

Nipissing Area Bird Bash Report

April 2018

By Dick Tafel, compiler

What a week-end! It all started on a snowy Saturday, with the wildest “fall-out” of birds your compiler has ever known. On the north end of our range along streets and roads were at least 800 seeable American Robins mixed in with over 1,000 Dark-eyed Juncos and very large numbers of Fox Sparrows, Tree Sparrows, Hermit Thrushes and Rusty Blackbirds. Then the weather on Sunday, a fine, spring day (after a long, wintry-like April) helped get out some **30 observers to find some 98 species, three above our 15-year average.**

We usually start out in rough taxonomic order with new birds in the area for the year. But this time we must emphasize first the young Golden Eagle photographed so well by Kaye Edmunds in Calvin Twp. This may be the first such seen within our fifteen years of Bird Bash scenarios!

Then there was the Common Loon seen only by Keith Thornborrow within the open waters of the South River. With our lakes still frozen solid, this normally common early arriver has obviously had much trouble finding deep water to ply its trade. Following this seeker of open waters was the Pied-billed Grebe discovered by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing within the finally wide-open Sturgeon River.

Double-crested Cormorants were now about, mostly in the Sturgeon area and spotted by several, including Grant and Shirley McKercher, but also by Keith in South River.

American Bittern were on a surprising number of lists, including Renee Levesque and your compiler; Brent and Laura Turcotte with Gary and Luanne Chowns; Steve Pitt; Ernie Frayle; and the Anderson pair. Great Blue Herons were seen by several observers, including some seven in a row within Cache Bay noted by the Levesque duo.

Now as to first of the year ducks! Wood Ducks, American Wigeon, American Black Ducks, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead and Hooded Mergansers were seen by many for this first of the year list. But, Blue-winged Teal were seen only by Chris Sukha in the Lavigne area and by Gary and Connie Sturges near Powassan. Northern Pintail were found solely by the Anderson duo and the McKerchers, and a Gadwall seen only by the Levesque pair. Redhead Ducks were spotted by Kaye within the now open Callander Lagoon, and a Red-breasted Merganser female was identified, after much studying, by the Levesque duo in the Sturgeon River.

Predators were fairly widespread. Osprey were observed by many, including Therez Violette within Sturgeon Falls, and Lloyd and Janet Sparks near Wolfe Lake, who also identified a Sharp-shinned Hawk, as did Keith. Northern Harrier were noted by a fair number, including Rose McClelland and Ernie Frayle. A Broad-winged Hawk was seen by the Sturges, Chris and the Levesque pair. American Kestrel have become fairly common once again, being spotted by Rose, Matt Procnier and several others.

A Great Grey Owl was on Ernie's list, after a few had been seen recently within Calvin Twp.

Sandhill Cranes! Once very rare around here, they have become almost numerous. Some 40 or so were near the east shore of the Sturgeon River, off Quesnel Road, and observed by the Levesque pair, the Anderson duo and the McKerchers. They also were found by Chris in the west end.

The only shorebirds discovered were Killdeer by the Anderson duo, the Turcotte foursome and Chris, who also saw Greater Yellowlegs, as did the McKerchers, the Sturges and the Levesque duo, who also found Wilson's Snipe, as did Steve, the Turcotte foursome and the Anderson pair, who also noted American Woodcock, as did Chris. (What a sentence!)

Arriving Ring-billed Gulls were observed by many.

Belted Kingfishers had suddenly become fairly common, seen in large numbers (up to 15) by the McKerchers and the Levesque duo, by the Anderson pair and by Keith.

The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker had just recently appeared, being noticed by several; the Northern Flicker, likewise.

Eastern Phoebes, as usual, were the first flycatchers to arrive and were enjoyed by many participants. A Warbling Vireo was found by the Sturges.

Both Barn Swallows and Tree Swallows were seen by the Anderson duo, while Kaye, Keith, Rose, the Sparks and Ernie also saw Tree Swallows.

Winter Wrens were discovered by the McKerchers, the Sturges and Chris.

Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were on several lists, but the Eastern Bluebird was enjoyed only by Steve near Astorville and by the Levesque pair (one bird all by itself at the edge of Highway 17). The latter pair also enjoyed very many Hermit Thrush, as did many others. The American Robin had arrived in huge numbers and was

certainly enjoyed by most, many of whom had been concerned by its slow-awakening. A Brown Thrasher was discovered by the Sturges, the Sparks, Kaye and the Turcotte foursome.

Warblers: Only three during the Bird Bash so far - Pine by Elsa Tafel and your compiler (at their feeder), and the Turcotte quartet. The latter group also saw Yellow-rumped, as did Chris, the Sparks and Kaye, who also found a Palm.

This year's new sparrows: The normally quite rare Fox was especially numerous this April. These sparrows were a big part of the fall-out on Friday night and were seen in large numbers by the Levesque pair, Chris, John Levesque, Pam and Peter Handley and by the Turcotte foursome. The latter, the Levesque pair, Chris, and the Sturges were the only ones to observe Swamp Sparrows. Song Sparrows were seen by many. White-crowned were spotted solely by Keith, near South River, and by Ernie and Steve in the east end. Savannah Sparrows were noted by the McKerchers, the Turcotte foursome, the Levesque pair, Chris, Steve, and the Hasler duo.

Rusty Blackbirds were in unusually large numbers watched closely (to ensure they were not Brewer's) by the Levesque and the Anderson duos, by Chris, the Chowns (at their feeder) and by Keith.

Brown-headed Cowbirds were noted by the Chowns, the Sturges and Ernie.

And that concludes the new birds seen during a Bird Bash so far this year. The huge fall-out from Friday night no doubt caused lots of new species to be discovered and enjoyed within our area after a frustrating cold and snowy April.

Now to get to the birds previously noted during our first 3 months: That starts with the Turkey Vultures. Only one had been observed in our March Bird Bash. But in April's, very many were about and were observed by several of us.

Two Trumpeter Swans were discovered by the McKerchers and by Chris in the Lavigne area. Canada Geese were now here in large numbers, seen by most all over the place – with a lack of open water obviously frustrating them for more northerly ventures.

As to ducks previously noted: Mallards were still ubiquitous, as were Common Goldeneye and Common Mergansers.

Among predators, the Cooper's Hawk was observed again, this time by the Hasler duo. A Red-tailed Hawk was discovered by Chris in the west end and by Ernie in the east. A Rough-leg was identified by Kaye and also by the Levesque pair who spotted one near Wasi Road. Bald Eagles, now almost to be deemed a common bird, were seen by many

participants. Merlin were noted by the McKerchers, the Turcotte foursome and the Levesque pair.

Ruffed Grouse were discovered by several of the groups. Wild Turkey were on the lists of Keith, the Anderson duo and the McKerchers.

Herring Gulls were now widely distributed in large numbers.

Rock Doves were all over the place, while Mourning Doves, though fewer in number, were seen by many.

Downy, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers were, as usual, on many lists.

Just a few Gray Jays were noted - by the Hasler pair and by the Sturges. However, Blue Jays were widespread. American Crows were even more numerous than on previous lists, with most now having arrived from their southern migration. Common Ravens were still here in fair numbers.

Horned larks were discovered again, this time by Chris in the west end.

Of course, Black-capped Chickadees were almost everywhere, as were both the Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches. However, Brown Creepers were seen only by Mary Ann Kenrick and Chris.

European Starlings were, of course, almost everywhere.

American Tree Sparrows had arrived now in large numbers and were noted by several observers. Chipping Sparrows, though fewer in number, were seen by many, including John Levesque, Linda Stoner, the Anderson pair, the McKerchers, the Sparks, Steve and the Sturges. White-throats were noted by the Chowns, Therez in Sturgeon, Mary Anne and Matt, among others. Dark-eyed Juncos, in absolutely huge numbers, were upon very many lists.

Lapland Longspurs in their pretty spring plumage and Snow Buntings, both seen in a field off Quesnel Road, Sturgeon Falls vicinity, were on the list only of the Levesque duo.

Red-winged Blackbirds were now fairly widespread, as were Common Grackles.

Purple Finch, Pine Siskin and American Goldfinch were at most feeders. Common Redpolls, however, were noted in the west only by Chris and the Levesque pair.

Evening Grosbeaks were still at the feeders of the Handleys, Linda, the Chowns and the Anderson pair. The latter also observed House Sparrows, as did the McKerchers and the Sturges.

And that concludes a very busy week-end! Great going by everyone! A seemingly unusually quiet April blossomed at the very end into a fine flowering of very active birds – and birders.

Don't forget the May Bird Bash and combined Great Canadian Birdathon taking place over the **weekend of May 26 and 27.**