

Nipissing Bird Bash Report

November 2017

By Dick Tafel, compiler

Seventeen hardy souls braved some not all that great weather to observe a surprisingly good number of birds this past weekend – 69! This is two more than the average for the past 16 years. (Yes, we have been consecutively running these “bird bashes” for that long!)

Beginning, as usual, in roughly taxonomic order with new birds seen for the year, we start with the Horned Grebe spotted by Brent Turcotte near the Narrows of Trout Lake.

Then there were the Cackling Geese. There seemed to be a small flock of these very small geese along the lakefront at North Bay observed by Renee Levesque and yours truly. It must be confessed that these are hard to discriminate from the many, many Canada Geese still around. But they are different –with shorter necks, stubbier bills, smaller, rounded heads and some the size of a Mallard Duck.

Next is the Black Scoter – a pair, which the Levesque duo saw clearly from Sunset Park. They also enjoyed a cute Long-tailed Duck from the Government Dock – still there on Wednesday. Further, they observed well a pair of Dunlins and four White-rumped Sandpipers at Powassan Lagoon. (The water in the southeast cell was very low and had in it as many as twenty shorebirds as recently as Wednesday). Finally, amidst some 1,000 or so other gulls swarming at the North Bay land fill site, they also discovered two all-white Iceland Gulls.

Getting now to birds seen previously during this year’s Bird Bash, we start with the Common Loons. A few are still around, found on Lake Nipissing by the Levesque pair who also saw Pied-billed Grebes at Cache Bay.

A Great Blue Heron was still within Steve Pitt's view in the east end. As intimated, Canada Geese were seen by many. They are still about in huge numbers. And a couple of Trumpeter Swans, one a juvenile, were at Cache Bay, watched by the Levesque pair.

Some 16 species of ducks and mergansers were still about, though most were seen within the lagoons, especially at Warren. The tiny Buffleheads were clearly the most prevalent duck. The only fairly common one in months past, not seen, was the Blue-winged Teal. And Steve and the Levesque duo were the only ones to see the Hooded Merganser.

As to predators, they have become few in number. The Northern Harrier was seen only by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing east of Powassan; Cooper's Hawk by Kaye Edmunds; Red-tailed Hawk by Gary and Connie Surge, Mary Young and by the Levesque pair, the latter two groups also seeing Bald Eagles, many of which are at the North Bay landfill site.

Ruffed Grouse were spotted by John Levesque, Kaye and Donna Demarco.

American Coots were still around at Callander and Warren Lagoons.

As to shorebirds, they were relatively abundant for the Levesque pair at Powassan Lagoon. There were Greater Yellowlegs, seen also off Sunset Park by Kaye; Semipalmated Sandpipers; Pectoral Sandpipers; as well as those seen for the first time and mentioned initially. This is rather late for such birds for around here. Only one of that family was seen during the October Bird Bash. However, this time the habitat at Powassan Lagoon was excellent for shorebirds, with a very low water level in one of the cells, though the rainy and misty weather certainly did not help in identifications.

Now to gulls: Marc Buchanan identified Bonaparte Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls off the Lake Nipissing shoreline. The latter gulls, seen as well by Kaye, were also at the North Bay landfill site. Ring-billed and Herring Gulls were still very evident near the shores, as well as at the landfill site.

Mourning Doves were seen by several participants.

One owl, the Barred, was heard by Steve.

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were widely identified, with both species being at the Handley residence. Pileateds were spotted by Mary Ann Kenrick, Doug, Steve and the Sturges.

Blue Jays were at very many feeders, while American Crows and Common Ravens were still quite abundant.

Horned Larks turned up unexpectedly at Powassan Lagoon for the Levesque duo. This species had not been observed around here since January.

Black-capped Chickadees and both nuthatches were very plentiful.

American Robins were still about here and there, especially within Pinewood subdivision, but certainly not plentiful anymore. European Starlings remain very common, usually in large flocks.

American Pipits in good numbers were about for a second month, observed by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing, as well as by the Levesque duo.

No warblers at all were identified. And surprisingly, only one sparrow species was spotted - the American Tree Sparrow found by Brent. Dark-eyed Juncos were seen by Doug Patterson, Mary, the Levesque duo and Kaye, who was the only one to find Snow Buntings.

Just a few Red-winged Blackbirds now – seen by the Sturges and by Mary Ann. Rusty Blackbirds were near Mary Young's residence, as were Common Grackles, found also by Doug, the Sturges and Brent.

The only Evening Grosbeaks were discovered by Doug. He also saw Purple Finches, as did the Anderson pair. The latter birders also saw American Goldfinches, as did Elsa Tafel. The Anderson and Levesque duos noted House Sparrows.

A very good result for a smaller than usual number of participants during some rather unpleasant weather conditions! Congratulations to all who managed to get out and observe.

Next month's Bird Bash will be held over the first weekend of December – **December 2-3**. Mark it down!