

Bird Bash Report

September 19-20

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

Well, it sure was nice weather over the Bird Bash weekend, making the birding especially enjoyable. And though the Bird Bash was one week later in September than normal, the numbers seen by the 21 participants were pretty good – 100 in all! That was somewhat below the average over the past 17 years, but seven other Septembers were lower.

First, starting with the new birds seen for the year during a Bird Bash, and following in rough taxonomic order (or more closely to the Seasonal Checklist for North Bay and area), we start with the Red-necked Grebe. This was viewed by Grant and Shirley McKercher at Callander Bay and at Sunset Point.

Then there was a pair of Redhead Ducks seen at Callander lagoon by Rene Levesque and yours truly. They also saw the American Golden Plover and the Black-bellied Plover at the beach near the government dock. They were both probably feeding up at a stop-over prior to their huge trip from their northern Arctic breeding grounds to southern South America! The Golden was also seen by the McKerchers. Both groups also saw a Great Black-backed Gull nearby.

The American Pipit was noted by Brent and Laura Turcotte. They also attained the first sighting during this year's Bird Bash of the White-crowned Sparrow as it was moving southward through our area.

An Orange-crowned Warbler was spotted by Renee in the vicinity of her home.

Now as to birds seen previously in this year's Bird Bashes, the wonderful Common Loon traditionally comes at the beginning. Many seem to have either left the area already or have combined forces, probably in Lake Nipissing. But a few were observed by Grant and Shirley McKercher, Brent and Laura Turcotte, Elsa Tafel in Trout Lake, new member, Denise Desmarais, and Renee Levesque and yours truly at Cache Bay and at Jocko Point.

Then we have the Pied-billed Grebe. This was spotted by Fred Pinto and by Denise.

The now barbarically-hunted Double-crested Cormorant was noted by Steve Pitt (five of them in Talon Lake), and by Denise, the Turcottes, and the Levesque duo.

An American Bittern was briefly spotted by Renee at Callander Lagoon.

Great Blue Herons seemed to be still quite active and were spotted by Linda Stoner, Cindy Lafleur, the McKerchers, and the Levesque pair.

Turkey Vultures were still fairly abundant, seen by the Levesque duo, Steve, Denise, the McKerchers, Gary and Connie Sturge, Corinne Urrutia, and Fred.

Now as to Canada Geese – they were in huge numbers all over the place and seen by many.

No swans were spotted, but ducks were very numerous, especially “puddle ducks” in the lagoons, including Wood Ducks, Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Ducks, Mallards (the most numerous), Blue-winged and Green-winged Teals, Northern Pintail and Northern Shoveler, the latter two seen only by the McKerchers.

Diving ducks, including Ring-necks and Lesser Scaup , Bufflehead , Common Goldeneye, Hooded and Common Mergansers were also now about in greater numbers, the latter duck, however, being noted solely by the Sturges, Lloyd and Janet Sparks, and the Levesque duo.

We now get to the predators. Osprey were spotted solely by the Levesque duo and by Denise in Cache Bay. Both also noted Northern Harrier, as did Steve. A lingering Broad-winged Hawk was spotted by the Sturges. They also saw Bald Eagles, as did the Levesque duo, the Sparks, and Steve. American Kestrel were fairly common still, noted by the Levesque pair, the McKerchers, Denise, the Sparks, and the Sturges. The latter pair also noted Merlin, as did the McKerchers, and Mary Ann Kenrick. Exciting Peregrine Falcons, first ones since March, were identified by the Turcottes and by Denise.

Ruffed Grouse were spotted by Denise, the Sturges, the Sparks, Fred, Steve, Mary Young and the Turcottes.

Now to the Sandhill Cranes: Just a few years ago they were almost non-existent around here, but during this past weekend over 600 rather overwhelmed the Levesque duo at a field adjacent to Highway 64, south of Verner. And others were also spotted during the weekend by Fred and by Denise.

Only a few previously-seen shorebirds were noted – Greater Yellowlegs by Fred, Spotted Sandpipers by the Levesque pair, and a Solitary Sandpiper by the Turcottes.

As to gulls, there were certainly lots of Ring-billed Gulls about and Herring Gulls seemed to have increased in number since the last count. Bonapartes seem to have been missed!

Common Terns were discovered by the Turcottes, first since June.

Of course, Rock Pigeons were in as great a number as ever, while the Mourning Doves were noted by Mary Ann, the Sparks, Denise, Mary, the Levesque duo, Steve, the Sturges, and Linda.

Once again, no owls were observed.

A very late-staying Ruby-throated Hummingbird was still around the McKercher feeders.

Belted Kingfishers were watched by the Levesque pair, the McKerchers, and Denise.

As to woodpeckers, the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was noted by Steve, Cindy, the Sturges, and John and Renee Levesque. Downys and Hairys were pretty widespread. Northern Flickers were

seen by the Levesque pair, Mary, Denise, the Sparks, Mary Ann, and the Sturges. The latter pair were the only ones to find the Pileated Woodpecker.

There were still a few flycatchers about, notably the Eastern Phoebe, seen by Denise, the Levesque duo, the Sparks, Fred, Steve, the McKerchers and the Sturges, who also saw Eastern Wood Pewees and the Alder Flycatcher. The Turcottes spotted the Eastern Kingbird. Steve also saw the Least Flycatcher.

Amongst the vireos, there was still a Warbling, spotted by the Levesque pair, who also saw a Blue-headed and observed the Red-eyed. The latter was also noted by the McKerchers, Corinne, and Linda.

Once again no Canada Jay was located (the last one was in March). But Blue Jays were very prominent, as were American Crows. Common Ravens were noted by Fred, the Turcottes, the McKerchers, Denise, Mary, Steve, the Levesque pair, Cindy, and the Sturges.

No swallows stayed around to flit upon our list in September.

Black-capped Chickadees remained as one of our most-noted species. But Red-breasted Nuthatches were not that far behind. The White-breasted, however, was seen only by Linda, Cindy, Mary, the McKerchers, the Sparks, and the Turcottes. A Brown Creeper was found only by the Levesque pair and by the Turcottes, who also spotted the only Golden-crowned Kinglet.

Although the American Robin was still around in large bunches, spotted by many, other thrushes were few and far between. One Veery was found with two American Robins by the Levesque pair on Stillar's Side Road, west of Powassan.

Gray Catbirds were still about in smaller numbers and spotted by Mary, Steve, John, Fred, and the Levesque pair. Fred also found a Brown Thrasher, as did Steve and Mary Ann.

European Starlings did not seem to be reducing their large numbers very much, if at all.

The American Pipit was noted only by the McKerchers.

Cedar Waxwings were spotted solely by Fred and the McKerchers.

Surprisingly perhaps, some eleven other wood warbler species were discovered. The Levesque pair spotted the Tennessee, Yellow-rumped, Pine, Palm, Common Yellow-throat, and yours truly got the Wilson's. Fred observed the Ovenbird. Denise also saw Yellow-rumped, as did Linda, the McKerchers, and the Turcottes. The latter pair also spotted a Blackburnian, plus the Nashville and the Pine, also seen by the Sturges. The McKerchers also saw Nashville, plus the Palm. Common Yellow-throats were also spotted by Corinne and by the McKerchers. Cindy noted the Pine and the American Redstart, the latter also spotted by John. Steve had Yellow Warblers and Palms on his list, and Mary also had the Yellow-rumped. It seems the Palm, next to the Yellow-rumped, was the most common warbler for the month.

Getting now to sparrows: The Chipping Sparrow was still about, spotted by the Sturges, Mary Ann and the Levesque pair. Savannahs were noted by those three groups, plus Denise and Fred. The Song was seemingly still the most common local sparrow, spotted by Fred, Steve, the Levesque duo, the Turcottes, and the McKerchers. Swamp Sparrows were marked by the Levesque pair. White-throats were noted by John, Linda, Cindy, Renee, Mary, the Sparks, Denise, Peter and Pam Handley, and the Sturges.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were still about, noted by Fred, Mary, Renee, and Linda.

Some Red-winged Blackbirds were also still around, and observed by Mary Ann, the Turcottes, Cindy, Steve and Fred. Rusty Blackbirds had arrived from their more northern breeding area and were noted in their fall colours by the Sturges, Denise, and the Levesque duo. Common Grackles were still about in large numbers and observed by most.

But Purple Finches were only upon the lists of Mary Ann, Steve, and the McKerchers.

Pine Siskins (beginning their move south?) were spotted solely by the Sturges.

American Goldfinch were noted by the Levesque duo, the Turcottes, the Sturges, John, Cindy, Steve, and Denise.

And at the end of the checklist are the House Sparrows, this month discovered only by the McKerchers.

That was a pretty fulsome selection of early fall birds from around here. Congrats to all for the efforts!

October's Bird Bash is earlier in the month, **namely October 3-4**. Count on that and be prepared for another interesting exercise of discovery.