

BIRD SONGS

Newsletter of the North Lakeland
Discovery Center Bird Club

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Officers

Frank Schroyer, President
Debbie Simek, Secretary
Debby Wilson, Treasurer
Meg Sanders, Membership Director
Hannah Thorpe, Program Director

President's Message

by Frank Schroyer

Hello fellow birders! I am excited to share with you that during the Club's annual meeting this past August, I was voted in as the next president of the club! Also, we added Debbie Simek and Hannah Thorpe to the board as the Secretary and Program Director, respectively. It was also good to retain some of the existing board members, as Debby Wilson, Treasurer, and Meg Sanders, Membership Director, have both agreed to continue serving for another 3 years. It will be great to have a full board moving forward as we look to keep the Bird Club operating smoothly.

I also want to thank our outgoing Board Members – Mark Westphal, President, and Amy Sheldon, Program Director. The two of you have put in a TON of volunteer effort over the past six years. Amy has been responsible for contacting, coordinating, and bringing in fresh faces and interesting speakers for the Club's

monthly talks, May through October each year. Mark has been at the helm of the club, providing guidance and leadership. Thank you both for all you have done!

I am very excited to serve as President of the Club for the next 3 years. Since I became involved with the club after moving back to Wisconsin in fall of 2021, I have really enjoyed the programs, walks, special events, and camaraderie that comes with being a Bird Club member. Although I work full time for Northwoods Land Trust, I still try to make a point get to outings and programs if I can. Although I have been able to meet many club members, I know I haven't crossed paths with everyone. So, here's a little more about me:

I *really* love birding. That said, my relationship with the hobby has had an interesting path, and I'm still relatively new to it. Birds have always been something I noticed, but not something I sought out. Even in college, after taking an ornithology course, I found the idea of actively seeking out birds in the wild to be a little... weird.

After graduating from UW-Milwaukee with degrees in Biology and CES (Conservation and Environmental Sciences), I decided to pursue a career in natural resources. I started my second job out of school with the Milwaukee County Parks Natural Areas Program in September of 2017. Part of our focus was to document the bird species found in each of the different parks throughout the year. My skills grew, but my interest remained limited – until spotting my “spark” bird, the Northern Shrike. I'll have to write a lengthier story about that experience in a future newsletter.

My career then took me to Kansas, Michigan, and finally back to northern Wisconsin in 2021. Throughout that time, I had several opportunities to continue bird surveys and also made a point to go birding in my free time.

Nowadays, birding is one of my favorite hobbies, and I am really looking forward to serving as club President for the next three years. It is going to be a lot of fun!

Happy Birding,
Frank Schroyer

A MURDER OF CROWS?

By Linda Dunn

I have always wondered who decided we can't just say “a flock of birds”. Why is it a “murder of crows” and a “gaggle of geese” etc. ?

These terms emerged in the Middle Ages. They came from the hunting culture. They were popularized by the book: “The Boke of Seynt Albuns” (the Book of Saint Albuns). Also known as “The Book of Hawking Hunting and Blasing of Arms”. Printed in 1486. In

the middle of this book is a long list of terms under the heading “the Compaynys of Beestys and Fowlys”. This book contained an appendix of over 160 collective nouns. The author of this book is Dame Juliana Bernes, a Noble and a Nun.

It became a fashionable trend among the aristocracy to use these terms during hunting and at social events. The practice grew out of the hunting tradition of the Late Middle Ages. These names were called a “venery” from the French word for Hunting. Intended to show off the speaker’s intelligence and distinguish themselves from the common people. Terms of “venery” are collective nouns for groupings of animals of the same species.

Dame Juliana was an English writer on heraldry, hawking and hunting. She was a noblewoman and the prioress of a nunnery: St Mary of Sopwell in Hertfordshire. Additionally she was the author of treatises on field sports such as hunting. Many names were created for a humorous or poetic effect. Other names were descriptive of the animals behaviors such as “cast of hawks” from the act of the cast off from the falconer’s arm. Some names come from folklore and superstition.

So, if you want to impress your fellow birders, learn and use these terms. Distinguish yourself from the common folk.

Species Profile: Sage Thrasher **(*Oreoscoptes montanus*)** *By Frank Schroyer*



Photo from eBird

Meg and I do not often chase birds, but there are usually a few exceptions each year. A Sage Thrasher, typically a bird of the southwest, was reported at Powell Marsh this spring at 6:45am by Mary Murrell on June 2nd. This was a first for Vilas County, so Meg and I decided given the exceptional rarity of the bird, we had to go try to see it. Fortunately, in the afternoon of the same day, after about a mile

walk, the bird flushed ten yards away and perched in a nearby shrub. The bird sat still the whole time we watched it, and though the views were somewhat obscured, it was one of the best (and closest) observations of a rare bird for both of us. The encounter left me feeling inspired to write this profile about the rare visitor.

Sage Thrashers are a common bird in their home range of sagebrush landscapes in the west. They are medium sized, grayish overall, and have some light gray speckling down their chest and flanks. They also have two white wing bars that are barely distinguishable, and a yellow-orange eye. Males, females, and juvenile birds all look incredibly similar. In addition to the non-descript gray plumage, the birds seem to act secretive, making ID in the field somewhat difficult. Outside of a singing male bird, this species prefers to walk more than perch or fly, as it often forages for insects beneath the cover of thick sagebrush.

Despite “Thrasher” being the common name of the bird, this species is the only member of the genus *Oreoscoptes* and is likely to be genetically more closely related to mockingbirds than other thrashers. In fact, they used to be referred to as Mountain Mockingbird. Generally, they are very similar in size and shape to mockingbirds but can be distinguished by several of the above-mentioned plumage characteristics. The song of the Sage Thrasher sounds similar to a Gray Catbird. That said, they are much more long winded and tend to sing faster. One male was recorded singing his song for 22 straight minutes!

These birds, like many songbirds, are in decline, having experienced a population reduction of nearly 50% over the past 50 years. Despite habitat loss, this species seems to be faring much better than other sagebrush-dependent species. The highly sensitive sagebrush steppe makes for excellent ranching land and has unfortunately seen massive declines in acreage over the years.



The obscured view of the Sage Thrasher at Powell Marsh. Photo by Frank Schroyer

As mentioned, the bird found on June 2nd was a first county record for Vilas. This species does seem to exhibit somewhat regular vagrancy to the eastern United States, especially in fall, with a sighting every few years. I wonder if the bird decided to stop its off-course travel at Powell Marsh, given the landscape there is similar in structural composition to sagebrush. Others tried to find the bird over the next few days, but it had apparently moved on. Hopefully another decides to make a visit to Vilas County in the coming years!

Resources:
All About Birds
eBird

In Celebration

by Donna Roche

A celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Discovery Center Bird Club was held in conjunction with the 2025 Annual Meeting on Monday, August 8, 2025

The celebration group photo was taken at the NLDC in front of the Chimney Swift Tower



Photo taken by Licia Kuckkahn Johnson

The Celebration and Annual Meeting included a Potluck Supper that was served in the NLDC Lodge and included a special dessert cake decorated with the club's logo and birds.



Photo (& potluck chairman) by Carne Andrews

DC Bird Club Thursday Outings – July 3, 2025 – September 25, 2025

Recap of Outings with Photos of the Birders!

By Donna Roche

My request for members to suggest and to lead outings was taken up for almost the entire season!! Thank you so much to ALL for creating and leading outings! In ALL cases, the outings were interesting, some new, different, educational, BIRDY and FUN!

And as for our great participants.... at every outing there were nice-sized groups of birders, volunteers who kept the ebird species lists, folks who brought their scopes and cameras, reminded me to take a group photo, helped carry scopes, helped with the route and participated ACTIVELY IN BIRDING!

Once again, I wish to thank John Randolph for being willing and available to send out the weekly announcements and all the other messages that are sent through him to the BC membership. Couldn't do it without you!!!

And, of course, thank you Sarah Besadny for keeping the Club's bird species totals and for taking the effort it takes to publish each issue of the BIRD SONGS newsletter ... Cheers to you!!!

I hope you enjoy reviewing what we accomplished this summer with the places we've been and the birds we've seen!!

All of you are appreciated and HERE YOU ARE:



Recap of July 3, 2025 Star Lake outing: This Recap is written by Sarah B.: On July 3rd, thirteen of us met at Centennial Park on the shore of Star Lake on a sunny and calm morning. Several Eastern Kingbirds were perched at the waters edge giving the photographers in the group some great photo ops and giving the rest of us great looks at this handsome bird. A target bird for this location is the American Black Duck, so it was a joy to spot a female with 7 fairly good-sized ducklings. The American Black Duck is considered "special concern" in Wisconsin. It took a while for the birds to really start singing but once they did, we were able to get great looks at Yellow Warbler, Cedar Waxwing and Purple Finch. At this time of year, there are many signs of successful breeding --the American Black Duck ducklings, American Robins and Red-winged Blackbirds carrying food and in the non-avian arena a young Snowshoe Hare. Thanks to everyone who came out and helped spot the 32 species that were tallied for the morning. Many thanks to Sarah B. for a great outing and keeping the eBird lists. **32 Species**



Recap of July 10, 2025 Pipke Park, Presque Isle Outing: I believe that this location, both with title of Presque Isle Ponds and Pipke Park have been on the DC Bird Club's list of birding destinations since the very first year of the Bird Club! The pond/pools and the surrounding creek, wetlands and woods have provided birders with a rich variety of 'birdlife'. Although there have been changes with ponds more recently that resulted in less ducks, loons and wading birds, it is still a great dependable destination for finding birds. This past Thursday, Debbie W. led a group of 14 DC birders around the ponds and found **29 species of birds**. We enjoyed finding a couple of goose families in the ponds, warblers in the woods and flycatchers heard from the wetlands. Sometimes it seems that we hear the same species in the same places along the route each time we visit! I love that! Thanks, Debbie, for bring us back for another outing at 'The Ponds'. And Thanks to Denise H. for the eBird report.



Recap July 17, 2025 – Bearskin Trail, Nokomis Lake: It was very comfortable weather, after the rains of yesterday, to walk the green, green Bearskin Trail along Nokomis' lakeshore. Several times along the way, a member of our group would spot something that no one else would see that would cause us to spend time examining it. Once was a very well-hidden bird's nest (maybe a redstart), another was a shaggy blue heron, then there was the kingfisher on a buoy (male or female was the question) and lastly was our only monarch butterfly. We all love to search for and study interesting features of nature especially birds of course! Linda D. did a great job leading the group of 11 along the way and making sure we would get ice cream treats at the Windmill Ice Cream Shoppe afterwards! Thanks Linda! And thanks to Debbie S. for keeping the eBird list...

17 Species



Frank couldn't stay for the hike photo, but I found one of him and Meg at Thunder Lake and hope he enjoys remembering a great paddle!

Recap of July 24th: The Paddle Outing to Papoose Lake with Hike option at North Lakeland Trails was almost a total BUST! But, just as the old saying promotes 'making lemonade out of having lemons', a few of our DC Birders made 'a nice birding hike out of the 'WASH-OUT FOR THE PADDLE'! Sincere thanks to Frank S. for being a good sport and dedicated outing planner/leader who SHOWED UP even though the chances of others doing so were slim. After the 8 a.m. start time at the landing, he and I decided to check on the Hike Option trailhead where 3 members were waiting to walk regardless of rain. Since Frank was actually 'working' this day, he went to pursue 'business' and I walked with Linda, Denise and John R. The misty-rain finally stopped, the sun came out a bit and a few species of birds let us either hear from them or as the chickadees did, appear as a family and brighten our day with their activity and songs! Denise H. kept our list of **10 bird species....** Thanks!



Recap of July 31, 2025, at Mead State Wildlife Area led by Dave W. It was almost a perfect day to be at Mead with sunshine, warm temperature, light breezes as we walked along our 3 different hike areas. The birds were active and enjoying the high summer greenery and flowers as we were. The insects weren't a bother to us, but they must be plentiful to keep the warblers, flycatchers and others working the air and on the plants. We were so pleased to find Purple Martins, Black Terns and Indigo Buntings on this trip. Mead usually can be counted on for a goodly number of Double-crested Cormorants, Great Egrets and American White Pelicans.

*They didn't fail to provide them for us this day both on the water and in the air.... Great views! Mead is very large with panoramic vistas, native plants in woods and open fields, plus impounded waterways with dike access. We walked each of these for just a small look at the variety of habitats... Spectacular! Thanks so much to Dave W. for putting this outing together and your birding expertise. Denise kept the species lists with Dave and put 3 lists together in a Trip Report...thank you. **45 Species***



Recap of day trip to Ashland on Thursday, August 4, 2025. This was the 2nd outing to Ashland that Colleen M. volunteered to lead. Thank you so much! She arranged for Tim O. to meet up with us too and that's always great to have them both. We also had 2 guests who added to the fun of the day... Colleen's partner Tom and their foster-dog!!

It was a HOT DAY! I am glad that our caravan of 2 vehicles arrived earlier than I expected and that we got started at 7:45 giving us a FULL MORNING of birding. Three other birders arrived to make our group 12! I'm sure that the birds, like us, kept in the shade as much as possible, so our species numbers may seem less than robust, but it is AUGUST! The Common Terns are still around and our other special birds were a catbird, kingbird and oriole at Bayview Park. There was work being done on the ore dock, so we walked along the bike path to find most of our birds. We were so pleased to find a peregrine right on top one of tall stacks at the Hot Pond. It was a challenge to walk the long part of our usual hike at Prentice, but we made it out to the bridge! We found a great variety of bird types and species at Prentice!

It's a treat to bird Ashland and I was pleased that we had a good-sized group this day. Thanks to all! Thanks to Liz S. for helping me by doing 2 of the lists.

Approx 33 species



Recap of August 14, 2025: It was hardly the mid-summer morning of dreams at Powell Marsh Vista at 8! It was cloudy and foggy with a stiff breeze when 11 DC birders gathered in the parking area. However, even before all the group arrived a Great Egret flew almost over us and was lost in the grayness as it continued to the south. It was our only, but very welcome, view of the species we had hoped to find! The swan family with 3 cygnets was another species that we could see and found right away. We moved along the dike path stopping to watch a Northern Harrier's pursuit of something that caused large splashes beyond an island of reeds. We counted it but never found out the fate of prey. Turning the other direction, someone spotted a bittern in its hiding pose. It held that pose and all of us got a great view. This was a high point in bird excitement for our day, but we continued to find birds one by one and added numbers of species to our list. As you will see from our list, there was raven and crow activity, more swans and several turkey vultures, grebes and ducks and another bittern. We were also pleased with the one Black Tern, one warbler, one catbird and one crane! Thank you, Liz S. and Denise H, for keeping eBird lists. **26 species.**



Recap of August 15, 2024 - Saxon, Iron County, area. Seven BC folks started out from Mercer in 2 cars. It was very foggy there, but it cleared up very nicely by the time we made our first stop at Giles Flowage along Knight Rd. No white bird (Great Egret) for us this morning, but when was the last time you saw 6 loons in one place. We had 2 adults, 2 young and 2 fly-overs! From here we moved to Lake Head Road, Wall & Niemi Roads and the spill way lake at a Xcel Energy site. Along these roads we saw most of the birds listed below. For instance, it was so nice to see the bluebirds in an apple orchard and the turkeys in heavy grass area. We worked very hard to ID the accipiter that moved around to a couple of faraway perches, but no clear views. We did get a great show with 3 Sandhill Cranes who we heard having a 'ruckus' in the distance. Shortly after, they brought their 'ruckus' to us by flying into the yard of the residence at the end of Wall Street. We watched them for quite a while, prancing around and flying off to return shortly after. What beautiful, stately birds! We decided that the 3rd bird was an interloper to the pair. Hope all was ok and no blood spilt... Then on to Saxon Harbor which

although quiet, is always interesting with gulls and other birds. Although this was a morning outing and a drive, it is different birding than places nearby our home area and I think well worth the time and effort to check out. I hope that Carne will take the lead for it, again next year!! Thanks Denise for keeping the eBird lists and combining the list.. the 23 species, etc.



Recap of August 28, 2025 outing in Winchester: A big thank you to Denise H. for bringing us back to a location that she introduced us to last year. Bruette Road is an interesting mix of large woods, wetlands, logged areas, along a creek and a deteriorating homestead with old house and car. The birding started slowly, but as is often the case, it picked up in a 'hot spot' that kept our attention for quite a long time. In this case, it seemed to be the remnants on the edge of a newly cut area... tall, single, almost dead pine/tamarack and birch trees with occasional full deciduous trees. This was where we found the most birds and ones that we enjoyed finding... waxwings, redstart, grosbeak, etc. The day warmed up and was nicely sunny. We moved to the Winchester Library and residential area and walked around a couple of blocks. We found some of the same species we had along Bruette Road plus a sapsucker which made our total of woodpecker species '5'! Denise and Liz S. kept the eBird lists. Thanks! **Total of 18 Species**



Recap Minocqua Evening Birding, September 4, 2025: Regardless of forecasted rain, eight birders met at the appointed parking area on a very cool, windy evening to see what birds were around in 'downtown' Minocqua. We didn't spend much time eating our picnic style suppers before starting our walk around the area. Our focus was up into the sky for nighthawks and/or swifts, but what we found were gulls and a nice small 'V' of geese. As we walked along the trestle bridge, we saw a couple of loons and heard a crane farther down the Bearskin Trail. We were able to walk around some of the business and residential streets for about 45 minutes before it started to drizzle. During that time, we found a blue heron, robins and crows. The rain got a little

harder just as we discovered a nice bird feeder setup with an assortment of chickadees and different finches. So, we were content to call it a wrap and hurry back to our cars. I think 13 species of birds (not including the eagle sighted at 4:45) was a good total for our dedicated group! Donna's **eBird list is 13 Species**



Recap for Star Lake September Outing written by Sarah Besadny: On Thursday, September 11th 2025, 12 people birded the Start Lake West area. The morning was calm and dry but very overcast. Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Ring-billed Gulls were plentiful. It was nice to see 4 American Black Ducks, likely some of the family we saw when we were at Star Lake earlier this summer. The warbler variety was low (not even a Yellow-rump!) but everyone had good looks at a Black-throated Green Warbler. We spotted two flycatchers thinking at first they were Eastern Phoebes but studying the silhouettes against the gray sky, it was clear that the tail was too short... and never bobbed. These two birds were Eastern Wood-pewees. Thank you to everyone who came out to bird – more eyes and ears and discussion about what we're seeing means more chances of seeing, hearing and properly IDing the birds. Thanks you Sarah for volunteering to lead this great outing, for writing up the recap AND for keeping the **eBird list... 19 species.**



Jon Cassady is catching up with group on the right.

Recap of September 18th outing to Rainbow Flowage area: We started our outing of Rainbow Flowage as we often do, with a meet-up at the bridge over the Wisconsin River on County 'O' Road. Here we walk on the snowmobile bridge and get to see a nice view up and down stream. This day our first view showed a nice group

of Hood Mergansers, a female Belted Kingfisher and a surprise of one Common Nighthawk. From here, we headed to Oxbow Road and stopped along the way at an area that had been cleared a couple of years ago and now had vegetation that was maybe 4' tall that we could see over and to tall trees beyond. The hope was to find some migrating birds... we found one Palm Warbler and a few other birds. It's hard to say if the road grading equipment kept other birds hidden away as we followed it to the end of Oxbow, but it was there! We parked our cars at the end and a couple of sharp-eyed birders saw a Peregrine Falcon fly out! We walked along the high shoreline to where there is usually a thin spit of land that often has interesting waterfowl. We found very little of big interest and it started to pick up with the drizzle so we called it a day. Yes, a bit disappointing... but, as always we were glad to be out birding and enjoyed it!! Thanks to Dave W. for leading the hike and Debbie S. for keeping eBird lists of a total of **17 Species**



Recap of September 25th outing in the Statenaker Lake area in Lac du Flambeau led by Dave W. There were 13 birders who came out to find birds on the last Thursday in Sept. They were rewarded with a crisp, cool and sunny morning that was very nice but not as birdy as we all hoped. Although Dave had a rare bird and groups of migrating warblers yesterday, they weren't to be found on this day. We did find many of our local species, jays, ravens, 4 species of woodpeckers and nuthatches, as the day warmed up and later we moved to another nearby location. We hoped that when the chickadees came around, they would be accompanied by migrants. But they were on their own. So, what does our birding group do when the birding is slow? We enjoy what nature provides in the area. Photos were taken of red-berried shrubs and asters plus beautiful displays of dew-laden spiderwebs. Thank you, Dave, for leading us here, both in the spring and now in fall. Let's do it again!
Debbie S. kept an eBird list of 10 bird species.

There are FIVE more Thursday outings to finish the 2025 birding season... and to be featured in the next issue of BIRD SONGS.....

October 2- Thunder Lake
October 9 - Ashland area
October 16 - Wausau
October 23 - TBA
October 30 - Powell Marsh.

HAPPY BIRDING!

Life List Quarterly: Third Quarter 2025

by Sarah Besadny

Continuing our celebration and reflection on the past 20 years of the Discovery Center Bird Club, I have been publishing the birds first spotted by the Club in 5-year increments. The March issue of the newsletter included highlights of some of the many species reported by the Club in it's first 5 years of existence: 2004 and 2008 (206 total species). The June issue covered 2009 – 2013 (54 species). This issue includes the bird species added to the Club's Life List during the 2014 – 2018 time period (13 more species). As you would guess, the list of new species has become smaller and smaller over time. It's hard to find new species of birds, especially if the same general areas are covered. But covering the same general areas is so rewarding. There might be the anticipation of seeing a "probable" species such as the American Bittern at Powell Marsh and feeling joy when it is seen. Additionally, we can learn so much about bird behavior and also fine tune our ID skills by seeing the same species of bird frequently and also in various habitats. There's a black bird in the sky, it's soaring (eliminates American Crow) and doesn't hold it's wings in a dihedral (eliminates Turkey Vulture) and you land on a probable ID of Common Raven. Upon further view you see that wedge-shaped tail and confirm your ID. Or you spot a striped sparrow at the edge of a wooded lake. You know that both Savannah and Vesper Sparrows are striped but they prefer open, grassy or marshy areas. Then you hear it's song, a few short notes followed by a long trill and another shorter note. You confirm your ID of the Song Sparrow. And then of course, when we travel to a familiar location and there just happens to be a rare bird there on that day -- how fun! So, no matter where the Bird Club heads to on a Thursday outing, there is joy in seeing each species, opportunity to learn more about the birds we're seeing and always the possibility of adding a new species to the Club's Life List.

Here are the 13 species that were added to the Club's Life List from 2014 through 2018. Note, two of them were hybrids.

Black Vulture	5/31/14
Grasshopper Sparrow	5/31/14
Spruce Grouse	8/28/14
White-winged Scoter	10/23/14
Short-billed Dowitcher	5/22/15
Lark Sparrow	7/16/15
Red-necked Phalarope	8/19/16
<i>Ross's x Snow Goose</i>	10/6/16
Northern Mockingbird	5/13/17
<i>Golden-winged x Blue-winged Warbler</i>	5/22/17
Black-billed Magpie	1/18/18
Willet	7/12/18
Black Scoter	10/4/18

Photo Journal

Photos and Captions by Mark Westphal



A late summer Ruby-throated Hummingbird sampled the nectar of Orange Butterfly Weed in a pollinator garden



A rare summer visitor to my feeder, this Evening Grosbeak along with two others dined on sunflower seeds for several days until they traveled on



*This Indigo Bunting sang
from its perch in a restored
prairie at the Mead Wildlife
area*



*Ring-billed Gulls
gather at a Star Lake
dock*



While this photo does not capture the entire bird, the gentle light brings out the texture and subtle colors of feathers that help create the essence of a Trumpeter Swan