

Bird Bash Report

May 2022

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

Wow! What an effort! Twenty-nine participants (in 19 groups), during a lovely weekend, managed to discover some 138 species of birds within a 50 mile (80.5 km.) radius of our North Bay neighbourhood.

Partly with the aid of the newest invention, the Merlin app, this number is slightly above the average for the past 19 years of our May Bird Bashes. Only five previous years have seen more species discovered.

And so onto the new birds seen for the year, following the order of the *Seasonal Checklist of the Birds of North Bay and Area*: That starts (surprisingly) with the Broad-winged Hawk, noticed by John Levesque, Greg Jaski, Linda Stoner, Lori Anderson, Jeremy Corbeil (our newest, ten-year old member), Lloyd and Janet Sparks, and Renee Levesque with your compiler.

We then have the Sora Rail noted by Grant and Shirley McKercher and Lori in Laurier Woods.

The Common Gallinule was spotted by Chris Sukha in Cache Bay.

As to shorebirds, the Levesque pair saw a Semipalmated Plover at Warren Lagoon, along with 8 Least Sandpipers and one Dunlin, plus Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. Chris also saw there Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpipers, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Short-billed Dowitchers. Spotted Sandpipers were also seen by the latter two groups, as well as by Gary and Connie Sturge, Brent and Laura Turcotte, the McKerchers, and Greg.

Bonaparte's Gulls were observed by Linda, Jeremy, the McKerchers, your compiler, and Greg, all presumably near the rocky islets of Sunset Park.

Three Black Terns were heard by Chris at Cache Bay. As well, he saw Caspian Terns that were also noted by Denise Desmarais and by Linda; Caspian and Common Terns were spotted by the Levesque pair, Greg, and the McKerchers.

A Black-billed Cuckoo was heard by June and Kevin Telford and also by Chris.

The now difficult-to-discover Common Nighthawk was heard by Chris and the McKerchers, while the wonderful Whippoorwill was heard solely by Mary Young.

Chimney Swifts were about in goodly numbers and watched in the late evenings by Elsa Tafel, the McKerchers, the Levesque duo, April, and Chris.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were enjoyed by many: Faye Oie, Connie and Gary Sturge, Peter and Pam Handley, Steve Pitt, Lori, Denise, the Sparks, the Turcottes, Mary, Chris, the Telfords, Elsa, the Levesque duo, the McKerchers, John, and Greg.

Now as to new flycatchers, some just recently arrived: the Eastern Wood Pewee was observed by April McCrum, the Sturges, Greg, John, Mary, and the Telfords. The Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Eastern Kingbird were all spotted by Lori, the Sturges, Greg, and the Levesque pair. The McKerchers missed the Alder. The Telfords missed the Eastern Kingbird. Chris missed the Great Crested. Denise missed the Least. Cindy Lafleur, Jeremy, and Linda caught sight of or heard only the Least. April noted the Least and Alder. Steve caught sight only of the Eastern Kingbird. Where was the Olive-sided?

Three new vireos were seen: the Warbling, Red-eyed and Philadelphia. Almost everyone heard, if not saw, the Red-eyed, while the Warbling was observed by the Levesque pair, the McKerchers, Jeremy, the Sturges, Chris, Greg, Mary, and Lori. The difficult- to- identify Philadelphia by its song alone was noted by the Levesque pair, Faye, April, and John.

Three new swallows arrived this month: Cliff, Bank and Northern Rough-winged. Chris found the latter two; Lori found the Cliff; and the Levesque pair found the Bank.

Two new wrens were located: the House, noted by Chris, Greg, and the Sturges, who also unearthed the hard-to- find Sedge.

Somewhat surprisingly, three of the four new thrushes were not spotted by many, with the Eastern Bluebird only upon Steve's list, while Swainson's was heard clearly only by your compiler. The Wood Thrush was noted only by the Sturges. Veerys were observed, however, by many - April, Mary, Lori, the Levesque pair, Chris, the Sturges, Greg, the McKerchers, Denise, Jeremy, April, and the Telfords.

Gray Catbirds were also noted by many - John, the Sturges, Denise, the McKerchers, Greg, Chris, the Levesque pair, Linda, Lori, and Mary.

As to Cedar Waxwings, not a lot of sightings yet, but, they were observed by Lori, Linda, the Levesque duo, Chris, Greg, Steve, the McKerchers, Cindy, the Sparks, and the Sturges.

Now to the wonderful, but often difficult to find, wood warblers: Only two of nineteen species discovered were prior to May's Bird Bash. It is too time-consuming to try to delineate which of what were observed by whom. And so, your compiler will start by detailing the new ones discovered, following the order of the checklist and then commenting upon the listers: Golden-winged (very rare for this area), Nashville, Northern Parula, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Pine, Blackpoll, Black and White, American Redstart, Mourning, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's, and Canada.

The Telfords noted ten new Bird Bash warblers - the Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, and Canada being perhaps paramount.

The Sturges marked down fifteen new ones - the Golden-winged surely being the most exciting, but also including the extra pretty Mourning, Canada, and Northern Parula. Their exceptional results were much due to a recording device on top of their car helped by the new birding assistant, the Merlin app.

Faye saw nine new ones, a great result for a new birder. She saw among her nine, the Canada, the Northern Parula, and the outstanding Blackburnian.

Another great result for a new birder was eight new ones spied by young Jeremy - the Blackpoll certainly among the most difficult to see and identify, being normally among the last to arrive while the leaves have almost fully formed. Magnolias and Common Yellowthroats were some of his other exciting finds.

The Sparks observed three new ones, including the Chestnut-sided, a bird which welcomes visitors by chanting, sometimes as incessantly as the Red-eyed Vireo, *Very, very pleased to meet you.*

Denise found seven new warblers, including the easy- to- identify and the aptly named, but lovely Black and White.

Cindy had four new ones on her list, including the very active American Redstart.

The McKerchers identified six new warblers, including the bright Yellow which calls out to everyone, *Sweet, sweet shredded wheat.* They had some identification assistance from the Merlin app. I am sure many others also had such rather amazing assistance.

The Turcottes located seven new ones, which also included the very beautiful Northern Parula.

Greg had eleven new ones on his list, including the very pretty Nashville, the often hard-

to-find Magnolia and the hard-to- spot Pine, whose chipping voice is often a major clue.

Chris, without the aid of Merlin, identified thirteen new ones, including the magnificent Black-throated Blue and Green, and the recognizably-voiced Mourning. Chris, like some other birders, has excellent hearing for bird song and identifying such.

The Levesque pair had six new ones upon their joint list, including the black-masked Common Yellowthroat, but your compiler was very excited to discover a brilliant Blackburnian and the always tough-to- locate, but most beautiful, Northern Parula.

Linda noted three warblers, including the always appealing American Redstart.

Lori located eight new warblers, the brilliant Wilson's likely being a standout.

Mary had eight new ones on her list including the normally tough-to- identify Blackpoll and the brilliant Blackburnian.

April found eight new warblers, including both Black-throats and the Black and White.

John identified seven new warblers, which included the always special Blackburnian and the Chestnut-sided.

Steve had but two on his list, one of which was the American Redstart.

Moving along now to new, similar-looking sparrows, we have only the Clay-coloured, discovered luckily by your compiler near Warren Lagoon.

The new to the area for this Bird Bash were the beautiful, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, noted by several participants, including the Sparks, Faye, the Telfords, the Sturges, Steve, Mary, April, your compiler, and Chris.

Exotic Indigo Buntings were discovered only by Greg and the Sturges.

Energetic Bobolinks were enjoyed by Mary, Lori, Chris, Denise, the Sturges, Steve, and the Levesque pair.

Excitingly beautiful Baltimore Orioles were watched by the Sturges, Chris, Renee, and Steve.

And so that concludes the record-keeping of the new bird species for this year.

We will now get to those species noted at some time previously following the same

order as our seasonal checklist.

This seems always to start with the Common Loon. A few more than previously were no doubt around, but they were hiding a bit more now, with nesting having started. They were discovered by Faye, Steve, Mary, Jeremy, the Levesque pair, Chris, the McKerchers, Denise, Elsa, and the Sparks.

A Pied-billed Grebe was seen by the Sturges.

Double-crested Cormorants were still about in pretty good numbers (they had not yet been eradicated under Ontario's barbaric killing laws), and were noticed by Denise in Cache Bay, the McKerchers, Greg, Chris, and the Levesque duo.

A few American Bitterns showed up and were marked down by Steve, Mary, Chris, the Sturges, and the Sparks.

Great Blue Herons were spotted by the Sturges, Denise, Faye, Cindy, the McKerchers, Greg, Chris, the Levesque pair, the Telfords, Linda, Jeremy, Mary, Elsa, and Steve. No Green Herons have been noted yet upon our lists this year.

Turkey Vultures were soaring about, and were spotted by Steve, Mary, John, Lori, the Levesque pair, Chris, Greg, the Turcottes, Denise, the Sturges, the Sparks, and the Telfords.

Canada Geese were quite common and widely distributed.

Three Trumpeter Swans were rather strangely located at Warren Lagoon and seen by Chris and the Levesque pair.

There were still many, pretty, dabbling ducks around, especially in the lagoons, spotted by those who visited them, especially Chris, the Sturges, and the Levesque pair - the beautiful Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard (also seen everywhere), Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, and Northern Shoveler. Denise managed to locate just the Gadwall, American Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler (besides the Mallard). The Sturges missed the Blue-winged Teal. Steve got only the Wood, besides the Mallard. Faye saw only the Mallard.

As to diving ducks, the Common Merganser was located by the Telfords, the McKerchers, Greg, and Chris, who also spotted the Hooded Merganser and Common Goldeneye. The latter two ducks were also seen by the Levesque duo, who also spotted one male Bufflehead (at Warren Lagoon).

Predators were about, of course, including Osprey observed by Greg, Denise, the Levesque pair, and Chris. The latter three also saw Northern Harrier, as did John. American Kestrels were watched by the Levesque duo, plus Denise, the Sturges, Chris, Steve, the Sparks, and Lori. Bald Eagles were spotted by the Sturges, the Telfords, the Sparks, the Turcottes, Greg, Faye, and Chris. Merlin was on the lists only of Renee and Denise. A Peregrine Falcon was well photographed by Steve.

Ruffed Grouse revealed themselves to the Telfords, Steve, Faye, Denise and Chris. Wild Turkeys were seen this month only by the Handleys, Faye, and Lori.

Sandhill Cranes were about in small numbers and spotted by John, Lori, the Sturges, and Chris.

A few Killdeer were first spotted last month, but this time a few more were noted by Chris, Greg, the Turcottes, the Sturges, and by Denise and the Levesque pair in the ball field at Cache Bay.

Rather rare Wilson's Snipe were discovered once again, this time by Mary, the Sturges, the Telfords, and Steve.

American Woodcock were about, though observed almost only during dusk, usually by their strange voice, and noted solely by Chris and the Sturges.

Ring-billed and Herring Gulls were around in quite large numbers.

Rock Pigeons remained the most common bird, it seems, while their family member, the Mourning Dove, was noticed only by Chris, Linda, Cindy, the McKerchers, April, Mary, Lori, the Sturges, the Levesque pair, and the Sparks.

The only owl, the Barred Owl, was noted solely by Chris.

The Belted Kingfisher was upon the lists only of Chris, Greg, and Denise.

Getting to woodpeckers, we start with the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, spotted by Denise, Greg, Steve, the McKerchers, Mary, John, Lori, the Sturges, your compiler, Jeremy, April, and Chris.

We will leave the Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and Northern Flickers to their own devices, since almost all participants spotted two or all of these common backyard species. Pileated Woodpeckers have a special place, one presumes due to their extraordinary demeanor, size and colorations, and so we will note those few who spotted such, mentioning Chris, the Levesque pair, the McKerchers, and Greg.

Now we get to the Perching Birds (the Passeriformes), starting with flycatchers. The only species noted previously was the Eastern Phoebe, always the first one to try our area in the spring. It was spotted by Denise (in her yard), Greg, the McKerchers, Mary, John (in his yard), Lori, the Sturges, the Levesque duo, the Sparks, Jeremy, Steve, and Chris.

The Blue-headed Vireo was seen again, but solely by Faye, the Sturges, and Greg.

There were no Canada Jays spotted this month, but Blue Jays, American Crows and Common Ravens were, as they say, ubiquitous, and seen by most participants.

Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows were seen again, by Denise, Chris, the Sturges, the Levesque duo, Steve, and Lori. The Tree alone was watched by Greg, Cindy, the McKerchers, Faye, Mary, Jeremy, the Sparks, and the Turcottes.

Black-capped Chickadees were, of course, very common, and seen by almost everyone.

Nuthatches were not so commonplace now that most feeders have been discontinued. And so the Red-breasted was spotted by the Handleys and Denise, and both it and the White-breasted were located by Lori, the Sturges, the McKerchers, the Telfords, Faye, and Steve. The White-breasted alone was watched by Jeremy.

The Brown Creeper was again around and found only by the Sturges.

Winter Wrens were about and were discovered by the Sturges, the Telfords, and Chris.

The two kinglets came into view. The Sturges found both Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned; the Turcottes and April, just the Ruby-crowned; and Faye just the Golden-crowned.

The Hermit Thrush was again discovered. Mary found it, as did the Turcottes, Chris, and the Sturges. American Robins continued to be enjoyed by all participants!

The Brown Thrasher was found by Steve, Chris, the Levesque duo, Mary, Lori, and the Sturges.

European Starlings are not the most popular bird, but they were on just about everyone's list.

Now there were two warblers also discovered on the previous Bird Bash, namely Yellow-rumped and Ovenbird. The McKerchers spotted both as did the Sturges, Lori,

Greg, the Turcottes, Mary, John, and the Levesque pair. Just the noisy (*teacher, teacher, teacher*) Ovenbird was observed by Chris, Jeremy, April, Denise, and the Telfords, and just the Yellow-rumped Warbler was discovered by the Sparks and Faye.

Getting to sparrows previously noted, the normally northern-by- now White-crowned Sparrow was still within sight of Steve.

Now for other sparrow discoveries: The most common ones, the Chipping, Savannah, Song and White-throated were noticed by the Levesque duo, Denise, Mary, Greg, Lori, Chris, and the Sturges; Linda got the Chipping and Song; the McKerchers the Song and White-throated; Greg and Mary noted the Swamp, as did Chris; the Turcottes and Sparks spotted the Chipping and White-throat; Cindy the Chipping and Swamp; the Telfords the Song, Swamp and White-throat; April and John the Chipping, Song and White-throat; Jeremy saw all but the Savannah; the Handleys and Faye heard the White-throat sing, *Sweet Canada, Canada, Canada*; and Steve got the Chipping. Juncos and Longspurs were not reported.

Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles were on just about everyone's list. But Eastern Meadowlarks were observed only by the Sturges, Chris, and Lori. Brown-headed Cowbirds were spotted by Denise, the Levesque pair, and Steve.

The Purple Finch was observed by many, including the Sturges, Steve, John, the Levesque pair, the Telfords, Mary, Chris, Greg, and the Handleys.

Chris found the Pine Siskin in the Field area.

As to American Goldfinch, they were all over the place and spotted by the McKerchers, Lori, the Sturges, Denise, Greg, Cindy, the Telfords, the Levesque duo, Jeremy, Steve, and Chris.

Which gets us near to the end by bringing up the Evening Grosbeak, a frequent winter visitor, (and seen every month so far). This was still within Steve's household area.

And oh yes, how about the often maligned House Sparrow? It was watched by Chris, Lori, and the Sturges.

And so that concludes a very successful May Bird Bash, always the busiest month. Bugs were not too bad, the weather was peaceful, and the effort quite extra! Very big congrats to all for your efforts on behalf of our wonderful birding community.

June's Bird Bash should be a busy one also, occurring during nesting time, **the weekend of June 25-26**. Plan for it!