

LAKELAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



# ***The Chat***



**November 2025**

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## **CHAPTER MEETING**

Tuesday, November 25

7:00 PM

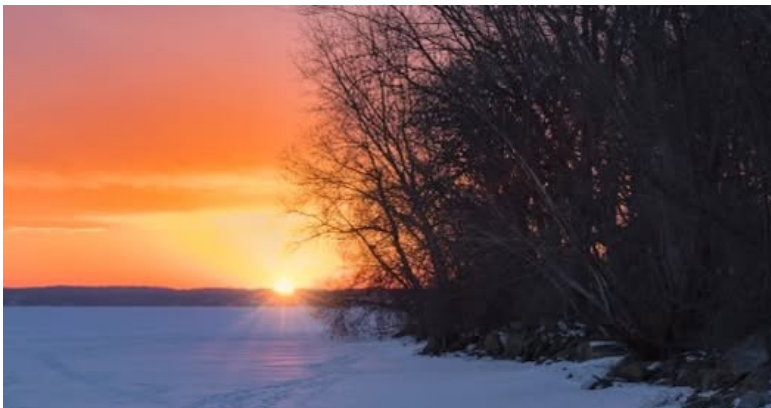
Lions Field House - 270 Elkhorn Road (Hwy 67), Williams Bay, WI

Free and open to the public!

Featuring the following Badger Talks event:

### ***"Lake Responses to Wisconsin's Changing Winters"***

By Zach Feiner



*A winter sunset. Photo courtesy of Badger Talks.*

This talk discusses how winters are changing in Wisconsin due to climate change, and how reduced or lost ice cover on our lakes impacts how they function and provide habitat to the plankton, fish, and other animals that live in our lakes.



### **About the Speaker**

Dr. Zach Feiner is a fisheries ecologist who studies fish populations in inland lakes, rivers, and the Great Lakes across the Upper Midwest. His research focuses on the dynamics and management of recreational fisheries, including who fishes, what they fish for, and how they value fishing, and how climate change is affecting our lakes, including the fish populations and communities that live in them.



*Dr. Zach Feiner.*

*Photo courtesy of Badger Talks.*

# Winter Birding & Environmental Factors

By Wayne Rohde

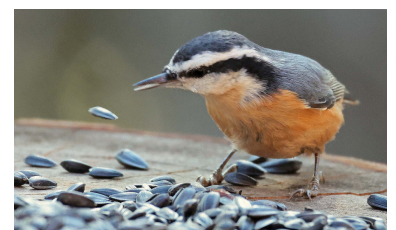
Color-coded maps, such as those in “Birds of Minnesota and Wisconsin” by Robert Janssen, Daryl Tessen and Gregory Kennedy, enable birders to see --at a glance--which birds will remain in our area during the winter (via purple), as well as which ones will migrate south into our area for the winter (via blue). Among the songbirds, for example, Black-capped Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches are permanent residents, whereas Red-breasted Nuthatches and American Tree Sparrows head south to southern Wisconsin, replacing our summer House Wrens and Chipping Sparrows. But there are exceptions to the rule, especially among species which have a northern limit to their winter range located near the Wisconsin/Illinois border. Thus, even though the vast majority of our flycatchers, vireos and warblers have already migrated to the Gulf States or Central America or even farther south, a few individuals may very well show up in our yards during winter, such as Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrushes, American Robins, Eastern Bluebirds, and Yellow-rumped Warblers. So it pays to keep one's feeders stocked, one's eyes open, and one's camera near.

Weather, along with its impact on food sources, also plays a role in which birds show up. Depending on the availability of rodents in the far North, Snowy and Great Gray Owls may occasionally reach south to our area in winter, and for much the same reason the abundance or scarcity of the pine cone seed crop in the Northwoods affects the overall population and nomadic wanderings of the so-called winter finches, such as Red- and White-winged Crossbills, Pine Siskins and Purple Finches. Irruption years, when these species make an appearance in our area, are exciting ones for birders. Furthermore, lakes and rivers, which may be open one winter but iced over the next, can be either hospitable or inhospitable to waterfowl and raptors. Who among us has not noticed that bodies of water which may be loaded with swans, geese and ducks one year may lack them another year? Likewise, when lakes and rivers are open, Bald Eagles may perch in trees along shorelines, periodically taking flight to skim low over frigid waters to capture fish. But when the same lakes and rivers are frozen, these raptors must move farther south in search of prey.

By way of contrast, inclement weather provides opportunities to see several additional species. When snow blankets the ground, many more birds are attracted to and concentrated at our feeders. A heavy snowfall may also bring birds such as Horned Larks, Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs to the shoulders of country roads to pick at the grit and seeds uncovered by snow plows. In this case the benefit is also ours, because it affords closer views of these normally rather shy and skittish birds. On the other hand, severe winters tend to reduce the number of Bobwhites, Tufted Titmice and Carolina Wrens.

Reports of changes in the mix of species observed in any local area from one winter to the next are often anecdotal, and such variations may seem to occur with little or no apparent rhyme or reason. Yet, the number of birds present in a particular geographical region is increasingly recognized to correlate with the larger phenomenon of global warming known as climate change. Long-term studies have demonstrated significant northward shifts in the ranges inhabited by several species, such as Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Northern Cardinals, and Evening Grosbeaks. In this regard, extrapolation of the data amassed through the decades makes us wonder which additional species may extend their winter ranges farther north due to climate change. If such logic is valid, we may eventually see some species in winter which we don't now (i.e., those which currently winter south of us); conversely, we may no longer see other species which we do now (i.e., those which may no longer winter as far south in the future as they do currently). Most unfortunately, for the birds themselves, climate change has already resulted in rising sea levels, and with it significant habitat loss of wetlands, grasslands, and woodlands, causing bird populations to plummet for lack of adequate and suitable feeding and nesting territory.

When all is said and done, winter is a great season for birding. We don't see nearly as many birds as we do during the nesting or migratory seasons, and we aren't treated to the wonder of bird song at this time of year. But winter allows us to see many birds which we don't encounter at other times of the calendar year. Putting out a varied supply of seed and suet also draws birds in for a closer look, providing the opportunity for us to witness an array of interesting behaviors. So bundle up, when the cold winds blow, and keep on birding! And don't forget to record and report what you observe. For citizen science yields useful data regarding avian populations and range shifts. Such information is, in turn, a helpful tool in the quest to slow the pace of deleterious climate change and to preserve essential habitat for the birds ... indeed, for life itself.



*Red-breasted Nuthatch, feeding on Black oil Sunflower Seed.  
Photo by Wayne Rohde.*

# Tango with Terms

By Janice Bain

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You’ve probably heard a gaggle of geese in reference to a group of geese. If that same group were flying, they would be referred to as a “skein” or “wedge” of geese. Groups of cardinals can be referenced using any of the following: “college,” “conclave,” or “deck.” Sometimes it is easy to see the connection between the collective term and the species of birds and other times not. “Conclave” makes sense because cardinals in the Catholic church wear red robes and pointy hats. In unison, the birds are bright red and sport a pointy crest. How, one may wonder, did a group of cormorants come to be called a “gulp”? While this connection is less obvious, it is thought that the term refers to the way the bird “gulps” down their food. Most of the collective nouns we use date back to the mid 15th century!

The list below is far from comprehensive but provides some of the most common labels. Use it to enhance your bird lexicon, then slip it into conversation with your friends. Ask them if they saw that “sedge” of sandhill cranes hanging in the field or maybe the “murmuration” of starlings that passed over the city.

## **Bird Species**

Bobolinks  
Brown Creepers  
Cardinals  
Chickadees  
Coots  
Cormorants  
Crows  
Cuckoos  
Ducks  
Eagles  
Finches  
Flamingos  
Geese  
Grackles  
Grouse  
Hummingbirds  
Hawks  
Hérons  
Ibises, gulls  
Jays  
Kingfishers  
Knots  
Lapwings  
Larks  
Magpies  
Nuthatches  
Owls  
Peacocks  
Pelicans

## **Collective Terms**

Chain  
Sleeze, spiral  
Conclave, college, deck  
Banditry  
Covert, commotion  
Gulp  
Murder, congress, horde  
Asylum  
Paddling or raft on water, sort (on land), team (in flight)  
Convocation, aerie, soar, salute  
Charm, trembling  
Flamboyance, stand  
Skein, team (in flight), gaggle (on ground)  
Plague  
Covey, pack  
Charm (recently found in NYTimes Connections game)  
Cast, kettle, lease (on land), boil (in flight)  
Siege, glean, sedge  
Colony  
Party, band, scold  
Crown, concentration  
Cluster  
Deceit, desert  
Bevy, exultation  
Tiding, gulp, charm, congregation, murder, tittering  
Booby, jar  
Parliament, glaring, wisdom  
Muster, ostentation  
Squadron, scoop, pod

## Bird Species

Penguins  
Pheasants  
Pigeons  
Quails  
Ravens  
Robins  
Sandhill cranes  
Sandpipers and Dunlins  
Snipes  
Sparrows  
Storks  
Swans  
Swifts  
Turkeys  
Woodcocks  
Woodpeckers  
Wrens

## Collective Terms

Waddle (on land), raft (at sea), colony, rookery (breeding)  
Bouquet, nye, nide  
Kit  
Bevy, covey, drift  
Congress, unkindness, constable  
Blush, worm (for feeding habits), round (for winter flocks)  
Sedge  
Fling  
Wisp  
Quarrel  
Mustering, Phalanx (in migration)  
Bevy, bank (on ground), wedge (in flight)  
Flock, scream  
Rafter, muster, gang  
Fall  
Descent, drumming  
Herd, chime

### Sources:

- Collective nouns for birds: Why we call it a murder of crows, murmuration of starlings and a conspiracy of ravens by Paula Minchin. Published Aug 10, 2023
- [https://backyardchirper.com/blog/collective-nouns-for-groups-of-various-birds/?srsltid=AfmBOoq\\_T4qA2uAiFoM-ct4hw6i3KCIPWUhLJMp8c04AJH9MSTfDuwlb](https://backyardchirper.com/blog/collective-nouns-for-groups-of-various-birds/?srsltid=AfmBOoq_T4qA2uAiFoM-ct4hw6i3KCIPWUhLJMp8c04AJH9MSTfDuwlb)
- [Group Names for Birds: A Partial List](#)
- [The Names of Bird Groups](#)
- [What is a Group of Cardinals Called? \(Complete List + Why\) | Birdfact](#)



[www.sossaveoursongbirds.org](http://www.sossaveoursongbirds.org)

## Winter finches are arriving!

This is what we love about bird-watching in Wisconsin: no sooner does the parade of warblers, blackbirds, thrushes and other favorites flying south end than “winter finches” start arriving from Canada to brighten our shorter, colder fall days!” Evening Grosbeaks are stealing the show!” says Ryan Brady, DNR conservation biologist and bird expert.

“They’re visiting feeders throughout all but southwestern Wisconsin and are especially turning up in the north woods.” Every year, Ryan and other bird lovers in the eastern U.S. eagerly wait to see what nomadic visitors from the boreal forest show up, and how closely those movements match the Winter Finch Forecast from the Finch Research Network. That group uses on-the-ground observations of fruit and cone crops in Canada to determine the movement patterns of birds during winter. As crops vary annually, so do the densities of the birds that eat them. When crops are plentiful, the finches stay put. When crops are poor, birds move in search of food, sometimes bringing them to Wisconsin. This year, the crops are poor, and Wisconsinites are beginning to see many of these northern songbirds show up, Ryan says.

“Redpolls are coming! A few have been seen across many areas of the state now, with some large flocks up north. But don’t expect many at feeders until the second half of winter, when natural food supplies dwindle.” He counted nearly 2,000 “winter finches” in 3 hours on Nov. 7 along Wisconsin’s south shore of Lake Superior, including 1,417 Redpolls! Pine Grosbeaks, Bohemian Waxwings, and White-winged Crossbills are moving into the north woods in modest numbers, better than forecast, Ryan says. “Bottom line? It should be a good year for many of the “winter finches” across a good bit of Wisconsin, and especially up north.” Read the [Winter Finch Forecast 2025-26](#).



*Purple Finch by Deborah Bifulco.*

## Join the 37th Season of Project FeederWatch

*Monitor the birds in your space—and other winter wildlife*

Ithaca, NY—The prime directive for [Project FeederWatch](#) has been and continues to be gathering data about how bird populations and distributions are changing across the United States and Canada—vital information for conservation. For the 37th season of this project, participants can enter some brand-new kinds of data—and finally get a chance to tell tales about squirrels, deer, raccoons, bears, or other mammals they see at their count sites in winter—in addition to the birds.

**The FeederWatch season takes place November 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024.**

In addition to the mammal sightings, FeederWatch is also asking for reports of sick birds and for information about how watching birds impacts people's sense of well-being.

"We are trying to accomplish several things with these new data," said the Cornell Lab's project leader Emma Greig. "How do feeder cleaning methods impact the number of sick birds at people's feeders? If participants see sick birds, how does that change what people do next? We are also trying to understand if seeing squirrels, deer, or other mammals affects human behavior or changes the way people feel about offering supplementary food to birds."

FeederWatchers make periodic two-day counts at their designated watch site(s) from November through April, spending as much or as little time as they wish. Even counting birds once or twice all season has value. No feeder necessary, either. If special plantings or a water feature are part of the count site, birds attracted to these items can also be reported to FeederWatch.

"FeederWatch has been used for so many bird population and behavior studies over the years," said Greig. "Recently, data from FeederWatchers are also helping scientists understand large scale climate fluctuations across the continent and the impact climate change is having on birds."

Project FeederWatch is a joint research and education project of the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) and [Birds Canada](#). Sign up or renew online to join the record-high contingent of FeederWatch participants from both the United State and Canada at [FeederWatch.org](#). The participation fee is \$18 in the U.S. or a donation of any amount in Canada.



# Create a Brush & Log Pile Habitat

(U.S. Native Edition)

Goldenrod  
(Solidago spp.) –  
late-season nectar  
for bees &  
butterflies.

Joe-Pye Weed  
tall blooms  
for Monarchs &  
pollinators.

Hollow gaps –  
safe havens  
for  
overwintering  
insects.

Native Ferns –  
ground cover for  
toads, turtles,  
and shade  
insects.

Decaying wood –  
attracts beetles,  
fungi, and grubs  
(food for birds).

Stacked logs &  
branches –  
shelter for  
amphibians,  
reptiles, and  
small mammals.



Helpful Links: <https://www.audubon.org/news/build-brush-pile-birds>  
<https://www.fws.gov/story/2023-05/brush-piles-safe-space-wildlife>  
<https://choosenatives.org/articles/brush-pile-build-wild-friends/>



# Christmas Bird Count

The annual event is right around the corner

By Kyle Cudworth

The Christmas Bird Count is a day, or a few hours, of birding, keeping careful track of the numbers of birds of which species, all with a purpose beyond just the enjoyment of birding. From a researcher's perspective, it is the longest-running Citizen Science survey in the world. Counts are done in well-defined 15-mile diameter circles, of which there are now over 2000. Wisconsin probably has the richest and most in-depth Audubon count data of any place in the world.

All birders are welcome to participate, and we especially encourage those who haven't done so before to join the effort. You don't have to be a candidate for best birder in the county. If you know the common birds of the area in this season and can use your guidebook (and binoculars or a spotting scope) to identify others, you can help.

On Sunday, Dec. 21, 2025, local birders will have their opportunity. Our Lake Geneva circle is centered at the Ridge Hotel on Highway 50, near the southwest end of Lake Como. We divide the circle into several zones, and typically one or two birders cover each zone by car and hiking, with a few of us hiking small areas. Those who live within the count circle are also encouraged to participate by watching feeders in their yards. Our count will be coordinated by Lisa Granbur, with data compiled afterwards by Kyle Cudworth.

Besides the birds we see frequently, some interesting ones usually turn up. We always have plenty of Canada Geese, but sometimes less common geese will be found among the large flocks if one looks carefully enough. Recent predictions are that we may have many winter finches coming south this year for us to count.

Those interested or possibly interested in joining the count should contact Lisa Granbur (email: [egretta503@gmail.com](mailto:egretta503@gmail.com) or cell: 312-354-0199). At 5:30 at the end of the count day we will gather at the Lions Field House in Williams Bay (our usual meeting place) for food, conversation, and turning in our count forms. Count data can also be sent to me, Kyle, at my university email address [k-cudworth@uchicago.edu](mailto:k-cudworth@uchicago.edu).

I can also answer some questions, but Lisa will coordinate who counts which area.

# Field Trip

Tuesday, December 16, 2025

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM (Noon)

Burlington School Forest – 2175 312 Ave/S English Settlement Ave (Highway J), Burlington, WI

Free and open to the public!

Join us as we visit the Burlington School Forest. We will hike the numerous trails throughout the property. The focus will be on finding winter finches and resident songbirds. The terrain can be somewhat hilly and uneven, so please wear boots or shoes that are appropriate. Hiking poles are recommended. Meet in the parking area (off of Highway J) before 9:00 AM. Learn more about the property by clicking/tapping the link below.

<https://awealthofnature.org/parks/burlington-school-forest/>

Please contact us and let us know if you are interested in attending this field trip.

<https://lakelandaudubon.com/contact> Call or Text: +1 (262) 729-9702

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(Volunteer Needed)

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## Bird Walks

### **Saturdays**

11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Big Foot Beach State Park

N1550 S Lakeshore Drive, Lake Geneva, WI

Meet in the main parking area to the right of the entrance station a little before 11:00 AM. A state park sticker (\$28, \$13 if age 65 or older) or daily pass (\$8, \$3 if age 65 or older) is required to enter Big Foot Beach State Park.

### **Sundays**

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

White River County Park

6503 Sheridan Springs Road, Lyons, WI

Get out and enjoy one of the best parks Walworth County has to offer. We'll walk the trails and be on the lookout for birds and other critters. We'll also watch for plant blooms and other interesting elements of nature. Meet at the kiosk by the parking lot a little before 11:00 AM.

Please contact us and let us know that you are interested in attending a walk.

<https://lakelandaudubon.com/contact>

Call or Text: +1 (262) 729-9702

**The Chat** is the newsletter of the Lakeland Audubon Chapter of the National Audubon Society, P.O. Box 473, Elkhorn, WI 53121. Subscription is \$15 per year for printed copies sent by US mail.