

BIRD SONGS

Newsletter of the North Lakeland
Discovery Center Bird Club

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Frank Schroyer, President
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President's Message

by Frank Schroyer

Winter has fully arrived in the Northwoods of Wisconsin. During a Thanksgiving week storm the NLDC campus received 10+ inches of snow, and the subsequent cold temperatures have kept that wintry blanket around. Birds have responded accordingly – all of our neotropical migratory species have moved on, and we are now left watching the bird feeders and fruiting trees for winter resident species. Luckily, with the return of *REAL* winter after two years of it being virtually snowless and warm, some species not seen in a while have also returned. Pine and Evening Grosbeaks have made their presence felt once again after their multi-year absence. These large, gregarious, and hardy species bring a welcome splash of vibrant colors to our otherwise grayish/white landscape. Regionally, Snowy Owls appear to be irrupting southward into the Great Lakes in solid numbers this year. Along with Bohemian Waxwings, Redpolls, and a handful of

Crossbills sticking around, there will be opportunities here this winter for fantastic birding.

The New Year is a time of reflection for many, and as I write I can't help but look back at the Club's year. In 2025 we were able to once again offer a suite of free monthly talks related to birds at NLDC, and I was happy to see a number of members of the public join the club for these highly educational experiences. Donna R. also once again did the heavy lifting to keep our Thursday morning outings going, with the help of other club members who led numerous trips across the northern part of the state this year. As always, a huge thanks to Donna for all her effort she puts in as a volunteer! The Club also went through some transitions, with three new Board Members coming on in August, which included myself. The new Board has met and we are all very excited to see what we can accomplish on the Club's behalf over the next three years. Another transition occurring relates to our bird feeding enclosure at the NLDC campus. Longtime volunteer feeder filler Anita F. will be moving away from the area soon, and is leaving some big shoes to fill! Anita has graciously volunteered May – October for many years now, to clean, fill, and maintain the feeders in the enclosure. Thank you, Anita! Speaking of the feeders, Sarah B. has historically coordinated volunteers to ensure someone is assigned to take care of the enclosure, but is stepping away from that volunteer role. Thank you, Sarah!

All this to say, we are now seeking volunteers to care for the enclosure, and for someone willing to coordinate and organize those volunteers. If you are interested, please reach out to me. *We need someone to volunteer as coordinator before May '26!*

Thank you to everyone in this Club who has given their time, money, and effort in 2025. Your membership and volunteerism are really meaningful to me personally, as I strongly believe in the Club's mission and role in the Northwoods community. As a reminder, the purpose of our Club is to *"provide opportunities for all interested persons to engage in activities related to birds and birding."* I look forward to seeing how we accomplish this in 2026!

Results of the Minocqua Christmas Bird Count

By Sarah Besadny

It wasn't an ideal day for birding – misty, dark gray skies, but it wasn't windy, nor icy and the mist only turned to rain when teams were wrapping up their morning of counting birds. Hindsight is 20/20 and it was a good thing we stuck with our

scheduled day since our “snow” date turned out to have worse conditions with extremely icy back roads.

This year was the 20th year that the Discovery Center Bird Club has sponsored the Minocqua Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The Minocqua CBC has records going back to the early 1960s but records were sporadic until the Bird Club began sponsoring it in 2006. Since then, members of the Bird Club as well as others who live within the Count Circle have been counting birds within the 7.5-mile radius that makes up the Count Circle (the center point being the intersection of Hwys 51 and 70 West). There are two types of participants in a CBC – teams that drive around the area and individuals who live within the Count Circle and count birds at their feeders. As you might expect, in the winter months, most birds are found around feeders. The driving teams know of homes in their assigned area that have bird feeders and ensure they travel by those places as they work to cover their assigned area. Our feeder watchers add significantly to our overall results.



Field Counters minus Lynn Barber and Donna Roche (taking picture)

This year's Count had some notable results. A total of 6 Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported, 4 by our driving teams and 2 by one of our feeder counters. This total of 6 smashes the prior record of 2 Red-headed Woodpeckers reported on a Minocqua CBC. In fact, only three other years since 2006 have Red-headed Woodpeckers been reported at all. Brown Creepers were another notable species. This year a total of 9 Brown Creepers were reported. Looking back at our data since 2006, the previous high count for Brown Creepers was 5.

The sighting of a hybrid duck was notable as well. The Mallard x American Black Duck sighting is a first for our CBC records as well as our Bird Club records.

I know folks really enjoy this winter tradition and I want to thank everyone who participated. Thank you Donna for organizing the day and for reserving a table at a warm and yummy spot for people to meet for lunch and share stories of their morning.

Below are the species totals recorded for the Minocqua CBC 2025.

Mallard	51
Mallard x Black Duck Hybrid	1
Wild Turkey	18
Ruffed Grouse	2
Bald Eagle	6
Mourning Dove	11
Red-headed Woodpecker	6
Red-bellied Woodpecker	12
Downy Woodpecker	28
Hairy Woodpecker	15
Pileated Woodpecker	22
Blue Jay	101
American Crow	37
Common Raven	27
Black-capped Chickadee	300
Red-breasted Nuthatch	81
White-breasted Nuthatch	37
Brown Creeper	9
Golden-crowned Kinglet	0
European Starling	6
Northern Cardinal	11
Dark-eyed Junco	1
Pine Grosbeak	22
Common Redpoll	2
Pine Siskin	1
American Goldfinch	58

Species Profile: Ringsnaveleend (*Aythya collaris*)

By Denise Herzberg

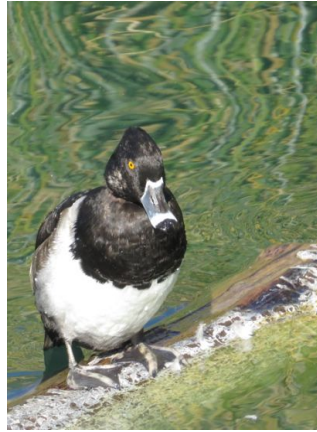
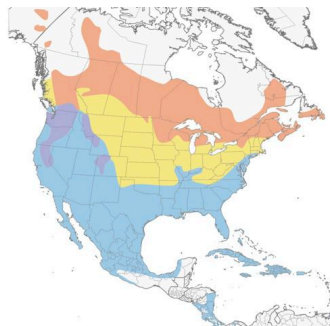


Photo by Mookie Fudenberg

Since I'm half Dutch, I'm pleased to say that the Dutch have it right. Ringsnaveleend translates to Ring-billed Duck and refers to the bird we are supposed to call the **Ring-necked Duck (RNDU)**. Like a few other species, such as the Red-Bellied Woodpecker, the bird was named by hunters or ornithologists who had a dead bird in hand and could see things too subtle for the rest of us. It makes sense that the Red-bellied wouldn't be called Red-headed, since there is another species with that name, but my search revealed no other species named Ring-billed Duck.

The RNDU population is very widespread. It can be found all over North America and in parts of Europe, including the Netherlands. I've seen them in Wisconsin, California, Texas, and Wyoming. Mookie's pictures were taken in Phoenix and the Kansas City area. According to eBird I've seen them 113 times over 20 years. To give you an idea of their relative abundance in my life, I've had 192 sightings of Northern Shovelers and 704 of Mallards. The most I've ever seen at one time was 250 on a pond in California.



Ring-Necked Duck Distribution Map



Photo by the author

It can be found diving, not dabbling, on freshwater lakes and ponds, sometimes associating with other ducks. When they dive, they use their feet to help locate seeds, and weeds, wild rice, and other aquatic plants. They prefer shallow water with dense vegetation. They are not deep divers.

From the Wisconsin DNR: “In Wisconsin, ring-necked ducks are the highest harvested breeding diving duck in the state and are therefore an important species comprising Wisconsin waterfowl hunter bags.” I guess that means the numbers are good. The Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas confirms that they breed in our part of the woods. Perhaps some of you have seen young ones!

Adult Male



Photo by Mookie

Adult Female



Photo from eBird

They are small and compact. The bill is about 2/3 the length of the head—long and narrow. The tricolored bill on an adult male is diagnostic. They have a steep forehead with a high round-peaked crown and head that may seem oversized compared to the body.

The male in breeding plumage is boldly marked with a black breast and back and pale gray sides and golden eyes. The female is overall brown with a white eye

ring and a short white eyeline behind the eye and pale white at the base of the bill. The eyes are dark reddish/brown. The back of the female makes me think of a saddle, but I've had trouble convincing anyone else of that. The female could be confused with female scaup or Tufted Duck, but those have golden eyes and do not have a white eye-ring.

In flight, their profile is compact and large-headed. The trailing edge of the wing is gray as opposed to the white edged wings of scaup or Tufted Duck. They run over the water and abruptly take off. It's a fast and strong wingbeat. To quote Pete Dunne: "Landings seem recklessly fast: the bird brakes with a rapid flutter of wings and comes to a stop after a very short slide on the water".

My first encounter with a Ring-necked Duck was at the Los Angeles County Arboretum, where they are so acclimated to humans that several of them waddled right by me. I could clearly see the "ring around the collar" but never have again. Here, you can see it too:

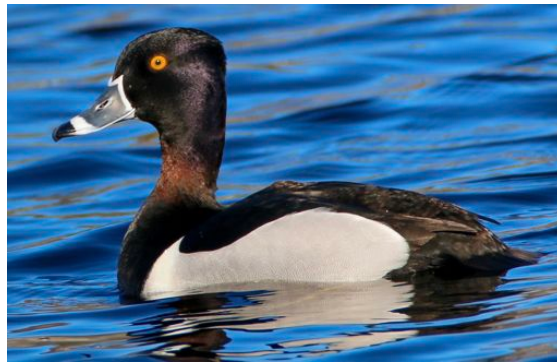


Photo from eBird

Sources:

The Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America
Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion
The Behavior of Texas Birds by Kent Rylander
eBird
The internet!

DC Bird Club Thursday Outings – October, 2025

By Donna Roche

Continuing from the 'Recaps' that were printed in previous BIRD SONGS issues to the end of the Discovery Center Bird Club Thursday Outings in 2025, here are the recaps for October.



The Recap of October 2, 2025 outing to Thunder Lake Wildlife Area was written by Frank Schroyer: "12 birders made it to Thunder Lake for the annual fall outing there, led by me, Frank. Instead of our usual hike to start things off, I suggested that we go to Rice Lake Rd. and check that area out instead. We were immediately greeted by several small groups of White-crowned Sparrows, and a fly-by Merlin. The Road wasn't terribly birdy, but we did find one location where we were able to pick up a Brown Creeper and a Golden-crowned Kinglet (a lifer for one club member)! From there we drove to the boat launch on Thunder Lake. As soon as we got out of the cars, we saw there Merlin again, this time perched beautifully in a dead tree. All of us had great looks at the bird through spotting scopes. For the second year in a row the club found large rafts of American Coot on Thunder Lake – we estimated 800 this year. In total the group found 18 species and enjoyed the nicest weather we've ever had during our Thunder Lake outing." In addition to volunteering, planning and leading this outing, Frank also kept our eBird lists... thank you!!. **18 Species of birds**



Recap of October 9, 2025 outing to Ashland was written by Linda Dunn: It was a beautiful sunny day in Ashland. We met Colleen and Tim at Bayview Park. We immediately saw birds: cormorants, terns, and far off a raft of loons which we saw better farther in our trip. Colleen spotted a horned Grebe. I'm only giving you the highlights. We saw 33 birds in all. The Friday before, I saw the white pelican which was in Ashland for a month. Unfortunately, we never saw it. Next, we went to the ore dock. We got a good scope look at the raft of loons. A merganser and cormorant were hanging out near the dock. On to Prentice Park. Lots of birds in the water. Then, Maslowski Beach where there were many geese. Luckily, we had Tim who pointed out a Snow Goose. A new one for the group. Our last stop was the bridge where we saw a family of eagles (I assume). 6 eagles standing on a sandbar. We went back to Maslowski beach for lunch. Lots of gulls. One decided to watch us eat in case we dropped some food for him. **BIG THANKS TO COLLEEN AND TIM FOR ANOTHER GREAT ASHLAND FIELD TRIP!!** Judy C. says 'Tim and Colleen are excellent leaders. **Judy took photo of the group. Thanks so much to Linda D. for keeping the eBird list of 33 species.**



Recap of October 16, 2025 -Wausau trip with Linda D. reporting: The trip to Wausau was very nice. At first, we were only four, Jon, Judy, Mark and me. We met up with Stephanie and Gene at Bluegill County Park. Lots of Mallards and geese flying overhead. The highlight for me was a cardinal. Then, we went to the Great Blue Heron Rookery. We saw a Raft, Fleet, Swarm of Coots. We counted them as best we could (old coots counting coots). After much argument we settled on 200. On to the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Museum where we met up with Carne and Debbie. The Birds in Art exhibit was really good. We decided to go back to our favorite 2510 restaurant where we enjoyed good food and good conversation. A very enjoyable day for all. Thank you Linda for the recap and ebird list. **13 Species**



Recap of October 23, 2025 outing to Little Turtle Flowage. *If I hadn't known better I would have thought that this was our typical LAST outing of the season. But no, it was the second to the last and it was cold, rainy, with snow squalls! We were lucky that it wasn't windy and the precipitation was light, so we did find a nice number of birds. As you will see from the list below, we enjoyed seeing a lot of swans. We found them flying in different groups. We were challenged with sorting out the identification and numbers of juncos and tree sparrows that moved ahead of us flying across the trail in mixed groups. We took a short walk into the woods and noted that aspen is filling up the space that was logged last year. Our birds were grouse, nuthatch and a few chickadees. Back to the parking lot, 3 of the group continued past the gate, but I called it a day for me. I haven't heard back from them so I don't think they found any other birds. For the record, I think I can say that we find pretty much the same species here at LTF each year at this time... it certainly shows that it's the ending of migration season for LTF! **11 Species***



Recap of October 30, 2025 - Powell Marsh Vista

I apologize up front that I am writing this recap since I didn't show up until the group was heading back to the parking lot. But, I didn't think to ask someone else who actually attended the whole outing. Yikes!

*We've talked about the weather conditions that have occurred for the last outing of the season in the past. You know what I mean.... Very cold, windy, misty, soaking wet rainy, snow squalls. I can now add FOGGY to the list! That's why I delayed getting over there. However, although I was 'chicken' to drive my needed truck in the thick fog, others weren't! Six hardy birders started out at 8 a.m. with a walk to the bird blind and then came back to the parking lot to hike around the Vista Pool. Apparently, those 120 grackles were found during this first part as were the ducks. Amazing! Most of the chickadees were hanging around the T intersection of the trail. I'm sorry that I missed the Snow Buntings and hope to see them and a few more tree sparrows and juncos this late fall. I'm so proud of those hardy birders to get out there and to be able to find birds in the fog!! Thank you, Dave W. for keeping our eBird list and for leading this outing! **10 Species***

That's it for 2025!!

Hope to see all you Birders in the Spring of 2026!!

Wishing you good birding until then, Donna

Editor's Note: On behalf of the Bird Club I would like to thank Donna for coordinating ALL, and leading many, of the Thursday morning bird walks. And since she's the one always taking the picture ...



Photo by Denise Herzberg

Life List Quarterly: Fourth Quarter 2025

by Sarah Besadny

To wrap up our year of celebrating the last 20 years of the Bird Club by reviewing the Club's bird reports, I'm back with the final installment. There are 4 more species to add to bring us up to the 274 species the Club has reported since it's inception, plus the (now) 3 hybrids and the removal of Hoary Redpoll as a separate species.

Tropical Kingbird – 10/19/23

Fieldfare – 2/21/24

Sabine's Gull – 10/10/24

American Avocet – 5/15/25

Mallard x Black Duck hybrid – 12/18/2025

Now let's wrap up our current year in bird sightings. Besides the American Avocet "lifer" for the Club, there were other highlights this year. Dave Wittrock has been following a Varied Thrush that showed up at a neighbor's house about a month ago and Dave graciously extended an invitation for club members to go see the bird. Several of us have seen it and what a treat it was. It's a handsome male and has offered great views of its calico wings, orange throat and breast separated by a dark breast band and faint speckling of orange and gray feathers along the sides of the belly. Although this species was spotted by the Club on 1/30/2009 and therefore isn't a lifer for the club, it has been a great addition to our annual list. Another highlight was a hybrid Mallard x American Black Duck spotted by the NE Quad Team for the Minocqua CBC (Frank Schroyer, Mark Westphal and John Bates) on December 18th. Although this isn't identified as a separate species, it is an interesting addition to our records.

We ended the 2025 season with a total of 156 species and one hybrid. Below is the years list with the first sighting date reported. Additionally, the 16 species that were reported in our last quarter of the year are highlighted in **bold**.

Snow Goose	10/9/25	Blue Jay	5/8/25
Canada Goose	5/1/25	American Crow	5/1/25
Trumpeter Swan	5/1/25	Common Raven	5/8/25
Wood Duck	5/19/25	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	5/15/25
Blue-winged Teal	5/1/25	Purple Martin	7/31/25
Northern Shoveler	5/15/25	Tree Swallow	5/1/25
Gadwall	5/15/25	Barn Swallow	5/19/25
Mallard	5/1/25	Black-capped Chickadee	5/1/25
Mallard x American Black Duck	12/18/25	Red-breasted Nuthatch	5/8/25
American Black Duck	5/15/25	White-breasted Nuthatch	5/15/25
Green-winged Teal	7/31/25	Brown Creeper	5/8/25
Redhead	5/15/25	House Wren	7/3/25
Ring-necked Duck	5/19/25	Winter Wren	5/8/25

Greater Scaup	10/9/25	Sedge Wren	5/1/25
Lesser Scaup	5/15/25	Golden-crowned Kinglet	10/2/25
Bufflehead	5/15/25	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5/1/25
Common Goldeneye	10/9/25	Eastern Bluebird	5/19/25
Hooded Merganser	5/19/25	Varied Thrush	12/2/25
Common Merganser	5/8/25	Veery	5/15/25
Red-breasted Merganser	5/15/25	Hermit Thrush	5/22/25
Ring-necked Pheasant	6/5/25	American Robin	5/8/25
Ruffed Grouse	5/8/25	Gray Catbird	5/15/25
Wild Turkey	8/21/25	Brown Thrasher	5/29/25
Pied-billed Grebe	5/1/25	European Starling	5/15/25
Horned Grebe	10/9/25	Cedar Waxwing	5/29/25
Rock Pigeon	5/19/25	Evening Grosbeak	12/2/25
Mourning Dove	5/15/25	Pine Grosbeak	12/18/25
Common Nighthawk	9/18/25	House Finch	5/19/25
Chimney Swift	5/19/25	Purple Finch	5/19/25
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	5/19/25	Common Redpoll	12/18/25
American Coot	5/1/25	Red Crossbill	5/19/25
Sandhill Crane	5/1/25	White-winged Crossbill	5/19/25
American Avocet *	5/15/25	Pine Siskin	12/18/25
Black-bellied Plover	5/15/25	American Goldfinch	5/15/25
Killdeer	5/15/25	Lapland Longspur	10/2/25
Dunlin	5/15/25	Snow Bunting	10/30/25
Wilson's Snipe	5/19/25	Chipping Sparrow	7/3/25
Spotted Sandpiper	5/8/25	Clay-colored Sparrow	5/15/25
Greater Yellowlegs	5/1/25	American Tree Sparrow	5/1/25
Lesser Yellowlegs	5/1/25	Dark-eyed Junco	5/15/25
Bonaparte's Gull	10/9/25	White-crowned Sparrow	5/15/25
Ring-billed Gull	5/15/25	Harris's Sparrow	10/9/25
American Herring Gull	10/9/25	White-throated Sparrow	5/8/25
Caspian Tern	5/15/25	Savannah Sparrow	5/19/25
Black Tern	7/31/25	Song Sparrow	5/1/25
Common Tern	5/15/25	Lincoln's Sparrow	5/19/25
Common Loon	5/1/25	Swamp Sparrow	5/1/25
Double-crested Cormorant	7/31/25	Eastern Towhee	5/19/25
American White Pelican	7/31/25	Baltimore Oriole	5/15/25
American Bittern	5/19/25	Red-winged Blackbird	5/1/25
Great Blue Heron	5/19/25	Brown-headed Cowbird	5/15/25
Great Egret	7/31/25	Common Grackle	5/1/25
Green Heron	5/15/25	Ovenbird	5/8/25
Turkey Vulture	5/15/25	Northern Waterthrush	5/19/25
Osprey	5/19/25	Golden-winged Warbler	5/22/25
Northern Harrier	5/19/25	Black-and-white Warbler	5/15/25
Bald Eagle	5/1/25	Nashville Warbler	5/19/25
Broad-winged Hawk	5/8/25	Mourning Warbler	5/19/25
Red-tailed Hawk	7/31/25	Common Yellowthroat	5/15/25
Belted Kingfisher	5/8/25	American Redstart	5/15/25
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	5/8/25	Cape May Warbler	5/19/25
Red-headed Woodpecker	12/18/25	Northern Parula	5/19/25
Red-bellied Woodpecker	5/19/25	Magnolia Warbler	5/19/25
Downy Woodpecker	5/15/25	Blackburnian Warbler	5/19/25

Hairy Woodpecker	5/19/25	Yellow Warbler	5/15/25
Pileated Woodpecker	5/8/25	Chestnut-sided Warbler	5/15/25
Northern Flicker	5/1/25	Black-throated Blue Warbler	5/19/25
Merlin	5/19/25	Palm Warbler	5/15/25
Peregrine Falcon	9/18/25	Pine Warbler	5/8/25
Eastern Wood-Pewee	5/22/25	Yellow-rumped Warbler	5/8/25
Alder Flycatcher	5/29/25	Black-throated Green Warbler	5/8/25
Least Flycatcher	5/19/25	Canada Warbler	8/7/25
Eastern Phoebe	5/15/25	Wilson's Warbler	5/19/25
Great Crested Flycatcher	6/12/25	Scarlet Tanager	5/29/25
Eastern Kingbird	5/15/25	Northern Cardinal	8/7/25
Yellow-throated Vireo	5/29/25	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5/19/25
Blue-headed Vireo	5/19/25	Indigo Bunting	7/31/25
Warbling Vireo	5/15/25	House Sparrow	7/31/25
Red-eyed Vireo	5/19/25		

Photo Journal

Photos and Captions by Mark Westphal



This dark phase Snow Goose, also known as a "blue goose" was spotted among a flock of Canada Geese during a Bird Club outing to Ashland

*An American Coot came up
with a tasty minnow at
Powell Marsh*



*A migrating Lapland Longspur
searches for food in the grass
along Main Dike of Powell
Marsh*

*This migrating Horned Lark
was one of a small flock that
made a stop over at my yard
this October*



*This brash young
Ring-billed Gull was
hoping to share the
lunch of Bird Club
members as they
dined along the
shore of Ashland
Bay*



*A Double-crested Cormorant
leisurely cruises the cool
waters of Ashland Bay. Note
the brilliant blue eyes!*



*Numerous Palm
Warblers searched for
food in the pines around
my home during their
journey south this Fall*



*An immature
Bald Eagle
intently stares
back at the
photographer*