

Bird Bash Report

September 2017

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

A very good turn-out of 23 participants in this month's Bird Bash during a lovely, sunny weekend. And, a good number of bird species discovered – 106! That compares very well to our 14-year average of 105 and to last month's number of 97.

Starting as usual in roughly taxonomic order with new birds for the year – first bird upon the list is – the Snow Goose! There amidst some 400 or more Canada Geese within an unploughed field next to Warren Lagoon this almost all-white goose did stand out! Rare for this district, it was an exciting discovery for Renee Levesque and yours truly.

Then there was the “thin as a rail” Sora Rail noted by Kaye Edmunds in the east cell of Callander lagoon.

Finally, there were (at last) some very interesting shorebirds gracing the North Bay waterfront beaches – Black-bellied Plover (distinguished in non-breeding plumage from the American Golden Plover by its white rump noticeable when it flies), and a very fast-walking Sanderling, walking as though it was in a huge hurry to catch a just-departing ferry. These shorebirds were discovered by Grant McKercher, Marc Buchanan and the Levesque duo.

Then there was the Pectoral Sandpiper, seemingly the last shorebird to stay at Callander Lagoon, as the waters have fast risen there in the past few days. It was identified by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing, Grant and the Levesque pair.

Finally, a Lincoln's Sparrow was identified by Chris Sukha near Field.

Back now to other birds observed over the weekend. The Common Loon comes first, as usual. More are being noticed, gathering together on the major waterways. Such was the case on Lake Nipissing with a raft of at least 35 being bothered by hovering flocks of gulls, noticed by the Levesque duo; some were also seen on Lake Nipissing by the Anderson pair, Grant, and Marc Buchanan, and on Trout Lake, one seen by Elsa Tafel.

A single Pied-billed Grebe was watched by Chris and by the Levesque pair at Cache Bay. Double-crested Cormorants were still about, seen by several. Likewise, the Great Blue Heron, seen by Steve Pitt and others. The Green Heron was noticed only by Kaye.

Turkey Vultures were still fairly common, and Canada Geese were gathering in ever greater numbers.

A single Trumpeter Swan was still present at a Cache Bay trailer park, discovered by Therez Violette and others venturing into the area. Thirteen species of ducks (or similar) were still around, including a rather rare for this district Northern Pintail found by Chris. It had last been seen during a Bird Bash in May. The only ones we might have expected but were not seen were the Hooded Merganser and Lesser Scaup.

Among predators, Grant was the only one to observe the Osprey (most of which have just recently begun their southern migration). Northern Harriers were on the Levesque and the Anderson pair's list. A single Broadwing was seen by John Levesque and by Chris. The Red-tail was observed by Chris and by the Anderson duo. Bald Eagles were seen by Grant and the Levesque pair. American Kestrels were still fairly common, noticed by many.

Then we get to Ruffed Grouse, discovered by Kaye and by the Anderson pair. Wild Turkeys were noted only by Linda Stoner and Rose McClelland.

American Coots were watched by the Levesque and the Anderson duos at Callander Lagoon. Several flocks of Sandhill Cranes were noted by the Levesque and Stoner duos, by Gary and Connie Sturge, by Kaye and by Donna Demarco.

A Semipalmated Plover was discovered by Marc Buchanan, Grant, and the Levesque pair along the Nipissing waterfront. No Killdeers were seen, somewhat surprisingly. Greater Yellowlegs were spotted by Paul Smylie, and the locally breeding Spotted Sandpiper was found by the Levesque pair off Jocko Point.

Bonaparte Gulls were spotted by Marc; Great Black-backed Gulls by Grant and by the Levesque pair; and, of course, many, many Ring-billed and Herring Gulls were seen all over the place. Caspian Terns were at Cache Bay, as were Common Terns.

Rock Pigeons were certainly everywhere, but Mourning Doves much less so, although also seen by many.

The only owl was the Barred heard by the Lori duo.

A single Common Nighthawk was enjoyed by the Levesque pair, circling around Jocko Point. That species was last noticed during a Bird Bash in May.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were still here (they won't be much longer), watched by Steve, Helen McCombie, Elsa, and Doug Paterson.

Grant was the only one to observe the Belted Kingfisher.

The five main, local species of woodpeckers (or similar) were all picked up, discovered by many.

Among the flycatchers, the Eastern Phoebe was still pretty widespread, but the Least was seen only by Grant, and the Great Crested by the Levesque pair. Four species of vireos were located - Blue-headed by John; Philadelphia by the Levesque pair; Warbling by Mary Ann Kenrick and Paul; and the common Red-eye by many.

The Gray Jay determined by some that it should be deemed Canada's national bird, was spotted only by Chris, the first one noticed during a Bird Bash since April; but the Blue Jay seemed to be almost everywhere. American Crows and Common Ravens were widely noted.

The only swallows were the Tree spotted by Kaye and the Stoner pair, and the Barn, by the Sturges.

Black-capped Chickadees were everywhere, the two nuthatch species, less so, but the Brown Creeper was discovered solely by John.

The Anderson pair found the Golden-crowned Kinglet, while they and the Sturges were the only ones to locate a Veery. American Robins were still about in fairly large numbers.

A Gray Catbird was located by the Levesque duo, as well as by the Sturges and Kaye, the latter two also finding the Brown Thrasher. European Starlings remain commonplace, and Cedar Waxwings were noted by several.

Now for the wood warblers - eleven were identified, tougher to do with the

confusing fall ones. The ones seen were: Nashville, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Yellow-rumped (the most common), Pine, Palm (probably the second most common), Black and White, American Redstart, Ovenbird and Common Yellowthroat. Five groups reported seeing some of them.

Scarlet Tanager was noted by Mary Ann Kenrick.

Seven sparrows were identified this month, the main new one arriving being the White-crowned discovered by Steve.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were identified by the Anderson pair,

Red-winged Blackbirds were still around in large flocks, along with Common Grackles.

Purple finches were noted by Mary Ann, Doug, and the Anderson duo. American Goldfinches were widely dispersed. Evening Grosbeaks were also on Doug's list.

House Sparrows were observed by the Sturges, the Anderson and the Levesque pairs.

And that is it! A pretty formidable list. Congrats to all participants!

Mark down October's Bird bash to take place over the weekend of the 7, 8 and 9. Because this is the Thanksgiving weekend, October's Bird Bash will be held over a 24-hour consecutive period for the full Thanksgiving weekend.