

# Finding the Overlooked and Secretive Species of Wisconsin

Tom Prestby

# Birding by Habitat is one of the best Atlas skills to have



# Marginal “Grasslands”

- Old/Idle field, Ag Edges
  - Meadowlarks, Dickcissel, Bobolink, even Loggerhead Shrike
- Hay/Pasture
  - Bobolink, Meadowlarks, Upland Sandpiper
- Wet Hay
  - Henslow’s, LeConte’s Sparrow (north), Snipe
- Row Crop desert
  - Vesper Sparrow, Horned Lark,



# Savanna Areas

- Pasture with mature trees can function as Savanna
- Birds
  - Red-headed Woodpecker, Orchard Oriole
  - Shrub component will change species list



# Grassland Bird Strategy

- Morning is best
- Late-spring/early-summer surveys best for possible/probable
- Summer is best for confirmations but varies
  - CN, FS best in early summer
  - FY, FL, CF easier and best in mid/late summer
- Patient observing is productive
  - Easier than looking for nests
  - Stake out with good view of prominent perches

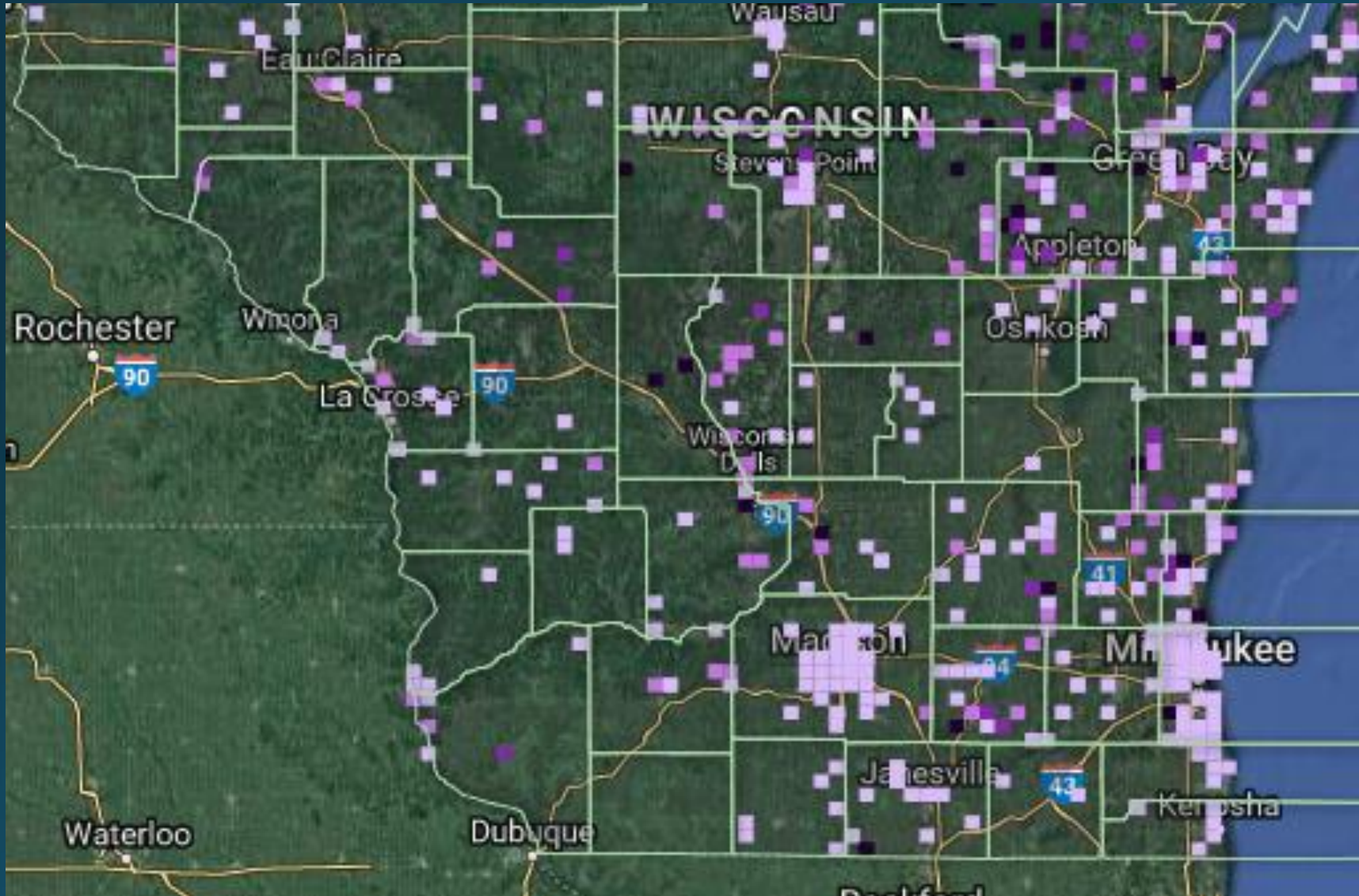


# Floodplain forest

- Can be especially birdy
- Access can be difficult
  - Perfect chance for canoe/kayak
- If limited access, stake out a spot and watch for short flights
- Unique species
  - Brown Creeper, Sapsucker, Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Prothonotary Warbler



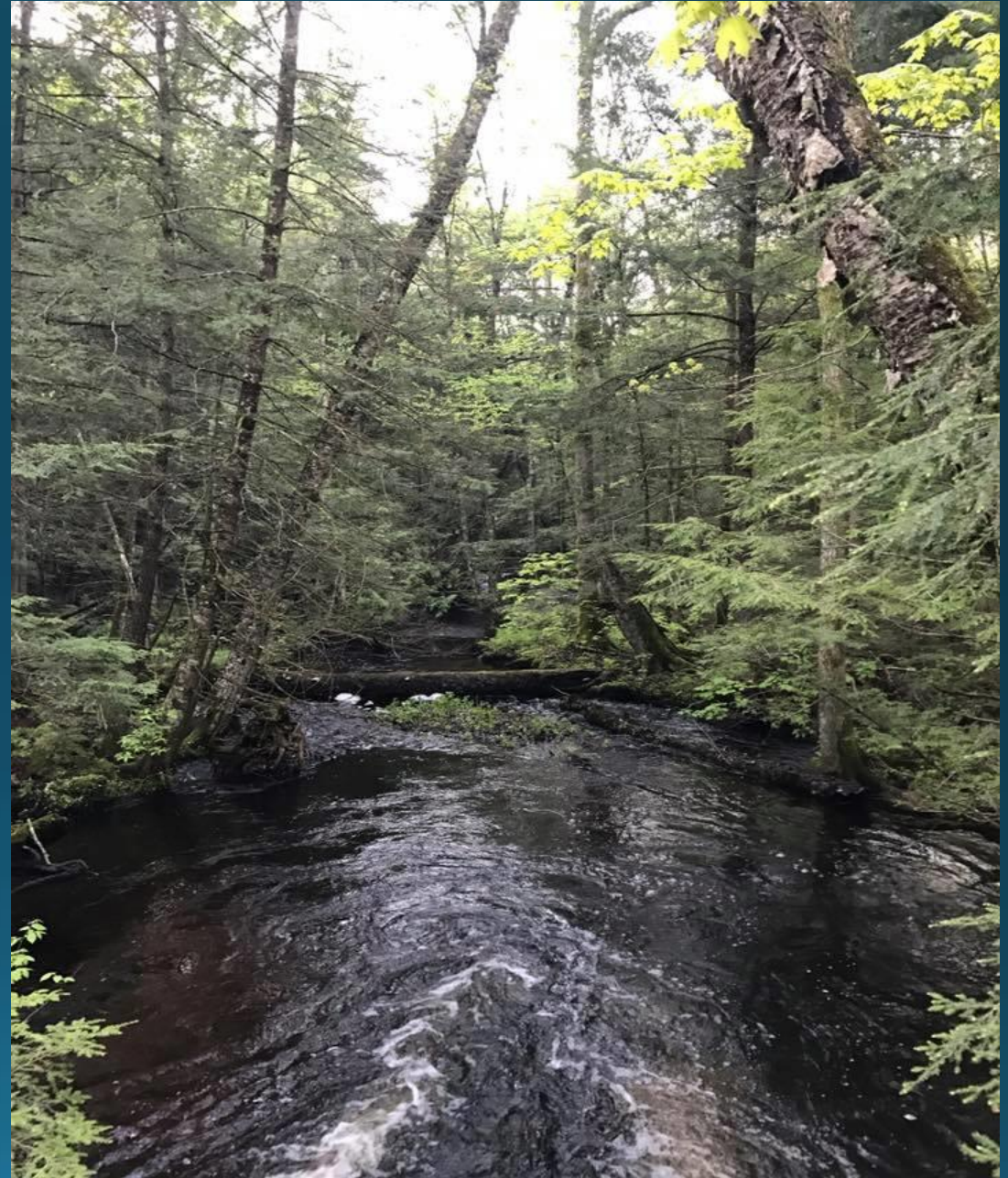
# Brown Creeper: Under-represented



Nick Anich

# Conifer Forest

- Easy to find on winter aerals
- Plantations
  - Pine Warbler, Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, RB Nuthatch
  - Spruce = GC Kinglet
- Lowland (swamp)
  - Good chance to add new species
  - Best chances at White-throated Sparrow, Nashville Warbler, and Yellow-rumped Warbler in south





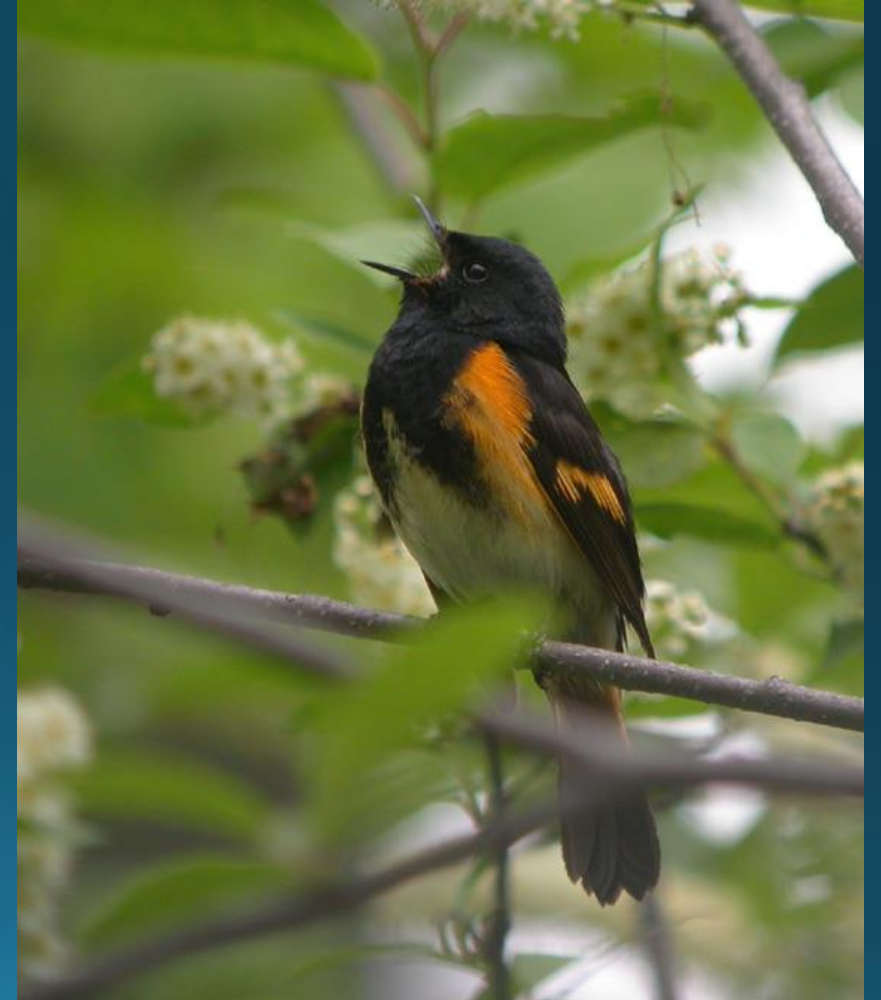
# Mixed Forest

- Just a few trees can add several species to a deciduous forest
- Listen from the road
- Add Winter Wren, BT Green, Pine, and Blackburnian Warbler, BH Vireo, Parula
- Possibly add Yellow-throated Warbler in the south



# Forest Bird Strategy

- Early Summer is best for possible/probable (S & S7 easiest)
  - Cover ground, “troll” for songs
- Late summer is best for confirmations
  - FY, FL, CF easiest
    - Best in mid/late summer
- Cover all forest types in your block
- Edges & openings are often best
  - Especially exposed to sun in morning
  - Trails and roads form edges in deep forest
- Follow chip notes

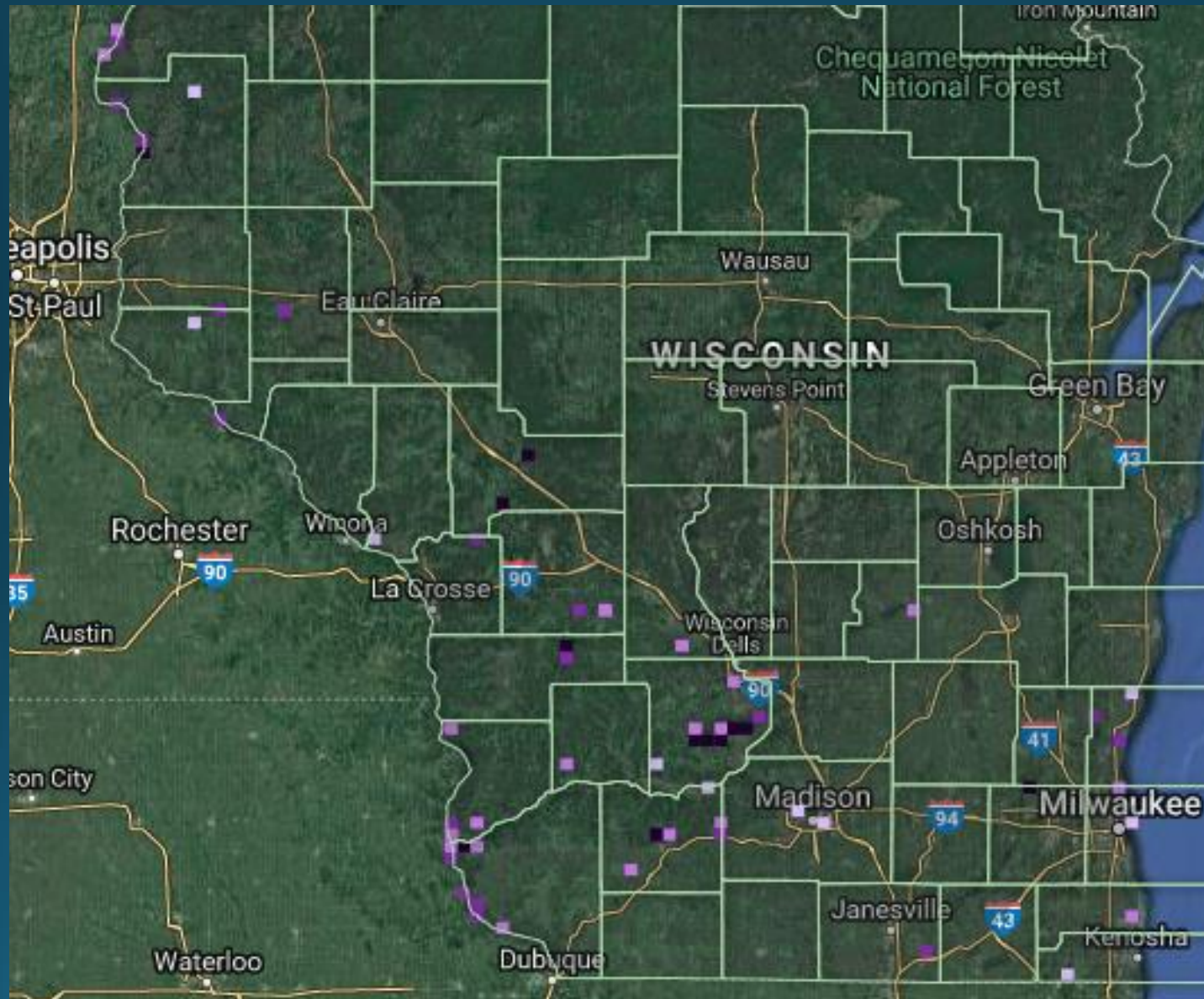


# Early Forest Species to Target

- Forest Raptors
  - Responsive to Playback
- Drumming Ruffed Grouse
  - Automatic Probable!
- Crossbills
  - Maybe some are still hanging around?
- Early Singers



# Under-represented: Louisiana Waterthrush

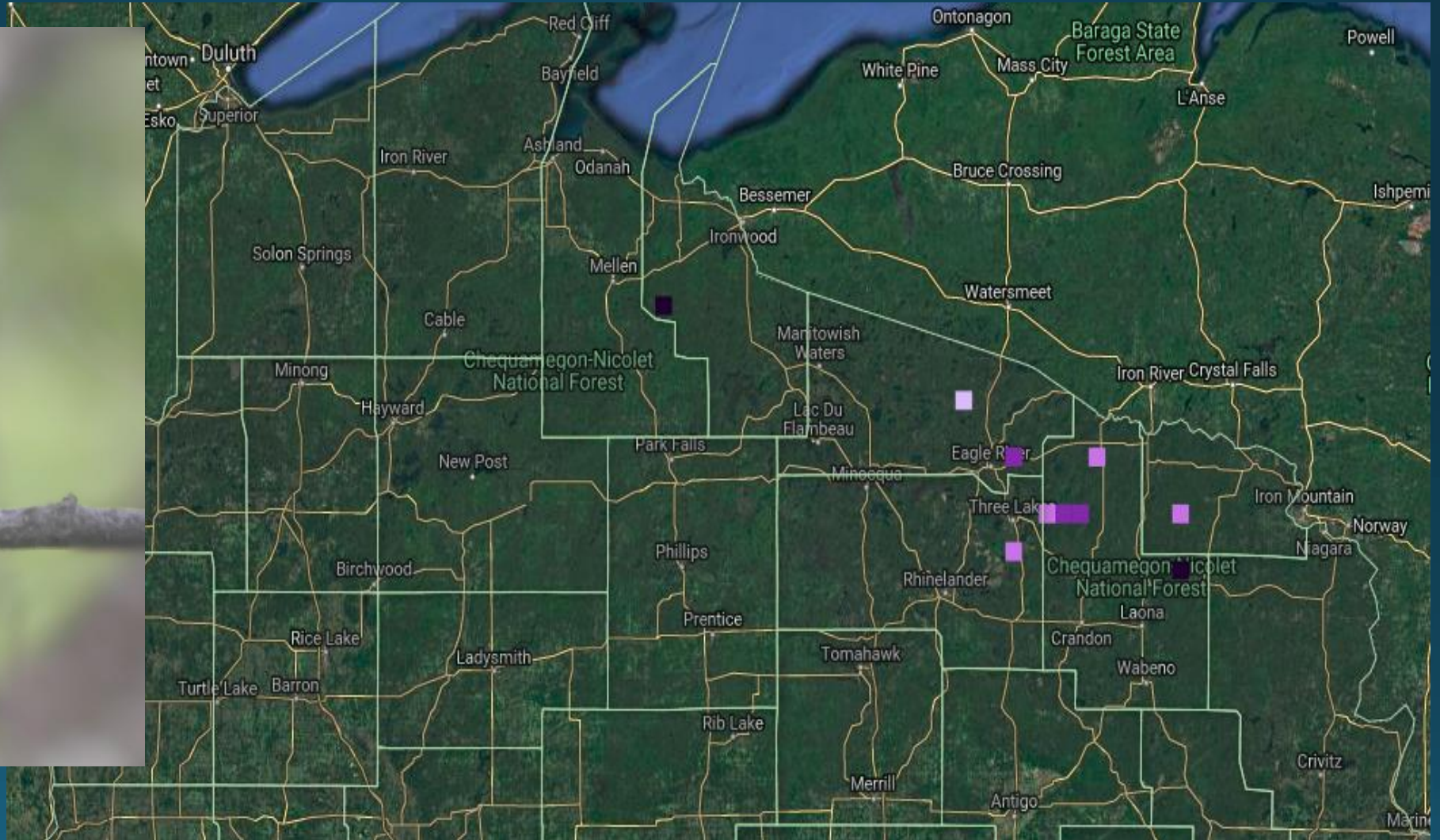


# Boreal Species

- Spruce /Tamarack Swamps
  - Bordered by pine/upland spruce ideal
  - Cedar-dominated can be OK
- Peak is right now for the “Boreal 4”
  - BBWO, BOCH, SPGR, CAJA
- Playback in appropriate habitat
- Off-road is usually best
- Other unique species in summer
  - YBFL, LISP, PAWA

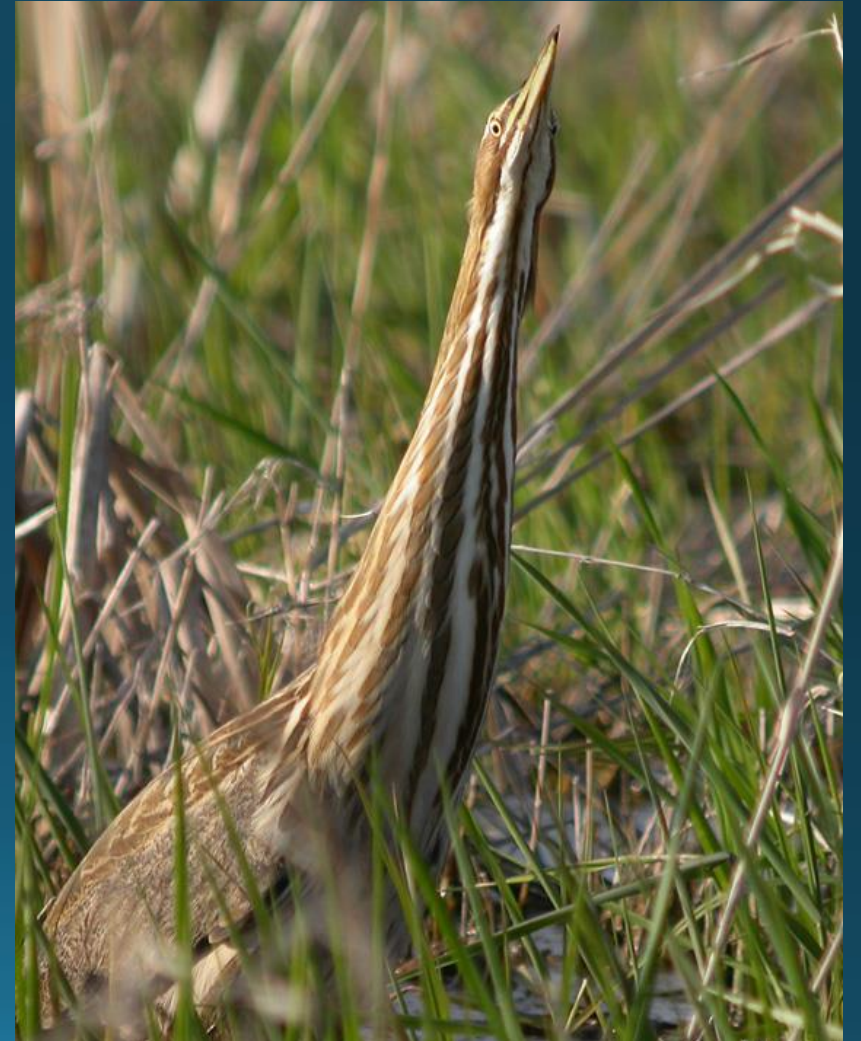


# Under-represented (or not?): Boreal Chickadee

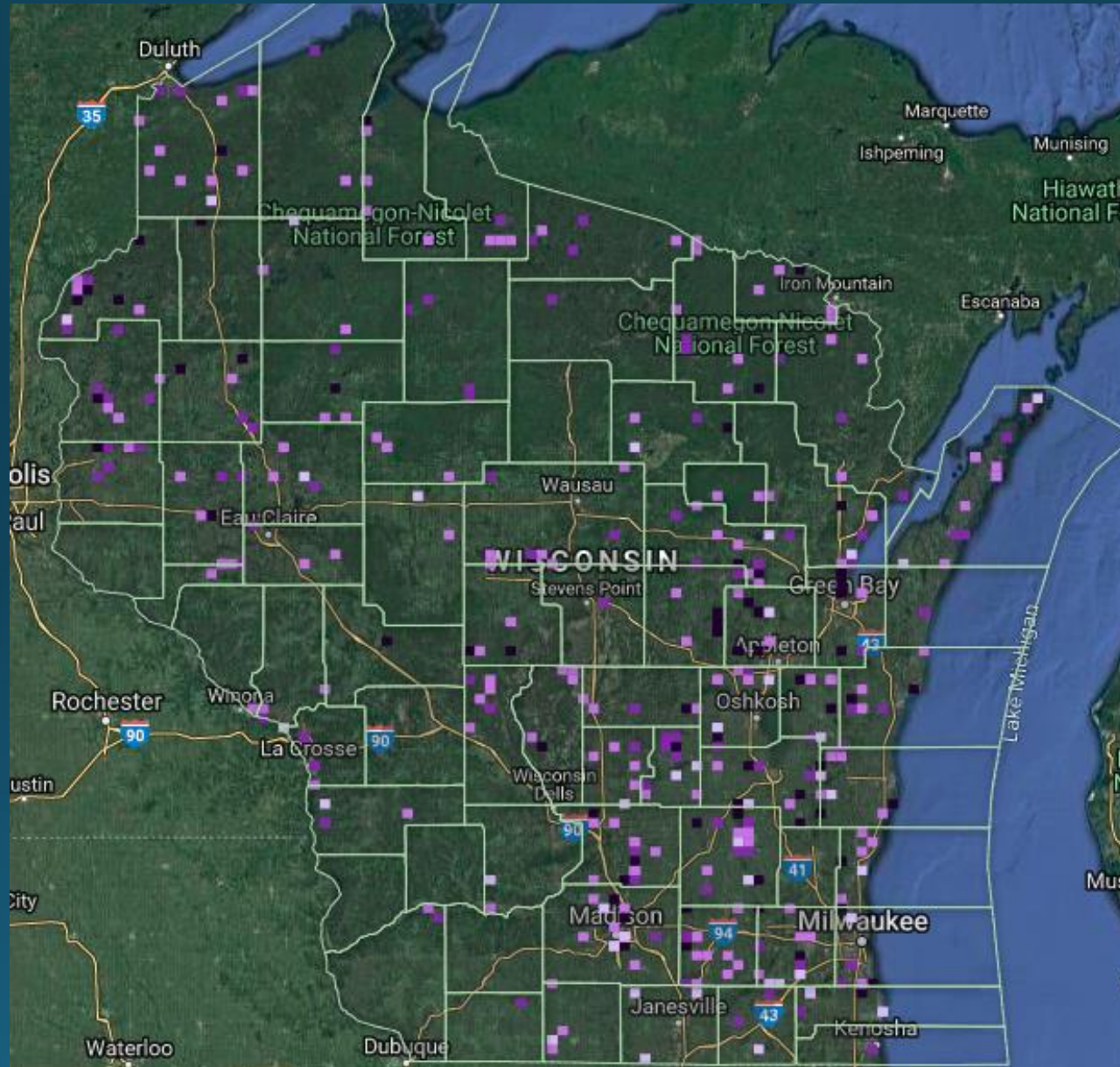


# Marshbird Strategy

- Different types of marshes
- Late-spring best for poss/prob
  - Migrants still moving through in early May
  - Early morning or late evening is best
  - Playback can be very helpful
- Mid/late-summer best for confirmations
  - Especially areas with openings of water
  - Patient observing is productive
  - This is the time to get in the boat if you want to!



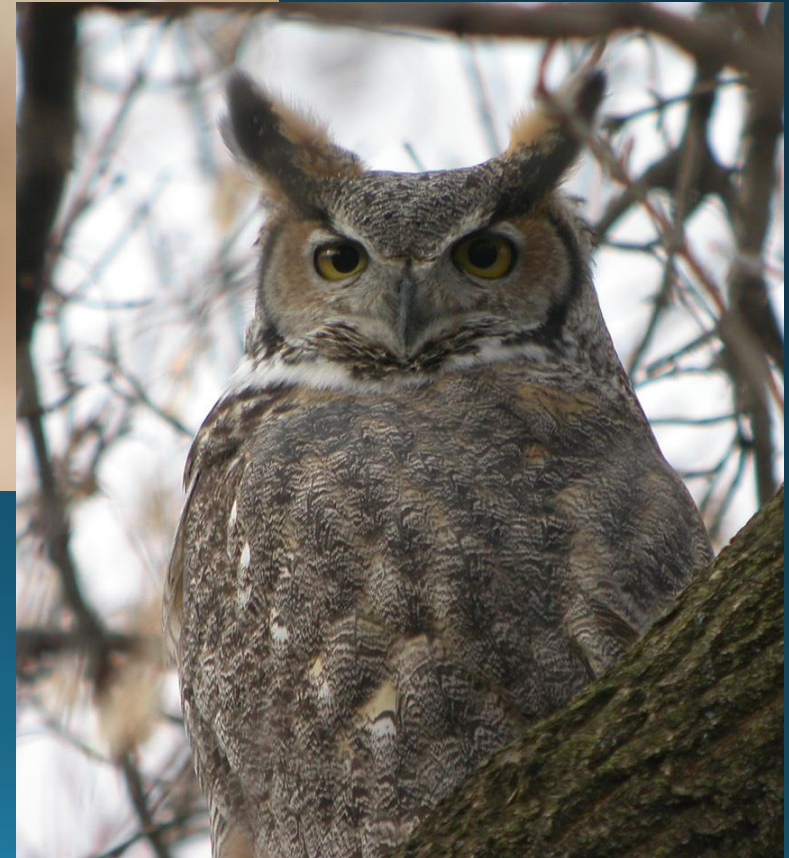
# Under-represented: Virginia Rail



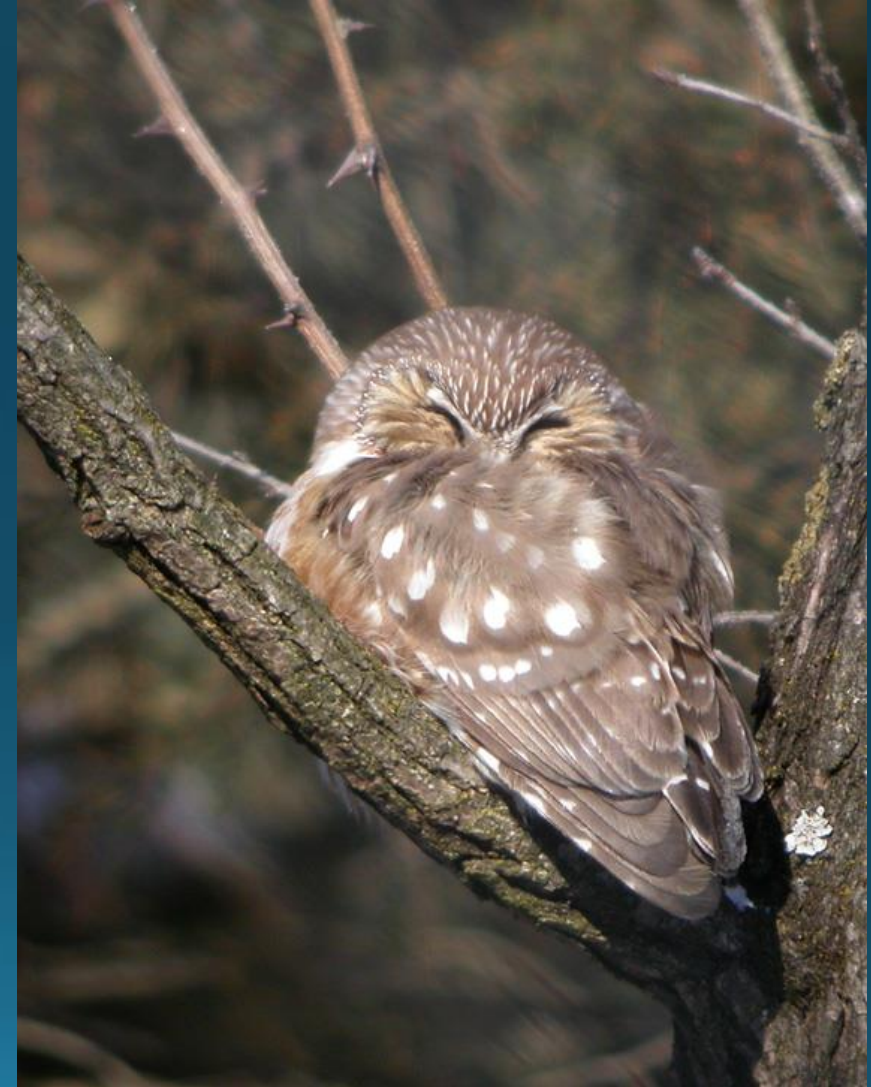
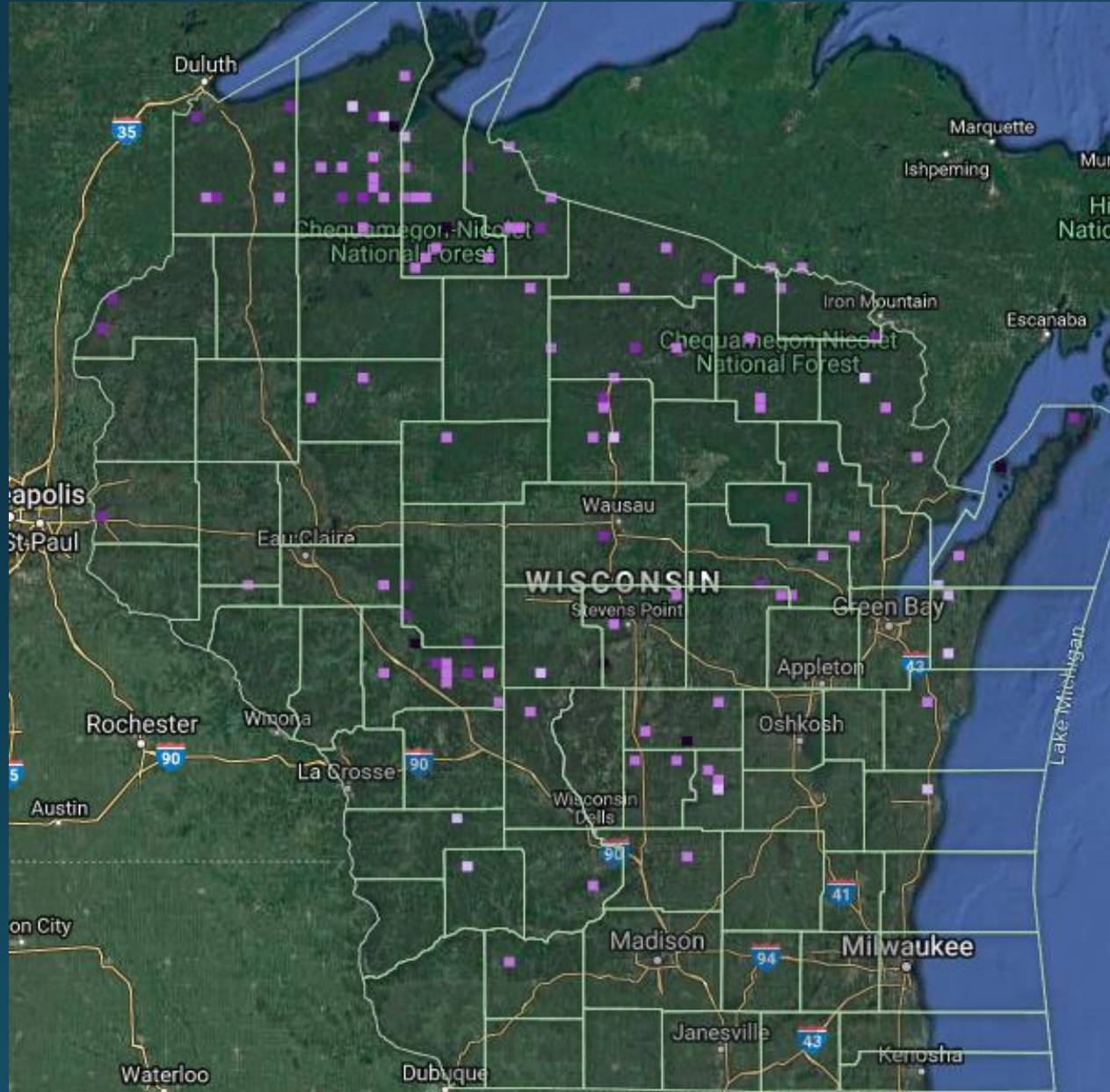


# Nocturnal Atlasing

- Can be combined with dusk/dawn birding
- Playback for Owls
  - Know begging calls!
- Windless nights are best
- Moon visible for nightjars
- Stop in different habitats, move at least half-mile
- Move on quick if nothing
- Other surprises are possible



# Under-represented: Northern Saw-whet Owl



# Despite challenges, how do you go about finding rare species?

- Awareness of abundance, distribution, of WI birds
  - Familiarize yourself with WBBA | Wisconsin Birdlife
  - Birds of North America
  - eBird maps and bar charts
  - eBird Tutorials

## Species Survey Strategy – Irruptive Finches – 2015

23 April, 2015

Many species of northern finches, such as redpolls, siskins, crossbills, and grosbeaks, are irruptive, that is, they stage irregular movements from year to year in and out of certain areas, especially during the non-breeding season. In some years they may be present across portions of Wisconsin in large numbers, while in others they're hard to find. Following winters with high numbers, several of these species remain to breed in the state. In 2015, two species are present that demand our attention — the Pine Siskin and Red Crossbill. We should be looking for breeding behaviors NOW because we aren't sure how many of them will be around in future years of the Atlas.



# Productive Planning

- Determine which under-represented or secretive species are likely in your region
- Determine their favored habitats and determine where those habitats might occur in priority blocks
  - Atlas interactive map
  - Aerial photos

# Productive Planning

- Familiarize yourself with natural history, vocalizations of species
- Make a plan for an expedition!
  - Time of year
  - Time of day
  - Favored habitats
  - Special strategies or methods

**Questions? Your Tips?**

