

Bird Wing Report

October 25, 2016

By Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe

October's Bird Wing meeting was held in the Garden Room at Cassellholme, after which all of us took off with our "Owloween" goodies to the end of Chemin Johnson Road to hear, and maybe even see, the owls.

Birds Seen in October: I won't report on all birds seen in October, just those in migration, in large flocks, and those we haven't seen in some time.

Snow Buntings have arrived and although every year at this time we see them at Sunset and other places along the shores of Lake Nipissing, this year Kaye Edmonds saw them in Laurier Woods. I don't know how many sightings of Snow Buntings there have been in Laurier Woods, but this is the first time I have heard of them being there. We see only the non-breeding Snow Buntings here, so I have contrasted Kaye's photo of a non-breeding Snow Bunting below (left) with a photo of a breeding male (right) that I took in Iceland, looking somewhat exhausted from his feeding duties.



There didn't seem to be as many sightings of American Pipits as other years, and although they have now left, Kaye did see some recently at Sunset Park and Lori Anderson had a lot of them at her place in Chisholm Township up until recently. Also in Chisholm Township were Eastern Meadowlarks, seen by Ken Gowing as late as October 18.

Ken also saw a Palm Warbler in October, albeit October 1. Palms are early to arrive in the spring and late to leave in the fall.

Other late departers are the Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, both seen by me at my place.

White-crowned Sparrows were seen by many. Two continue to be seen at Lori's and a White-throated Sparrow continues to be seen in my yard. Tree Sparrows arrived during October and were seen by many.

The Pattersons had a dozen or more Evening Grosbeaks at their place in Mattawa, but it was the cute little Black-capped Chickadees Doug Jr. waxed poetic over. One came to his hand to feed, the first time that has ever happened to Doug. He was quite delighted by this experience, one you never get blasé about.

It seemed to me there were not the large numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds there usually are in the fall, although Connie Sturge saw a large flock near her place in Powassan, and Lori had a large flock at her place.

Some Purple Finches and American Goldfinch were seen, but members said they were not seeing American Goldfinch in large numbers, although I have had up to 20 in my yard.

For a few weeks this fall, Marc Buchanan had Mourning Doves at his place on Lakeshore Drive, but other than Marc, no one else reported seeing any Mourning Doves for the last few weeks.

Irene Kasch saw a Ruffed Grouse on Sand Dam Road and during the October Bird Bash, Dick Tafel and I saw a male Spruce Grouse on Riding Stable Road.



Photo by John Levesque



Photo by Steve Pitt

Steve Pitt woke up one morning to two female Wild Turkeys in his yard on Lake Talon (above). He named them Thelma and Louise. He also had a Northern Shrike at his place, as did Lori.

Dick saw three Snow Geese at Warren Lagoon and others saw a few elsewhere. Dick, along with Stephen O'Donnell, also saw a juvenile Brant Goose at Sunset Park (below). You may recall we had a Brant Goose in the spring along the waterfront near The Boat restaurant.



Photo by Stephen O'Donnell

The odd Great Black-backed Gull was seen at Sunset Park and along the Lake Nipissing shoreline, and the odd Great Blue Heron continues to be seen. The only recent shorebird seen was a Wilson's Snipe, seen by Dick and heard by Gary Sturge.

All ducks normally seen in October were seen and the Red-breasted Merganser, not as widespread as other ducks in our area, was seen near King's Wharf by Dick and me.

Grebes seen were the Red-necked and the Horned Grebe, the latter first spotted by Dick and Stephen at Sunset Park, and later seen there by others.

On October 22, Angela Martin saw a Red-throated Loon by her place on the west arm of Lake Nipissing. Nice sighting! I happened to be in Barrie around this time when the Red-throated and Pacific Loons were being seen, but the short time I was there, there were no sightings of either. My only sighting of a Red-throated Loon was in its breeding plumage in Iceland one June about three years ago (photo below).



Raptors seen recently included a late Broadwing Hawk seen by Gary on October 12; juvenile Bald Eagles seen by Lori; Red-tailed Hawks seen along Hwy 11 and Hwy 17 by many; and a Northern Goshawk seen by Gary – where else but on the mythical Stillaway Line!

Membership Cards: Gary, who designed and ordered the membership cards as approved at the September meeting, had them ready to give out to all paid-up members. Nice work, Gary. And thanks to Doug Patterson, the membership card can be used to get a 10% discount on bird seed at Burrow's and Laporte's. Doug has now sent a copy of the membership card to Burrow's

and Laporte's so they know what to look for just in case some other birders come along and flash a different card! It is my understanding that the card also entitles us to 10% off bird feeders at Burrow's; however, when Dick recently used his card there, the discount applied only to the seed. Perhaps Doug could clarify this for us. Don't forget to let the cashier know before he/she rings in the purchase that you are using your card.

It does not cost a lot to become a member, only \$5.00 annually, but please remember you also have to be a member of Nipissing Naturalists Club – single annual membership is only \$20.00.

Owl Prowl: We left the Garden Room in great anticipation with the Owlween treats brought by me and Gary and Connie. Surely tonight was the night we were bound to hear an owl. It was not windy, the wind having died down around 5:00 p.m. or so; it was chilly enough that some wore their very thick winter coats; and there was no moon. All these conditions are good for owls. So off we drove to the end of Johnson Road. We were all very chatty, using the occasion to socialize and in

addition to our chatter at least three devices were playing various owl calls. So no wonder most of us didn't see the Barred Owl! However, Marc and Kaye did, and thankfully they were able to capture it on camera, the result of which is at right. In case you think this is a fake, please note Connie in her big winter coat and Lori illuminated by one of the flashlights. Others thought they heard a coyote, but perhaps they were mistaking the coyote's howl for the owl's hoot.



I had an email from a friend the next day who heard a Great Horned Owl the night of our Owlween party and Lori heard one the next night. So for those who think that October is not a

good month for owls, maybe you need to rethink or ask the banders at Hilliardton Marsh just how many owls they banded during October.

Local Celebrities: In the *Ontario Birds* 100th issue of August 2016, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Bird Wing member **Brent Turcotte** gets a mention in the Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 2015 for seeing a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (seen below) on May 18 at Sunset Park. One was also seen that spring in Rainy River, Thunder Bay, and Kenora. Last year, North Bay was also represented in the Ontario Bird Records when Dick, Vic Rizzo and I first saw a Brambling at Vic's place in November 2014.



By the way, it is a beautiful 100th issue of *Ontario Birds*, marking over 33 years of continuous publication. The cover features a remarkable photo of two Blue-winged Teal by Barry Kent McKay.

In the November-December 2016 issue of *Canadian Wildlife*, there is a photo of **Bev Kingdon** and Liz Benneian and an article on their tremendous work to protect the Trumpeter Swans (below) that winter along the Lake Ontario shoreline at LaSalle Park in Burlington. Although Bev lives in Burlington, she spends a lot of time at her place in Chisholm Township.



And finally, you can read about **Dick's and Paul Smylie's** contribution to the Q&A period following the screening of *The Messenger* in November's issue of *The Woodland Observer* in an article by the producer of documentary, Joanne Jackson. In the same issue, you can also read about Dick's contribution in providing University of Toronto student Kristen Grittani with bird records covering the period from 1995 to 2015 in an article written by Kristen. See <http://www.nipnats.com/newsletters/> for both articles.

Project FeederWatch: A reminder that Project FeederWatch begins on **November 12**, so be sure to pick two consecutive days of the week to count birds seen on those days. You must join Bird Studies Canada to take part in Project FeederWatch. See <http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/pfw/> for more details. For those who have not participated in Project FeederWatch before, if you are later than November 12 in becoming a member of Bird Studies Canada, you can still take part in Project FeederWatch. You don't have to start on the 12th. There is a leeway of quite a few weeks.



Photo by Renee Levesque

Christmas Bird Count: The **North Bay** Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will take place on **Saturday, December 17**, and the **Burk's Falls** Christmas Bird Count on **Friday, December 16**.

If you are interested in taking part in the North Bay CBC, either as a field counter or a backyard feeder counter, contact Lori Anderson, compiler, at lori.anderson58@hotmail.com. Paul Smylie has agreed to assume Craig and Elaine Hurst's route as team leader. And, depending on availability of leaders, Lori is looking to divide one large area, Area 2, into two.

If you are interested in taking part in the Burk's Falls CBC, contact Martin Parker, compiler, at mparker19@cogeco.ca. Burk's Falls CBC's northern edge is just south of Sundridge, so not too

far away for those from North Bay and surrounding areas. It then extends south to Burk's Falls and west to Magnetawan.

This year marks North Bay's 39th year and Burk's Falls 40th year of participation in North America's longest-running Citizen Science project which started in 1900. It is one of the world's largest wildlife surveys and the data collected is used daily by conservation biologists and naturalists to assess population trends and distribution of birds.

Christmas Bird Counts are conducted on a single day between December 14 and January 5. Counts are carried out within a 24-km diameter circle that stays the same from year to year.

Gull Outing: This year's November gull outing to the Merrick Landfill site will take place on **Saturday, November 26. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the former Visitor's Centre** for carpooling. Restrictions to the landfill site have been tightened. When Dick and I recently visited the site, Dick, as driver, had to sign in and we were told we could not drive to the top of the "hill", but only drive around the perimeter. We were also told we were not allowed to exit the car unless we had on high visibility vests. Maybe the rules will be less strict on a Saturday, but be sure to bring a high visibility vest if you want to get out of the car. Even so, it is difficult to see all the gulls from the bottom of the "hill." We were told these restrictions came about because a birder apparently got stuck and the workers had to leave their tasks to help pull this person's vehicle out.



Glaucous Gull, photo by Craig Hurst

Bird Bash: The next Bird Bash will take place the weekend of **December 3 and 4**. It will be interesting to see if the mild weather continues and if, as a result, we see more birds than we would normally see at that time of the year.

Bird Wing Meeting: The next Bird Wing meeting is back in the auditorium of the **North Bay Public Library on Tuesday, November 22, starting at 6:30 p.m.** **Guest speaker will be Grant McKercher recently back from a trip to South Africa where he added at least 200 birds to his life list.** We will also be discussing the Christmas Bird Count, so all who are taking part, especially the leaders, need to be there. This is the last meeting of 2016. Hard to believe another good birding year has almost come to an end.

In memory of Leonard Cohen, 1934-2016:



The birds they sang at the break of day.

To hear the full song, entitled *Anthem* and featuring birds in flight go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wRYjtvIYK0> – and be sure to watch from beginning to end.