rash; less than one percent become seriously ill. In animals, WNV may be deadly and symptoms can include difficulty walking, head tilt, muscle tremors and the inability to rise.

“The Wisconsin Division of Public Health monitors dead birds as a warning system to indicate that WNV may be in the area. In July 2017, a Blue Jay found in the Thorp area tested positive for the disease.”

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Another example of how West Nile Virus can impact us concerns Ruffed Grouse. The usual hunting season will end two months earlier this year although daily bag limits won’t be reduced. Typically Ruffed Grouse populations in the Upper Midwest follow a 10 year cycle, reaching lows in years ending in 4 or 5 and highs in years ending in 8 or 9 according to biologists. Last year field reports from hunters in the Upper Midwest were confirmed by results at the Ruffed Grouse Society national hunt held in October in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Hunters at the event harvested an average of 0.5 grouse per day, lowest in the 36 year history of the event. WNV is believed to be a contributor to the low numbers. Drumming counts are currently down in Wisconsin. How about you? Have you noticed much difference in Ruffed Grouse drumming or sightings?

Last month I wrote about ticks and problems they can cause and now West Nile Virus. I’m not trying to spook people into barricading themselves inside or reducing the joy of being outside and in forested areas. DEET, Permethrin and the other commodity of common sense should let you enjoy birding and other outdoor activities as much as ever.

Here is a political comment that I hope doesn’t offend too many. Ken Kaufman had this comment. Why birding is better than American politics—“On a bird, the right wing and the left wing work together to lift up the center.”
We are grateful to The Star News for the coverage they have provided of many of our events, especially our annual Migratory Bird Day Celebration.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

The 8th Annual Migratory Bird Day Celebration was held at the Perkinstown Winter Sports Area on Saturday. This year’s theme was “Year of the Bird.” The event included guided birdwatching walks and a wildflower/bird walk. In addition there were nature games along with construction of oriole bird feeders and bluebird houses. The Raptor Center brought in a live owl and other birds of prey for a demonstration.

The Bird Day celebration is hosted by the Chequamegon Bird Club with the support of the Miller Dam Lake Association, Taylor County Sportsman’s Club, and Taylor County Tourism.

Photos by David King. Story by Brian Willson. Page design by Sarah Komarek.
July and August—Full moons 7-27 and 8-26
Egg laying, feeding and fledging continue
Crops growing impressively with adequate rain
Currently much warmer days and nights
Many shades of green
A good time to test hammock comfort
Corn knee high on the 4th—to a Giraffe