Bird distribution, status and endemism

Our November meeting will be at the Medford Library at 7:00 P.M. Monday 11-19-18. There will be an informational program chosen by Joe Scott which will present information about where birds are currently and how that status can and does shift. Then there are endemic birds. That was a word I had to look up. It means pertaining primarily to a particular area. The Hawaiian Islands are the prime example of this phenomenon occurring in the USA. Other factors influencing distribution and status include landscape shifts, climate change in addition to human impacts.

Changing Seasons

November can be a dramatic time for weather change as we begin the shift into winter. Recent temperatures drops with ice and accompanying snow cover certainly bring this home. Canada Geese, Tundra Swans and Sandhill Cranes are being pushed out of or through our areas. On the ninth I was treated to a flock of some 50 Tundra Swans passing overhead and then having the sun break through to highlight their grace and color. Beauty in motion. That week brought many reports of their passing through. Their haunting calls on a dark or moonlight night make the experience so memorable. It will be interesting to compare information about current arrivals and late departures on Monday night. Along that theme the Wisconsin Birds Field Checklist will be available for members to fill in yearly specie information of birds recorded for the whole year. It will be at the December session also.

Banquet Summary

More than two dozen members and guests gathered for our annual banquet last month Steve Petznik presented information about different styles and capabilities of binoculars in addition to looking at individual’s equipment to offer suggestions. Visiting before, good food—with leftovers to take home home!—all made for a pleasant evening. Different people pitched in to make it all happen, especially Betty Danen and Judy Rau. Thank you from all of us.
College class taught by A Pidgeon?

No kidding. The University of Wisconsin-Madison offers a spring semester titled Birds of Southern Wisconsin taught by Anna Pidgeon PhD’00. Most of the students are undergraduates studying biology or wildlife ecology. In addition to class work, students take field trips around Dane County and southern Wisconsin on Saturdays through the semester. By the course’s end students are expected to be able to identify 235 bird species by sight and 145 species by sound alone. Pidgeon says students also discover how Wisconsin’s landscape is changing. From the 1850s to the 1950s, logging cleared away a lot of the state’s forests, sending arboreal birds into retreat. But in the last 60 years, the forests have been returning; forest and urban birds have returned, while grassland birds are in decline. Sounds like an interesting and informative class—which is to be expected when taught by A. Pidgeon. She did mention she gets a bit of office guff

Fall Migration

“Fall migration will bring four billion birds into the skies over the United States. That’s not a guess—it’s hard data, the first-ever national bird count using weather radar.

“Radar ornithology is an emerging field that extracts avian activity from weather data to track avian activity from weather related data to track birds’ nocturnal movements. Researchers in this field employ the power of cloud-computing and use algorithms to identify bird activity among meteorological phenomena, such as thunderstorms and drizzle. Scientists can then estimate flight altitude, speed, direction, and number of birds per unit of airspace using a wide assortment of radar tools along with existing knowledge of flight behavior, such as how close together migrant birds fly.

For birds crossing the U.S. northern border—which includes many short-distance migrants such as sparrows, Snow Buntings, and Dark-eyed Juncos that fly from Canada to spend the winter in the Lower 48 states—the average return was 46 percent. But for birds crossing the U.S. southern border—which includes more of the long-distance migrants such as warblers, tanagers, and orioles that travel to Central and South America, three to four times farther than the short-distance migrants—the average rate was 76 percent.

“That was probably the most interesting finding,” said Benjamin Zuckerburg, an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who studies the impacts of modern climate change on bird populations, and who was not involved in the research.

“We are entering a new age of big-data ornithology,” says Zuckerburg. “We can take data sets, either collected through citizen science, weather surveillance, or other ways of
capturing information on bird populations, and explore historical questions and think about them in a new light.” This information, including the following graph came from the annual report issue of Living Bird of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

**Christmas Bird Counts**

December 29 is the date for the Medford Christmas Bird Count. Gilman will start out the new year with a bang as we count birds in that circle on the first. December 15 and 16 may be the days respectively for the Owen and Spencer Counts. These are still tentative dates. Guests are welcome to also take part in these fun events. It can be an excellent time to recruit newcomers to the club and they can make significant contributions to the information collected. Hope each one of us can participate in at least one of these as a field counter or feeder watcher.

**Birds put billions into U.S economy**

45 Million

The number of Americans 16 years and older who are bird watchers

$1.8 Billion

Dollars spent annually on binoculars and spotting scopes

$4 Billion

Dollars spent annually on bird food
CLUB CONTACTS

Website: Chequamegonbirdclub.org
Information: info@chequamegonbirdclub.org
Newsletter: newsletter@chequamegonbirdclub.org
Bird sightings: connie1@charter.net

November and December happenings

Full moon 11-23 and 12-22
Later departures and more arrivals of migrants
REGE (via Connie) accepting deer hearts
Birds in Art continues until November 23
Consider bird themed gifts while shopping
A sincere and blessed Thanksgiving for all of us

Thank you to everyone who donated food, funds or time for the celebration of Gordy's life. He loved watching birds, not just identifying them, but photographing them and studying their behavior, both in our woods and in other parts of the country. He was home when he was outdoors, often just sitting and enjoying the birds and other wildlife around him. It would be wonderful if we all took time to do the same.

Cathy Mauer