

# Bird Bash Report

## January 2019

*By Dick Tafel, compiler*

This being one of the very coldest winters here in a very long time, the birds seem to have noticed – by their absences. And so, despite a great number of participants – 26 - the number of birds spotted at 29 is the lowest number during our 16 years of continuous January observations. The average for January is 36, but there were three previous lows of 31. Last year we observed 40. As intimated previously, this is all no doubt due to “global colding”!

Anyhow, we did have some wonderful sightings, and since this is the first month of a new year, all of them must be deemed first of the year; and so I will proceed in rough taxonomic order for all the birds observed.

That begins with Mallards. Normally these are so relatively common that they are often just included among a general heading of ducks. However, this time they had deserted their normal, quiet waters of the water treatment plant and the artificially warm water near the Green Store on the north side of Trout Lake, to take comfort mostly at the residence of Gary and Luanne Chowns. They had 35 of them! Grant and Shirley McKercher also spotted a few.

We next get to predators which includes a Red-tailed Hawk observed by Gary and Connie Sturge at the Powassan landfill site. Then there were the Bald Eagles! Their stately, exciting size makes them fun to spot, and spotted they were by the Sturges, Lloyd and Janet Sparks, Steve Pitt near Mattawa, and Renee Levesque and yours truly at the East Ferris landfill site.

Ruffed Grouse were fairly common, noted by many, including Donna Demarco, the Sturges, Ernie Frayle, and Brent and Laurie Turcotte. But, Wild Turkeys were seen only by Keith Thornborrow in the South River area.

Mourning Doves were also relatively common - at Steve's place, the Sturge's, the Chowns', and at Keith's. Of course, Rock Pigeons were very active at various semi-public locations.

Two owls figured in the count – always a treat: A Northern Saw-whet Owl spent most of the day in the Chowns' yard! And two beautiful white, male adult Snowy Owls were much enjoyed by the Levesque duo upon barn structures in West Nipissing.

Now as to woodpeckers, the Downy and Hairy were at most feeders, but the Pileateds seemed to be present at only three places – at the homes of John Levesque, Kaye Edmunds and Steve.

Single Northern Shrikes were discovered by the pair of Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing, by John in his yard and by the Chowns in their yard where the shrike feasted upon several chickadees.

Ernie was the only one to note the newly-named Canada Jay. But Blue Jays were fairly common, being at the home area of Mary Ann and Ted Kenrick and others. American Crows were observed by a few, including the Levesque pair, while Common Ravens were almost commonplace, observed by many, including Kathy Byers and Ed Rowley.

Black-capped Chickadees! They seemed to be everywhere, enjoying the seeds at many feeders - our winter cold does not seem to bother them in the least.

Red-breasted Nuthatches appeared in much smaller numbers than chickadees, but were also at many feeders, as were White-breasted Nuthatches, though fewer in number, and seen at the Chowns', Keith's , Kaye's, and Steve's.

Unfortunately no one came upon a flock of Bohemian Waxwings that had been at various locations in North Bay recently; nor any crossbills, nor the often wintry Pine Siskins, nor any Brown Creepers.

European Starlings, however, though not very plentiful, were seen in small numbers by the Levesque pair and a few others.

A White-throated Sparrow was noted by the Turcottes in their yard, and a White-crowned was at Ernie's.

The Anderson pair was the only one to find the often bountiful Snow Buntings, in the Chisholm area farm fields.

A Common Grackle was somehow managing at Ernie's.

Pine Grosbeaks were seemingly the most common “finch”, being noted by Keith, Pete and Pam Handley, and the Levesque and Anderson pairs.

Cute Common Redpolls were noted by Elsa Tafel, John, Renee, the McKerchers, and Keith.

Evening Grosbeaks were found by the Handleys and by Ernie.

House Sparrows were discovered by the Anderson and Levesque pairs and by the Sturges.

And so that concludes an extremely cold, bird-spotting weekend. Congrats to all participants for staying with it!

Maybe in February over the **Family Day weekend of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>** we will see a bigger list (or maybe not?). But mark down this three-day weekend event that coincides with the Great backyard Bird Count– and be ready!

Keep at it! The few winter birds around really do enjoy your attentions! You can tell that just by watching their enthusiasms.