

March, 2014, North Bay Area Bird Count

Winter had hardly released any grip upon our area; but 27 observers did find some 45 species of birds over the last week-end of March. This was a low number – over the past ten years of such local observations. Indeed in 2012 we saw some 67 in March, and 59 in 2013; but, it was not the lowest count – in 2005 and 2011 we saw only 43.

Clearly the most exciting had to be the Great Gray Owl up at the tip of Larocque Rd., north of the university. Spotted by Renee and John Levesque, and yours truly, it was also located by Fred Pinto and by Greg Jaskie. The latter also found Snowy Owl, previously noted in January.

Other new birds for the year include a lone Turkey Vulture spotted by Kaye Edmunds, and our two “favourite” gulls, Ring-billed and Herring, seen in good number by Greg and Pat Boxwell along the Ottawa River. The latter gull was also seen as individuals by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing south-east of Powassan, by Linda Stoner and Rose McClelland, nearby, and by Chris Sukha near Field. Chris also found our first of the year Black-backed Woodpecker. John Levesque observed the year’s first White-throated Sparrow. First Pine Grosbeaks were observed by Yvan Latour near Pine Lake, and by Keith Thornborrow near South River, while the Anderson duo also found White-winged Crossbills.

Now going more or less in taxonomic order, Canada Geese were seen in small numbers by Kaye, and the Boxwells; the latter also noted Common Mergansers and the Common Goldeneye in the Ottawa, while Angela and Gary Martin saw well Goldeneye, and Trumpeter Swans in one of the west bays of Lake Nipissing.

Just a few predators – Bald Eagles, noted by Renee and your compiler off hwy 533, the Stoner duo, and by Jaskie off Airport Rd. And, Red-tailed Hawks, by the Stoner pair, and by the Martins. Ruffed grouse were fairly common, while Keith Thornborrow again observed a few Wild Turkeys near South River.

The Northern Hawk Owl was still around, near Astorville, observed by the Anderson pair. The three major woodpeckers were still widely noted, including the somewhat rarer Downy , at the home of Elsa Tafel. A Northern Shrike was at the feeder area of Mary Young and Lucas Beaver. Gray Jays were seen by the Levesque duo, and by the Martins.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were pretty common, with the White-breasted , less so, noted by Kevan Cowcill and just a few others. Perhaps surprisingly, in this frigid winter, Tree Sparrows were still pretty common observed by the Young- Beaver duo, and three others. The Levesques were the only observers of the Dark-eyed Junco. Snow Buntings were at Thornborows, Boxwells, Martins and Andersons in large numbers. Gary and Connie Sturge saw a lone Red-winged Blackbird near their home west of Powassan. Common Grackles were discovered only by the Stoner duo. Red Crossbills were noted by the Levesque pair along hwy 533. They also found a few Pine Siskins, as did Pinto, and Mary Ann Kenrick.

Evening Grosbeaks were at just a few spots, including that of Donna Demarco and Vicki Wunsch in the east end. Purple Finches were still very common, including at the home of Therez Violete in Sturgeon Falls.

The weather began finally to co-operate somewhat this week-end, and the efforts by all were certainly exemplary. Congrats all!

Check out this and other monthly counts upon the web page at - - <http://www.nipissing-naturalist.com/>

- April's count will be over the week-end of the 26th and 27th. Prepare for it. This time there definitely should be lots of new migrants!

Dick Tafel, Your Compiler

