

Bird Bash Report

December 2020

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

Perhaps rather surprisingly, a very productive Bird Bash for December was held this month – almost a record number for the past 18 years! Some 29 participants managed to find 49 species! Only 3 other years have been slightly higher in number - 2005, 2006 and 2015. (Last year we saw only 36 species.) It wasn't that any one spotter group was especially productive, but rather that many just came upon one or two very different species!

And so, as usual and within the order of the Seasonal Checklist of Birds of North Bay and Area, we start off with the new Bird Bash species for the year. (You can get this checklist from Gary Sturge, Treasurer, if, as a member of the Bird Wing, you don't already have one.)

There were just two new species for a Bird Bash: Glaucous Gulls - at least eight - were watched by Renee Levesque and yours truly at the North Bay landfill site; and a Red-bellied Woodpecker was spotted by Marc Buchanan and Sarah Wheelan.

Then with other birds in similar order, we begin with an unexpected Great Blue Heron seen by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing along the east shore of Lake Nipissing– near a creek off “LSD”, according to Lori.

Canada Geese - not many around any longer - were observed in Callander Bay by Grant and Shirley McKercher.

American Black Ducks, along with lots of Mallards, were spotted by the Levesque pair on Trout Lake by the Green Store. Mallards were also seen by Cindy Lafleur, the Anderson pair, the McKerchers, and Brent and Laura Turcotte.

No other “puddle ducks” were found, but many divers were seen: Lesser Scaup were seen by the Buchanan duo and the Levesque pair. The latter pair also saw a Surf Scoter off Portage Beach Park, Trout Lake, while Brent and Laura Turcotte found a Black Scoter off Sunset Park, Lake Nipissing (before it froze over).

A Bufflehead and a Hooded Merganser were noted by the Levesque pair on Trout Lake, the Hooded also spotted by the Turcotte and the Anderson pairs. The latter pair also found Common Goldeneye and Common Mergansers, both also discovered by the Levesque duo and the McKerchers. Gary and Connie Sturge also found Common

Mergansers, as did the Turcottes and Elsa Tafel; and in the west end, Chris Sukha also found Common Goldeneye.

Now as to predators, a Northern Goshawk was spotted by the Sturges, along with a Rough-legged Hawk, also identified by Keith Thornborrow. Bald Eagles were the most common predator still around, watched by the Sturges, the McKerchers, the Anderson pair, Denise Desmarais, Lloyd and Janet Sparks, Paul Smylie, and the Levesque pair who saw at least a dozen at the North Bay landfill site. The Turcottes spotted a Peregrine Falcon within North Bay limits.

Ruffed Grouse were noted by Denise, the Sparks, Peter and Pam Handley, and the Sturges. The latter pair also found Wild Turkeys, as did Keith.

As to gulls, there were still myriads about the North Bay landfill site, including one Iceland Gull and a few Black-backed Gulls, both spotted by the Levesque pair. Herring Gulls were by far the most common gull that they saw there, also spotted in town by John Levesque, the Anderson duo, and the McKerchers. The latter two pairs, the Buchanan duo, Linda Conway and Oriana Pokorny also identified the few Ring-billed Gulls that were still around.

Rock Doves were as common as ever, while Mourning Doves were spotted by the Anderson pair, Keith, Oriana, and the Sturges.

No owls were discovered?

As to woodpeckers, lots of Downys and Hairys were about, but perhaps the most amazing was a Northern Flicker found still in town by the Buchanan pair. Pileated Woodpeckers were seen by many, including Elsa, Denise, Gary and Luanne Chowns, Cindy, Keith, John, Paul, the Anderson pair, and the McKerchers.

A Northern Shrike wreaked some havoc within Keith's yard, actually downing a sparrow while Keith watched.

Keith also had Canada Jays nearby in South River. He was the only one to find them. Blue Jays were fairly common, as were American Crows and Common Ravens.

Black-capped Chickadees were enjoyed almost everywhere, as were Red-breasted Nuthatches. The White-breasted Nuthatch was a bit less common, but noticed by Corinne Urrutia, Oriana, Paul, and several others.

Now to one of the least expected birds: an American Robin spotted by Buddy Myles within his small community area of Verner.

European Starlings were still about in fairly large numbers.

As to sparrows, there were still a few around: a White-throat was spotted by the Turcottes; a White-crowned was watched in desperation by Keith as it was attacked by the shrike; and Dark-eyed Juncos were discovered by the Levesques and the Sparks.

Snow Buntings were found solely by the Sturges.

Pine Grosbeaks had arrived in fair numbers, spotted by the Buchanan duo, the Handleys, Chris, the Turcottes, the McKerchers, the Levesque duo, the Sturges, and the Anderson pair.

Common Redpolls continue their recent arrival in fair numbers, spotted by the Buchanan duo, the Handleys, Chris, the Anderson pair, Keith, the Levesque duo, the McKerchers, and the Turcottes.

Pine Siskins were noted only by Keith.

American Goldfinch - upon their 12th monthly occasion - were spotted this month by the Handleys, the Levesques, the McKerchers, and the Buchanan pair.

Evening Grosbeaks were discovered solely by the Handleys, the Levesques, and Keith.

Finally, the House Sparrow: on the lists this month of the Anderson pair and Buddy.

And so that concludes a very successful December 2020 Bird Bash result. Congrats to all for your persistence and great effort.

The first Bird Bash of 2021 will be held **over the weekend of January 16.**

In the meantime, have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, even if somewhat more subdued than upon previous (and hopefully subsequent) non-virus years!!