

North Bay Area “Bird Bash” October 1-2, 2016

By Dick Tafel, Complier

Eighty-four species were discovered by 18 participants over the October Bird Bash weekend. That is one above the average number over the past 14 years. Pretty good despite a very unpleasant day for sightings on Sunday.

As usual, we will start out in rough taxonomic order with first Bird Bash observations for the year. And that must be a rather exciting view of a pretty male Spruce Grouse by Renee Levesque and yours truly at the edge of Riding Stable Road. Good to know that such are within that coniferous area. The only other “new” one was the Lincoln's Sparrow identified by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing east of Powassan.

Now to the other birds, continuing the taxonomic order: Common Loons were not especially “common” yet, but Steve Pitt in Lake Talon and others observing Lake Nipissing did see them. Pied-billed Grebes were common in Cache Bay. Double-crested Cormorants are still being noted by groups checking out Lake Nipissing. But, the American Bittern was solely observed by yours truly in Laurier Woods. Great Blue Herons were noted by several; likewise, Turkey Vultures.

Canada Geese were still over-abundant. Some twelve duck species (including mergansers) were found, but Blue-winged Teal, Bufflehead and Hooded Mergansers were not among them. Angela and Gary Martin were the only ones to find Redheads and Ring-necked ducks, both presumably in Warren Lagoon. They also saw a Red-tailed Hawk, as well as a Sharp-shinned, which “took down” a blackbird in their yard. Many were able to observe Northern Harriers still soaring low over the fields. Bald Eagles, Merlin and Kestrel were still being fairly widely reported.

Ruffed Grouse were seen by a fair number, including Steve. Common Gallinules were discovered, again in Cache Bay, by the Martins. And American Coots were still in the western lagoons. Sandhill Cranes were still in huge abundance at various fields in the west end.

Now as to shore-birds - where are they? The only one sighted was the locally breeding Spotted Sandpiper observed by the Anderson duo along the North Bay shoreline. As to gulls, the Anderson duo and Kaye Edmonds were the only ones to

spot the Great Black-backed, while the Martins were the only group to espy Bonaparte's Gulls.

Mourning Doves were still fairly prominent as, of course, were the always common Rock Pigeons whose humorous pic graced last month's report. The Anderson and Martin duos were the only ones to find a Belted Kingfisher.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Northern Flickers were still around, but in smaller numbers, while the two main woodpeckers were noted by many participants. Mary Ann Kenrick and just a few others observed the Pileated.

As to flycatchers, the only one still about was the Eastern Phoebe, normally the earliest and last flycatcher to visit here, and seen by a few. Gray Jays were found by the Martins, while Blue Jays, crows and ravens were on many lists. The Anderson pair found Horned Larks in their eastern Powassan neighbourhood. The ubiquitous Black-capped Chickadee seemed to be everywhere. And the two nuthatch species were noted by many. The Brown Creeper was seen only by the Levesque duo and the Martins.

Both kinglets were watched by the Levesque pair, the Ruby-crowned also by the Anderson duo, who were the only ones to enjoy Eastern Bluebirds. The only other thrush was the American Robin, not especially wide-spread, but in good numbers at Mary Young's and Mary Ann's places and elsewhere.

Gary and Connie Sturge were the only ones to see the Gray Catbird, near their home west of Powassan. European Starlings were flocking about in huge numbers, but American Pipits were found only by Kaye and the Levesque duo. No waxwings at all were noted.

Now we get to the wood warblers. Eight species were observed. Starting with the Orange-crowned, the Anderson pair identified it, only the second time it has been seen this year on a Bird Bash. The Nashville was also seen by them, and by Renee at Jocko Point, where she and yours truly also saw the lovely Northern Parula. Yellow-rumps, Common Yellow-throats and Palms were seen by several. But, the Pine was spotted only by the Martins, and Kaye discovered the only American Redstart.

Sparrows: Eight were seen (counting the junco). American Tree Sparrows were just arriving and spotted by the Sturges, while Song, Savannah, White-throated Chipping and White-crowned were seen by many - that included the latter two at

Helen McCombie's. Lincoln's was identified by the Anderson duo, and Swamp's discovered by the Martins. Dark-eyed Juncos had arrived in fulsome numbers, many at Elsa Tafel's, Mary Young's, and Pam and Peter Handley's feeders. Red-winged Blackbirds were not quite as numerous as expected, but were observed by Mary Ann and by both the Martin and Anderson pairs. The latter pair was the only one to discover Eastern Meadowlarks. Rusty Blackbirds put in some minimal appearances, noted by Greg Jaski and a few others. Likewise, Common Grackles were noted just by a few, including Therez Violette in Sturgeon Falls and by Mary Ann.

Purple Finches were seen by the Handleys and the Martins. And finally, the lowly House Sparrow (not deemed a sparrow in the earlier notes due to its European ancestry) was discovered only by the Anderson pair at a barn east of Powassan.

And so, another good birding week-end. Congrats all!

Put aside some time over the weekend of **November 5-6** for the November "bash". There could be some more very interesting birds showing up then.

Late report from Brent Turcotte: During October's Bird Bash, Brent saw two shorebirds along the shoreline at the end of the Cranberry Trail - Greater Yellowlegs and Wilson's Snipe - and along the Cranberry Trail, a Hermit Thrush. Therefore, three more species can be added to those seen, bringing the total to 87 and the number of participants to 19. (Brent, like the Anderson and Martin teams, also saw a Belted Kingfisher.)