

ChequamegonChirps



March 2026 Volume 44 Number 3

Our March meeting will be Monday, March 16 at the Medford Library
at 7:00 p.m.

699 and Counting

Sue Vick will present results, pictures, and experiences of a recent ten-day trip with ten other birders from around the country to Northern Costa Rica. This country, located just north of Panama, has an astounding variety of birds year around—then add hundreds of species of birds who cross Costa Rica’s borders to spend our colder months in much warmer and food available locations. The result is bird identifiers heaven. This second trip to Costa Rica by Sue gave her the opportunity to identify 293 species with the assistance of an outstanding Costa Rican guide. That’s an impressive number. Even more so is that 104 of those species were “Lifers” for her. I’ll let her tell you the 699 story.

Odds, Ends, and upcoming activities

If you haven’t yet paid this year’s dues, It would be nice to get that bookkeeping out of the way.

Club officer election will be next month. Nominees are Joe Scott, President; Ron Draeger, Vice President; Mary Urban, Secretary; and Sue Vic, Treasurer.

Upcoming dates of club activities: Saturday, May 9 World Migratory Bird Day.

Friday, May 15—Taylor County Youth Day

Mead Bird Outings** Saturday, March 21 or 28: Sunday, April 12: Saturday, May 9: Saturday, June 13: Saturday, June 27: Saturday, August 8: Saturday, September 12: and an evening owl session on October 9, 10 or 11

Doug and Mary Urban will have more information about the Mead sessions

Important Online Information

Online meetings are convenient at times, especially in bad weather. This seems to most likely to happen in January, but realistically, it can happen in any

month due to road conditions or extreme weather. Today March 8th, there is warm sunshine, little wind and temperatures in the mid-50s. On the 16th? I can confidently predict there will weather next Monday—just not what kind.

“The executive committee met and reviewed several online meeting options and decided to give a trial to the free app ‘Discard.’ Here’s what you need to know: For the March 16 meeting we will provide teams for those wanting to meet remotely. If you wish to join remotely it will be easier to join and have no time limit if you receive a Teams invite for March from Scott Stalheim. If you need an invite, let Scott know (scottstalheim@gmail.com).

For future online meetings, Discord is pretty easy to install on Windows, Apple, android phones and iPhones. A username and password are needed. You can give it a try, but if want some help, bring your phone or laptop early to the March meeting. We will have people there to help by 6:30 so we can get our meeting underway at about 7:00 as usual.” This information is from Scott who also gave me the following information for us to understand why it as a compliment when, or if ever, you are called a bird brain. This a summary of some sources quoted in the New York Times: Key findings on birders’ brains:

- . **Neuroplasticity:** Consistent, challenging birding (e.g., identifying species) rewires the brain, enhancing cognitive flexibility.

- . **Brain Density:** Expert birders show increased gray matter in visual and auditory processing regions.

- . **“Bird Brains” vs. Humans:** Research, including studies cited by the New York Times in 2016, shows that bird intelligence and brain organization are more sophisticated than previously thought, often mirroring human cognitive patterns in memory and learning.

- . **Benefits:** Birdwatching is not just a passive hobby; it acts as a mental exercise that sharpens focus and improves detailed observation skills.

New York Time and related studies also highlight the therapeutic, mental-health benefits of being in nature and listening to birdsong.

That is good information to consider when you’re inside on a beautiful day or having a spot of cabin fever. Just more information how it is really healthy in various ways to grab your binoculars, get outside, and do some birding for a few minutes or the rest of the day. You’re not goofing off, you are doing serious brain exercising, gaining knowledge and gathering information. Good for you.

Springtime Migration and Phenology

Spring migration is in early stages and will continue to increase to a virtual flood in the near future. Tonight, I talked with my daughter and son-in-law who live about twenty-five miles north of Milwaukee within a half-mile of Lake Michigan. He commented about hearing sandhill cranes the first time today, the many robins now around, blackbirds at their feeders, and bluebirds showing up a couple weeks ago. These species may well be already in our area or for sure within a few weeks. It is always nice to say hello to old neighbors when they come back from vacation. *What's Around* will have a great number of additions for the next several months.

Ron Shifler gave me a great gift of the 2026 Wisconsin Phenology Calendar that I plan to include tidbits of information from it in this and future Chirps. It is subtitled Nina's phenological legacy. Aldo Leopold kept extensive phenological records for thirteen years until his death in 1948.

In 1976, Nina, Aldo's daughter, and her husband Charlie Bradly retired to Wisconsin and built their retirement home (the Bradly Study Center) just down the road from the family's historic Shack and Farm. They soon began an ambitious series of research projects on the landscape—then designated as the Leopold Memorial Reserve—including a return to phenological record keeping near the Shack. By comparing her father's 1935-48 records with her own from 1976-98, Nina discovered that many seasonal events were occurring earlier in the year than they had in her father's time. Nina continued keeping phenological records until her passing in 2011 at the age of 93.

The rate of global warming began increasing sharply during the 1970s. Her records from 1976-2011 documented how plants and animals adjusted to this unprecedented rate of change in Wisconsin's climate. On page 4, I listed some birds followed by a number. This is how many days earlier these species are arriving in the Baraboo area compared to only a few decades earlier.

Has anyone in the club or someone you know collected data along this line for this area of Wisconsin? If so, it would be outstanding information for a meeting and I'd really like to include such data in future Chirps.

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Club contacts

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March and April events

Yellow-bellied sapsuckers—16 days

Eastern phoebes—11 days

Chipping sparrows--13 days

Tree swallows—6 days

American Robins 21—days

Sandhill cranes—20 days

House wrens—10—days

Indigo buntings 11—days

