

Bird Bash Report

October 2019

By Dick Tafel, compiler

Twenty of us found 77 species of birds this past, variably weathered weekend. That is rather below the average of 84 (and last year's 89); however, on four other October outings during our 18 years (our first one was in October 2003), we did see fewer. So, I guess we cannot be too disappointed, though yours truly did feel the number of passerines were unduly limited.

We must now get to the birds first seen during a Bird Bash this year, in roughly taxonomic order. What that basically means is in the same order as is within the Seasonal Checklist of the North Bay area (which most of you should have), or if you don't, within the order laid out in your field guides.

The first one has to be the exciting 4 Snow Geese within a field next to the Warren Lagoon – spotted by the duo of Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing and also by the duo of Renee Levesque and yours truly. Strangely, a single Snow Goose was seen at about the same time in the same location last year.

Then we have both Surf Scoters and Black Scoters observed off Sunset Point by the Levesque duo. The Surf was also seen at the same location by Brent Turcotte, while the Grant McKercher/ Keith Pearson duo and Kaye Edmunds, as well as the Levesque duo, saw one at Callander Lagoon.

Spruce Grouse was found by Keith Thornborrow near South River.

Horned Larks were discovered by the Levesque pair at Powassan Lagoon.

Palm Warblers, one of the last warblers normally to be noted in the fall, were found by Kaye.

Now to the other birds seen: the Common Loon was found by a few, namely by Keith, Grant McKercher's duo and Lloyd and Janet Sparks.

The Red-necked Grebe, last seen in May on a Bird Bash, was discovered by Brent, Kaye, the Levesque and McKercher pairs, once again off Sunset Point. Double-crested Cormorants were noted by many groups, as were (in smaller numbers) Great Blue Herons. One can add Turkey Vultures and Canada Geese to that widespread list.

Counting mergansers among them (and also the first seen birds mentioned above) some 17 duck species were discovered, most of them within the protection of the many local lagoons. That includes Northern Pintail, the first such since April, one of which was noted by the Levesque pair at Callander Lagoon and one lonely Bufflehead also there. Hooded Mergansers were noted only by Keith and Brent. We should add two other almost ducks - the American Coot, found by Gary and Connie Sturge, and Common Gallinules which were seen again in Cache Bay by the Levesque duo.

Predators seemed to be more common than usual, with Northern Harrier being seen by the Anderson duo, Buddy Myles, and by the Anderson and Levesque pairs; a Sharp-shinned Hawk by the Sparks; Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel by the Sturges and by the Levesque pair, who also saw Bald Eagles and a Merlin, one of which was also noted by Nancy Pearson. The Anderson pair also viewed the Red-tailed.

Sandhill Cranes were about in large numbers within various fields, seen by the Anderson and Levesque duos and by Buddy. Ruffed Grouse were noted by several groups, but the Wild Turkey was seen solely by Keith.

No shorebirds at all were discovered. That was rather surprising for sure!

Ring-billed Gulls were the only birds noted from home by Elsa Tafel, but were, of course, widely dispersed, along with Herring Gulls. Three or four Great Black-backed Gulls were noted along the North Bay shoreline by Kaye, as well as the McKercher and the Levesque duos. No terns were observed.

Rock Doves were as common as ever, but Mourning Doves were noted only by Buddy, Keith and the Sturges.

Belted Kingfishers were observed by the Levesque duo, Buddy and Keith.

Downy Woodpeckers were seen solely by Nancy, Mary Ann Kenrick, and Pete and Pam Handley, but Hairys were noted by many. Northern Flickers still seemed to be fairly common. Pileateds were found by the Anderson pair, the Sturges and Kaye.

Now getting to the Passerines, sometimes called "songbirds", we start with flycatchers. Eastern Phoebes were noted by the Sturges and the McKercher pair. The Sparks found a Great Crested Flycatcher.

The Canada Jay was seen only by Keith, the first since June. Blue Jays, American Crows and Common Ravens were widely observed.

Black-capped Chickadees were also widely noted, but the Red-breasted Nuthatch was

seen only by Brent, the Sturges and Keith. The White-breasted Nuthatch was found solely by the McKercher pair.

Fast moving Golden-crowned Kinglets were spotted by the Levesque duo, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets by Brent.

Although our popular American Robins seemed to be in lower numbers than usual for this time of year, although noted by many, a very active migrating flock of fourteen was watched by the Levesque pair in the forested area by Powassan Lagoon.

A Gray Catbird was spotted by the Sturges.

Large flocks of European Starlings were seen by many.

A good number of American Pipits were noted – by the Anderson and Levesque pairs, and by the Sturges and Kaye.

Cedar Waxwings were watched by the Sparks.

No warblers, except for the aforementioned Palm, were found.

As to sparrows, American Tree was noted by the Sturges, first one since April. They also spotted Savannahs, as did the Levesque pair, Buddy and the Anderson duo. Song Sparrows seemed to be the most widely identified. Lincoln's were seen by the Levesque duo; Swamps by Buddy; White-throats by Brent, Kaye, Mary Ann and the Handleys. White-crowned had arrived back in fairly large numbers, unseen here since May, and noted by John Levesque, the Sturges, the McKercher and the Levesque duos.

Red-winged Blackbirds were still about in large flocks, seen by Mary Ann, and the Anderson and Levesque pairs.

Eastern Meadowlark were observed by the Anderson duo.

Common Grackle were about still about in fair numbers, observed by Keith, the Levesque duo and the Anderson pair.

Pine Grosbeak, first since February, were noted amidst the conifers near South River by Keith.

American Goldfinch were fairly common, while House Sparrows were seen only by Buddy, the Sturges and the Anderson pair.

And that ends the October report. Very good going of all participants!

The November outing might not be quite as spectacular, but will, as always, be interesting, especially with many more feeders around. It will take place over the weekend of **November 9 and 10**. Be ready for it!