



The Chat

Lakeland Audubon Society

February, 2020

lakelandaudubon.com

February 25 Program

Ecological Responses to Climate Change: Lessons from the Past
Dr. John Williams, UW-Madison

How do species adapt to changing climates and how can we help them? Some of our best examples come from the end of the last ice age, when the world warmed by 5-10F. Here I'll review how we study past climates and ecosystems, what we've learned, and insights for today.

John (Jack) Williams is Professor in Geography and a faculty affiliate with the Center for Climatic Research. Dr. Williams research focuses on the responses of plant species and communities to past and future climate change. Research themes include novel climates and ecosystems, the causes and consequences of the wave of species extinctions at the end of the last ice age, and the communities and climates of the last deglaciation as a model system for understanding 21st-century climate change. Awards include the Cooper Award from the Ecological Society of America, the Phil Certain Distinguished Faculty Award and a Romnes Fellowship from UW-Madison, a Bullard Fellowship from Harvard University, an Aldo Leopold Leadership Fellowship from the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, and an Institute for Advanced Study Fellowship from Durham University.

This program is scheduled on Tuesday February 25 at 7 pm at the Lions Field House in Williams Bay and is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served before and after the meeting.



Directions

The Lions Field House is located 0.4 miles north of Geneva Street in Williams Bay on Highway 67. Turn on Stark Road on the west side of Highway 67, across from Kishwauketo Nature Conservancy. Turn right at the next intersection to go to the parking lot.

Left: Photo sent by Dr. John Williams

Upcoming Programs – Mark your Calendars!

March 24 , 2020: Jennifer Kuroda - *Bobcat "The Native Cat"*

April 28, 2020: Michael Edmonds - *"Taking Flight"*



The Great Backyard Bird Count!

Friday, February 14 - Monday, February 17

Counting is Caring: Join the Great Backyard Bird Count

Around the world, people are helping birds by counting them for science.

For release by the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)

New York, NY, Ithaca, NY, and Port Rowan, ON — Show the wild birds some love by taking part in the 23rd Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). This year's count begins on Valentine's Day, Friday, February 14, and continues through Monday, February 17. Volunteers from around the world count the birds they see for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, and then enter their checklists at gbbc.birdcount.org/.

There is no better time to get involved because we are facing a bird emergency. In a study published by the journal [Science](#) last fall, scientists revealed a decline of more than one in four birds in the United States and Canada since 1970 — **3 billion birds gone**. In addition to these steep declines, Audubon scientists projected a grim future for birds in [Survival By Degrees](#), a report showing nearly two-thirds of North America's bird species could disappear due to climate change. Birds from around the world are facing similar challenges and declines. Counting birds for science is one simple action that individuals can take to protect birds and the places where they live.

"In order to understand where birds are and how their numbers are changing, we need everybody's help," says the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Marshall Iliff, a leader of the [eBird program](#) which collects the GBBC data. "Without this information, scientists will not have enough data to show where birds are declining."

With more than 10,000 species in the world, it means all hands on deck to monitor birds found in backyards and neighborhoods as well as in suburban parks, wild areas, and cities.

"Birds are important because they're excellent indicators of the health of our ecosystems. Participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count is one of the easiest and best ways to help scientists understand how our changing climate may be affecting the world's birdlife," says Chad Wilsey, interim Chief Scientist for National Audubon Society. "All over the world people are paying more attention to our environment and how it's changing. There's a lot of bad news out there, but in just 15 minutes you can be part of a global solution to the crises birds and people are facing."

To learn more about how to take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, visit birdcount.org.

Warbler Vocalizations (Part 1)

By Wayne Rohde

Within just a few weeks, spring migration will begin. And during the first half of May, warbler migration will kick into high gear. The question posed by the arrival of three dozen species of wood warblers in southern Wisconsin is, "How can we tell so many species from one another?" And the answer, in part, entails learning to identify these colorful beauties by their songs. Accordingly, I'd like to spend the next few monthly articles of *The Chat* encouraging and assisting readers in the task --the happy task-- of birding by ear. To make this task more manageable, we'll (1) consider various types of songs (buzzes, trills, whistles, etc.); and (2) recall various features of songs (pitch, tempo, volume, etc.). In addition, so as to make our task less daunting, we'll (1) learn just a few species each month; (2) group species which sound alike; and (3) remind ourselves that in many cases birding by ear can actually help us distinguish one warbler from the next.

Louisiana and Northern Waterthrushes, which somewhat resemble thrushes with their drab brownish feathers, can be notoriously difficult to separate by sight alone. Their behavior and habitat differ somewhat, but their respective songs are radically different and thus definitive. The Louisiana's song begins with a set of clear, loud, double-noted and descending whistles. By contrast, the Northern's song, though also loud, is an emphatic set of unmusical chatters which abruptly drop off in pitch at the end. When we identify birds by sight, some species are readily told by their familiarity (e.g., crows, robins, sparrows). The same is true for birding by ear: think of the *teacher, teacher, teacher* notes of an Ovenbird, or the *witchety, witchety, witchety* chattering of a Common Yellowthroat, or the *zee, zee, zee, zoo, zeeee* (alternately: *zoooo, zeeee, zoo, zoo, zeeee*) buzzes of a Black-throated Green Warbler. As a birder becomes familiar with more and more of these common species, there are less and less warbler vocalizations to learn!

Furthermore, when we identify birds by sight, some species are easily told by their distinctiveness (e.g., pelicans, kingfishers, hummingbirds). This phenomenon is also true for birding by ear: think of the comedic mockingbird-like chatters and clucks and gurgles and hoots and mews and rattles and squeaks and squawks and whistles of a Yellow-breasted Chat, which doesn't sound like any other warbler. The sputtered song of a Connecticut Warbler is also in a class by itself. Recognizing more of these distinctive songs means less songs of other warblers to learn. Of course none of these verbal attempts to describe the music of the birds make much sense if one does not hear a bird for one's self: it's nigh-well impossible to successfully communicate how birds sound by mere words – even when using mnemonics. But, thankfully, very good recordings of warbler vocalizations are available. I highly recommend accessing these on-line at The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology website. Click on the songs of each species, comparing and contrasting them to hear the above similarities and differences.

This, the opening article in the series, has been designed to simply whet your appetite. If you are as eager to see and hear and enjoy the warblers which will be with us in but a few, short months as I am, stay tuned. Bit by bit, month by month, we'll gear up for the main show ... and move (conquer?) the massive mountain of warbler vocalizations one spoonful (step?) at a time!



Yellow-rumped Warbler
Photo by Wayne Rohde

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2020 Geneva Lake - Eagle Watching Days

February 22-23

Join members of our chapter along the shore of Geneva Lake for some Bald Eagle viewing on February 22nd and the 23rd from 9:00 a.m. – Noon. We will be setup in two separate locations:

Fontana Beach – S Lake Shore Drive, Fontana, WI

Edgewater Park – E Geneva Street, Williams Bay, WI

Exact locations may vary depending on ice conditions on the lake at the time of the event. For more information, please contact:
Kevin Dickey – email or call 1 (262) 729-9702



Photo by Dr. John Williams

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