

## **Bird Bash Report**

### **March 2017**

*By Dick Tafel, compiler*

An exciting bird bash for sure! Some 28 participants managed to locate 51 bird species. Considering the continuing heavy snow cover as well as freezing rain on Sunday, the results were especially good. The average for March during our past 14 years of these efforts has been 51, although for two years, last year and in 2012, it was 64 or over.

As usual, we start off with new birds for the year generally in taxonomic order. And so that gets us to geese and the very rare for our area, the Greater White-fronted Goose. Two of these, discovered by Gary and Connie Sturge, have shown up just west of Powassan, initially on Maple Hill Road and subsequently on Purdon Line. They also spotted about 50 Canada Geese nearby, also observed by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing, and by Renee Levesque and yours truly.

One Hooded Merganser was noticed by Keith Thornborrow near the town of South River.

Sharp-shinned Hawk was seen by Keith, and a Rough-legged Hawk was identified by yours truly along Hwy 64 near Lavigne, and spotted as well near Powassan by the Anderson pair and by the Sturges. The first American Kestrel and the first Turkey Vulture were seen by Steve Pitt in the east end, while a Merlin was observed by the Levesque duo on Jocko Point Road and by the foursome of Brent and Laura Turcotte and Gary and Luanne Chowns within North Bay. The latter four also saw a Peregrine Falcon on top of the Pro-Cathedral!

A Spruce Grouse was unearthed by Keith, also near his home area of South River.

Both Ring-billed and Herring Gulls were spotted for the first time during this year's Bird Bash, though still in small numbers. Both gulls were seen by the Anderson duo, while only the Ring-bills were seen by the Levesque pair and Herrings by Keith and the Sturges.

Three Great Grays were watched by Ernie Frayle southwest of Mattawa; one was seen by the Levesque pair on Jocko Point Road; and Ed Rowley and Kathy Byers spotted one just briefly in the southerly part of our area. To see so many Great

Gray Owls in our area has been remarkable. And that's not all! The Levesque pair had a close-up view of the Northern Hawk Owl sitting on a wire crossing Hwy. 64 outside Lavigne – another owl not always seen in our area. And the Anderson pair came upon a Great Horned Owl. So quite the owl weekend!

A few Red-winged Blackbirds, usually alone and near feeders, were spotted by Ernie at his place in Calvin Township; by Mary Young near Corbeil; by Steve at Lake Talon; by the Sturges; by Therez Violette in Sturgeon Falls; by Keith in South River; and by the Anderson duo.

A Hoary Redpoll was recognized by Kevan Cowcill. This bird, very similar to the Common Redpoll, is still considered a separate species, though experts are currently debating whether they are really a subspecies of the Common Redpoll. A decision should be made this summer.

Now we get to the other birds seen during the month – continuing in roughly taxonomic order. Mallards are still around, of course, in large numbers – though no one noticed any Blacks this month. Common Goldeneyes in limited numbers were spotted by the Levesque, Sturge, and Anderson pairs, within the now open areas of the major rivers. Common Mergansers were spotted by Kaye Edmunds near Mattawa.

A Northern Goshawk was spotted (again!) by the Sturges at the end of Stillaway Line, west of Powassan. A Red-tailed Hawk was found by the Levesque duo along Hwy 64. Bald Eagles are still showing up in fair numbers, seen by Grant and Shirley McKercher within Callander; the Levesque duo in the west end; and the Sturges, the Anderson pair, Keith and the Turcotte group all near or south of Powassan.

Ruffed Grouse were seen by a few, including Donna Demarco and Ernie in the east end. Wild Turkeys are still being noted by Keith and also by Steve. Mourning Doves were on a fair number of lists, as were, of course, Rock Pigeons.

The Red-bellied Woodpecker continues to be seen by Mary Young at her feeder. Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers remain quite common and were at the home of Peter and Pam Handley, among others. Pileated Woodpeckers were seen by Keith, Kaye, and the Anderson pair, as well as others.

No Gray Jays were located this month, but, of course Blue Jays, American Crows

and Common Ravens were pretty evident, especially the crows.

Black-capped Chickadees were enjoyed by everyone. The White-breasted Nuthatch was spotted by Elsa Tafel, the Turcotte foursome and some others, while the Red-breasted seemed to be less common, observed by Steve and just a few others.

Bohemian Waxwings are still about, but in lesser numbers, seen by Kaye and by the Turcotte bunch, the latter on Booth Road.

American Tree Sparrows have become slightly more common, noticed by Ernie and the Levesque pair. A Dark-eyed Junco remained at the Turcotte feeder, while both a Lapland Longspur and small flock of Snow Buntings were spotted by the Sturges. The Anderson duo also observed the buntings.

A Northern Cardinal was seen only by Kaye. The Common Grackle had not really arrived in any numbers yet, but one was still around the home of Therez, and seen by Kaye and by the Sturges at their home west of Powassan.

A Purple Finch was observed by Steve at Lake Talon. A few Common Redpolls, which had been quite rare for most of the winter here, were identified by Kevan, the Anderson pair, John Levesque, Mary Ann Kenrick, Mary, the McKerchers and Therez. Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches were at almost every feeder, including Helen McCombie's. Evening Grosbeaks were still around at a few places, observed by the Anderson duo and by the Turcotte foursome, among others.

We always end with the House Sparrow, seen in small numbers by the Sturges, the Anderson pair and the Levesque duo.

And that completes the March Bird Bash. Well done everyone!

Plan to participate within a much more active event – **the April Bird Bash over the weekend of April 29.**