

Bird Bash Report for Nipissing Area August 27, 28 2016

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

It was a pretty good weekend for birds- 104 species observed, though not so much, it seems, for birders, with only 14 participants.

Starting first, as usual, with new birds seen for the year, in rough taxonomic order, we can begin with a Black Scoter – seen from Beaucage Park Road by Renee Levesque and yours truly. They also observed Stilt Sandpipers at Verner Lagoon. Grant and Shirley McKercher were entertained by eight swooping Common Nighthawks near Nipissing Village and Gary and Connie Sturge saw another near Powassan. Two new warblers were spotted – in their confusing fall colours - Orange-crowned and Bay-breasted, both at Laurier Woods, and enjoyed along with lots of other warblers by the Levesque duo. Lisa Hackett spotted a fall plumaged Scarlet Tanager at Sweetman Gardens and one was seen by the Sturges in the Powassan area and another one was observed by the Levesque pair at Laurier Woods. The latter pair also spotted a Clay-coloured Sparrow, making its first appearance of the year, along with dozens of other sparrows migrating near Verner Lagoon.

Now getting back to basics: Common Loons were, of course, noted by some, as were Pied-billed Grebes and Double-crested Cormorants, the latter two at Cache Bay. Great Blue Herons were found by several, but Green Herons were seen only by Lisa and by the Levesque duo in Laurier Woods. Turkey Vultures were relatively common, soaring as they do in the sky after Sunday's rains. Canada Geese are becoming even more plentiful again as the first major flocks veer south. Three Trumpeter Swans graced Cache Bay, observed by Therez Violette among others.

Thirteen species of ducks were noted, most within the lagoons, with Common Mergansers being seen in large families within Lake Nipissing by the McKercher and Levesque pairs. Common Goldeneyes, Lesser Scaups and Ring-necked Ducks, all diving ducks, are now being seen a bit more regularly at various places.

Now among the predators, Ospreys have pretty well left their nests, but Therez spotted one near Cache Bay. The Sturges found a Sharp-shinned Hawk near Powassan. Broad Wings were seen by the Levesque pair, along with American Kestrel and Merlin, the latter two also spotted by several others.

Ruffed Grouse were found only by Kaye Edmunds.

American Coots were in large numbers at Warren Lagoon, while Sandhill Cranes were seen in the hundreds in West Nipissing and elsewhere.

Only five shorebirds were found, most within Verner Lagoon, heading south, including both Yellowlegs and Least and Stilt Sandpipers, the latter being the most unusual. Kaye spotted the Spotted Sandpiper at Callander Lagoon.

As to gulls, Bonaparte Gulls are now about in large numbers, many close to Sunset Park. Caspian Terns were still around Cache Bay, but neither Black nor Common ones were observed over the weekend.

Mourning Doves are still being seen in fair numbers. Doug Patterson still has a calling Barred Owl near his home in Mattawan Township. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are fighting hard at many feeders, including that of Elsa Tafel's, to obtain enough sugar for their long flights south, soon to occur.

Belted Kingfishers were noted by several birders. The four main woodpecker species (counting the sapsucker) were discovered, with only Doug finding the Pileated.

As to flycatchers, the Eastern Wood Pewee and Least were at Laurier Woods found by the Levesque duo. They also saw Eastern Kingbirds, as did the Sturges who also saw the Eastern Phoebe.

Three species of vireos were discovered – the Red-eye by many, and the Warbling and Blue-headed by the Levesque pair at Laurier Woods, a good location for passerines over the weekend.

Jays, crows and ravens were seen by many. But, as for swallows, the only observers were the Sturges who saw only Tree Swallows. Most swallows have already left for their southern climes.

Black-capped Chickadees were surely seen by everyone, but the Red-breasted Nuthatch by a lesser number and the White-breasted only by a couple. Eastern Bluebirds were enjoyed by the Levesque pair near Warren. In the thrush family, the Veery was still fairly common in Laurier Woods. Renee saw there the only Hermit Thrush. American Robins are still being seen by many.

The Gray Catbird and Brown Thrasher are still in Laurier Woods. European Starlings were not quite so gregarious, but there are lots around. And the Cedar Waxwings! - they seemed to be everywhere, often just sitting on bare branches, seemingly digesting their harvest of berries.

Wood Warblers – some seventeen species were discovered. They are banding

together to go south for sure. Many, including at least four sightings of the Ovenbird, were in Laurier Woods, enjoyed by the Levesque pair, with the Black and White found elsewhere by Lisa and the Nashville, Black-throated Green and Northern Waterthrush by the McKerchers. Missing were the Parula, Palm and Wilson's.

Six sparrow species were identified, with Helen McCombie and John Levesque, among very few, noting the Chipping. Savannah, Song, Swamp and White-throated were the other species (besides the Clay-coloured). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in their fall colours were at Laurier Woods.

Bobolinks - a not too common species around here - but on Saturday afternoon at the Verner Lagoon edges, they were in huge profusion; hundreds, all in their sparrow-like, yellowish, colours. Redwings, likewise, were in huge flocks, sporting a lot of female or juvenile colourations. Common Grackles were still fairly widespread.

Purple Finches were noted at a few feeders, including Mary Ann Kenrick's. Pine Siskins were still at Doug's home in Mattawan. American Goldfinch were very common, but Evening Grosbeaks were noted only by a few, including the McKerchers. House Sparrows were spotted by the Sturges and the Levesque duo.

And so, that does it. Some notable absences included Killdeer, Brown Creeper, wrens and kinglets. But, all in all, a rather respectable bundle of grand birds! Congrats to all participants.

Please consider being available for the September Bird Bash. It is only 2 weeks away – **September 10 and 11**. There should still be lots of new birds passing through then.