



Renee Levesque

North Bay's 39th Christmas Bird Count

A good count despite the cold

By Lori Anderson, compiler

On Saturday, December 16, a very chilly but sunny day, North Bay conducted its 39th Christmas Bird Count. The high temperature was -17C, but fortunately winds were low and participants hardy.

Thirty-five species for a total of 2450 birds were counted by 18 field observers and 16 feeder watchers - a good count on a cold day after winter's early arrival. Although the total count is down this year, the total number of species remains fairly steady at 35 – quite something considering the absence of some species we usually see.

The big news is that two new species, the Chipping Sparrow and the Golden Eagle, were counted for the very first time – not bad for our 39th count! As well, one all-time high was reached - 17 Bald Eagles, a species which is making a strong recovery.

With open water remaining only in a very small area of Trout Lake, no gulls and few waterfowl were reported – only Mallards and American Black Ducks.

Woodpecker, nuthatch and chickadee numbers were strong. A Red-Bellied Woodpecker, uncommon in our area, but noted at several feeders this winter, was reported again this count. One was also reported in the 2016 count.

Some fine owls and hawks were observed. Two Snowy Owls seen in the downtown and waterfront area this winter were observed on count day. A surprise find by a field observer on the Kate Pace Way was a Barred Owl trying desperately to nap through a mobbing of Pileated

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Woodpeckers. It has been a number of years since a Barred Owl was last seen on count day. Two Red-tailed Hawks and two Rough-legged Hawks were also sighted.

One Northern Shrike was found in the Callander Area.

As usual, feeder watchers made an important contribution, but especially this year with the cold when many birds were dependent on feeders to help them get through the day. Dark-eyed Juncos and American Tree Sparrows were seen in strong numbers by feeder watchers. Also reported at feeders were a Chipping Sparrow, a new species for count day and a very unusual one to be seen in our area at this time of the year; a White-throated Sparrow; a Brown Creeper; and three Gray Jays – as well as good numbers of more common species. Feeder watchers helped add to the number of species and to the total number of birds seen.

Missing from our day was a Peregrine Falcon observed downtown on Friday and Sunday, the day before and the day after the count, and two Common Loons that had been on Trout Lake as late as Friday, the day before the count.

Evening Grosbeaks were not found. Common Redpolls were not common, with just one reported. Purple Finches were scarce, although American Goldfinch numbers were strong. One large flock of Pine Grosbeaks was discovered.

The day was completed by Tally and Potluck (a delicious reward) in the warm home of Grant and Shirley McKercher. Thank you for hosting!

And a big thank you to all who participated, undaunted by winter, in another successful Christmas Bird Count.

Results can be viewed in detail on our website at: <https://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/bird-wing/reports-and-bird-counts/>. Scroll down until you get to Christmas Bird Counts.

