



News Release Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest

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Nicolet Bird Survey Celebrates 20th Anniversary June 9-11

Park Falls and Rhinelander, WI – May 18, 2006 – This year marks a very special occasion – the 20th Anniversary of the Nicolet National Forest Bird Survey the weekend of June 9 – 11. Headquarters is located at Camp Nicolet on Franklin Lake, approximately 12 miles east of Eagle River in Vilas County.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for birders to participate in ‘citizen science’ and provide information that is used to manage this forest,” said Anne Archie, Chequamegon-Nicolet Forest Supervisor, and herself an expert birder.



The Nicolet Bird Survey is the longest continuous volunteer monitoring program in the National Forest System. To celebrate the 20th anniversary distinguished guest Chris Wood from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology will present a program on *eBird*, a new web-based network for birders around the world. Among its many features, *eBird* contains site localities and data from the previous Nicolet National Forest Bird Surveys.

In addition to Wood’s presentation and the usual contests and recognition ceremonies, the program will include the dedication of three *Important Bird Areas* (IBA) within the national forest. The IBA program (www.wisconsinbirds.org/iba) is part of an international effort to identify important habitats for

conservation of birds. Information from the Nicolet National Forest Bird Survey was instrumental in nominating and documenting the importance of these three areas. UW-Green Bay Professor Bob Howe who started the survey in 1987 will present an illustrated history of the Bird Survey, along with Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest Ecologist Linda Parker.

According to Howe, 45 species on the Nicolet land base are declining significantly compared with only seven species that are increasing significantly. Declining species include neotropical migrants, short-distance migrants, permanent residents, forest interior species, wetland species, early successional species, old-growth forest species, and birds of open country.

“Continued monitoring will help determine whether these trends reflect temporary declines in bird numbers or whether they represent widespread and ongoing deterioration of environmental conditions, so a single explanation for the declines is unlikely,” Howe said.

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"However, consensus is emerging that northern forests are globally important breeding areas for a high diversity of bird species," Howe added.

The Nicolet bird survey draws up to 100 birders and volunteers from all over Wisconsin and the upper Midwest. What started as a birding adventure in the north for the Northeastern Wisconsin Chapter of the Audubon Society has since turned into an annual event with worldwide significance.

Each field survey group consists of one expert birder, a time keeper, a compass person and a recorder. All teams will have a GPS receiver for use during the surveys. More than 150 sites representing major habitat types will be visited in the national forest, in addition to other sites that are either prospective Important Bird Areas or likely habitats for rare species.



These hearty volunteers rise before the birds so they can get to the first survey sites before sunrise. By sunrise most of the birding groups have already done one of the five or six sites assigned to them. As a result of this effort the

Nicolet National Forest has learned much concerning what bird species occur here, their abundance and their habitat preferences. The survey is the basis for several university level studies on birds that have added to the Forest's knowledge of productivity and the effects of forest management practices. This information is important for both implementation of the current Forest Plan and for the next round of planning.

For more information contact Bob Howe by phone at 920-465-2272 or email at hower@uwgb.edu) or Mike Peczynski at 715-479-2827. Participants don't have to be an expert to participate in the NNF Bird Survey. Everyone can play a role as a timekeeper, data recorder, or extra listener. One of the best things about this event is the opportunity for participants to improve birding skills, leading to the development of a growing number of field "experts," Howe said.

Visit the NNF Bird Survey web site at: www.uwgb.edu/birds/nnf.

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