

## Bird Bash Report December 1-2, 2018

*By Dick Tafel, compiler*

Well, the weather wasn't so bad for 24 participants to check out the local birds in early December. But the number of birds seen was the lowest in 16 years – at 40! The average for December had been 48. (Last December, participants found 53 species!) Might be something to do with “global colding” since we have had the coldest November and greatest early snow cover in a very long time! There was little open water except at Trout Lake and the Ottawa and Sturgeon Rivers.

However, there were some very neat birds spotted, and as usual we will start in rough taxonomic order with those observed for the first time this year during a Bird Bash. That must firstly be Long-tailed Ducks, three of them being luckily spotted by Renee Levesque and yours truly in Trout Lake at the foot of Dugas Road towards the end of the day.

But then there were the gulls - beautiful Glaucous and Iceland Gulls and the especially rare Slaty-backed Gull! The latter had never been seen here before. It is a resident of northeastern Asia, but can regularly be seen during the summer months in small numbers in western Alaska. (It had formally been identified a few days before by gull experts after its picture was posted by Renee on eBird. She posted it after Lori Anderson and yours truly, along with Renee, had seen it at the landfill site on November 24.) All three gulls were noted at the landfill site by the Levesque duo and by Stephen O'Donnell. Glaucous Gulls were also noted at the west end of Trout Lake later in the afternoon by Kevan Cowcill and the duo of Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing.

Continuing now with other birds noted and previously observed during other monthly Bird Bashes this year, we must start with Mallards. They are still in large numbers, especially near the Green Store at the northwest corner of Trout Lake. No American Blacks or any other puddle ducks were noted. However, a few groups of Common Goldeneye and Common Mergansers were found by Grant and Shirley McKercher and by the Levesque pair, while Kevan, the Anderson pair and Brent and Laura Turcotte also spotted the Common Goldeneye.

Among predators, the Bald Eagle was the only one seen. About as many as 10 were at the North Bay landfill site, while Gary and Connie Sturge saw the Bald Eagle near Powassan and Keith Thornborrow, in South River.

Ruffed Grouse was discovered by Stephen, Ernie Frayle, Mary Young and Donna

Demarco, while Wild Turkeys were upon Keith's and the Sturges' lists.

Other gulls noted were, of course, lots of Herrings, very few Ring-bills and several Great Black-backs. These were either at the landfill site during the day or at the west end of Trout Lake later in the afternoon.

Rock Pigeons continue in large numbers, while Mourning Doves were seen by several including new participant Buddy Myles in the west end. No owls were discovered.

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers seemed very plentiful, while Pileateds were seen by Kevan and just a few others.

Northern Shrikes were noticed by the Sturges and by Renee at her place.

Canada Jays (formerly called Gray Jays) were discovered by the Levesque duo, Ernie, and the Anderson pair. Of course, Blue Jays were well distributed. The American Crow and the Common Raven were noted by several.

Black-capped Chickadees were at every feeder, with Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches almost as numerous. But no creepers nor kinglets.

European Starlings seemed to be down in numbers, but were noted by most observers.

Beautiful Bohemian Waxwings were observed only by Therez Violette in Sturgeon Falls.

Down to sparrows - only the American Tree Sparrow and the White-throated were discovered, the former by Steve, the Sturges and Ernie, and the latter by Elsa Tafel at the family feeder, by the Anderson pair and by the Turcottes. A few Dark-eyed Juncos were on Renee's home list, Steve Pitt's, Keith's, Therez's and the Sturges. Surprisingly, no Snow Buntings or Lapland Longspurs were discovered.

A Red-winged Blackbird was noted by Stephen and the Turcottes. A Common Grackle was at Mary Young's feeder.

Pine Grosbeaks were widely spread, noted by Kevan, Peter and Pam Handley, Ernie, Renee, the Anderson pair, Donna and the Sturges. The latter five groups also saw many surprisingly common Evening Grosbeaks, as did Mary Ann Kenrick, Mary Young and Therez.

Red Crossbills were discovered by the Turcottes near Highway 63.

Common Redpolls were noted by the Levesque duo, the Anderson pair, the Sturges and

the McKerchers. Pine Siskins were upon several lists, including that of John Levesque. He also saw American Goldfinches, as did Keith.

Finally, the House Sparrow was noted by Buddy and by the Anderson and Levesque pairs.

Forty species altogether - not bad considering the very cold November and early December weather. Congrats all!

The first Bird Bash of the New Year will take place over the weekend of **January 19 and 20**. Mark that date down. We will see whether we might see more birds in January than we did during this very wintry December, although that has never happened before.