

Not the greatest weather, but some very interesting birds turned up for 17 participants at the end of August “bird bash”. Ninety-one species in all were discovered. That was actually the lowest number for August, in 11 years; but let us see just what was observed.

Nine birds were the first of the year discoveries. We will go over those first, in more or less taxonomic order.

First must be the Canvasback Duck, immature, at the Verner lagoon, observed with a lot of attention by your compiler and Renee Levesque. This species is seen only occasionally in this area. Then there was an early Rough-legged Hawk seen by the same duo along the highway from Lavigne. This bird from the north, was over-looked by us during its mad rush there, late, last spring. It was seen well by the preceding duo, upon a wire near the highway displaying its “rough” feathered covering over its legs, among other details.

Then there were Semipalmated Sandpipers coming to the attention of Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing, along with 4 very active Red-necked Phalaropes, in the Warren lagoon. A pair of Pectoral Sandpipers in the Verner lagoon, and one lonely Bonapartes Gull at Callander were also new for the year, and seen by the Levesque pair.

A first for the year, Tennessee Warbler was noticed by Renee near her home, while Lincoln’s Sparrows were found by the Anderson pair – near the Warren lagoon. Finally, a Brewer’s Blackbird was identified by your compiler among hundreds of foraging grackles along highway 64.

Now to the previously observed species for the year, again in close to taxonomic order: Common Loons were, of course, found by a few, along with Pied billed Grebes. An American Bittern was seen by the Levesque pair at the Callander lagoon; Green Herons were surprisingly common, seen by three groups.

Twelve species of ducks were found, including the aforementioned Canvasback, all lagoons being active in that

department. Interestingly, no Common Mergansers were observed.

Among the predators, eight were discovered, including a Cooper's Hawk by Kaye Edmunds and Red-tailed Hawk by Gary and Connie Sturge, and Greg and Pat Boxwell, the latter in the east end. Kevan Cowcill and the Sturges were the only one to discover a Merlin.

A very cute, and lonely, young Virginia Rail was observed up close by the Levesque duo and by Kaye Edmunds, - right in the Laurier Woods parking lot. Becoming almost common, Sandhill Cranes were seen by Therez Violette, and two other groups. The Anderson pair discovered the Sora, along with American Coots, and Short-billed Dowitcher up at the western lagoons. Six Semipalmated Plovers were observed well by Kevan Cowcill and the Levesque pair along Lake Nipissing, near Tenth Avenue. Only 7 shorebirds were seen altogether; but, not even one, normally common, Killdeer showed up, however.

Caspian Terns at Cache Bay were the only terns observed. A Barred Owl was discovered by the Anderson duo, with a whitish-looking one being noticed by Kevan. Chimney Swifts were observed by Fred Pinto above the downtown North Bay parking garage, and by the Sturges, near Powassan. Hummingbirds were fairly common, along with Belted Kingfisher.

The five main woodpecker species were found, some by many, though only Kevan found Downys. The sole flycatcher still around seemed to be the Eastern Phoebe, seen by a few, while perhaps surprisingly, Red-eyed vireos were observed solely by Renee. And swallows, Tree and Barn were noticed only by the Anderson pair.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were seen only by Pam and Peter Handley and White-breasted by just a few. Eastern Bluebirds were enjoyed by three groups, while American Robins were the only other thrush found – and they only by very few, including Therez. Gray Catbirds were on a few lists, while Brown Thrashers were seen only by Mary Ann Kenrick and Kaye.

Cedar Waxwings were in large numbers; but, not so the warblers. Twelve species were found, but generally they were few and far between. Renee was blessed with a good number near her home, including the only Black-throated green, Magnolia, and Blackburnian. Kevan found the sole Canada, and Fred the only Black and White.

Six sparrows were listed, including Chipping Sparrow identified by Ernie Frayle and a few others, while the Anderson duo saw the only Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Kaye found the only Bobolinks, and the Boxwells the sole Eastern Meadowlark. Rusty Blackbirds and a Brown-headed Cowbird were both discovered by Kevan. Purple finches were on Doug Paterson's list, near Mattawa.

And so, a very interesting collection of birds, though the passerines did seem low in numbers compared to other years. (Do they know something about the coming of winter, that we don't? )

Please take note of the next bird bash – in just two weeks – the week-end of Sept. 13, 14. We try to find the most active week-end each month , with a bit of time between them.

And look up the web page for similar bird counts in the past eleven years ,within the following - - <http://www.nipissing-naturalist.com/>

Dick Tafel, Compiler