

Nipissing Area Bird Bash Oct. 3-4, 2015

A very interesting week-end for sure! - both weather wise and bird-productivity wise! Despite a lot of inclement weather, there were some 24 observers, finding 89 species of birds.

We always start off with the birds not seen previously in the year during our “bird-bash”. Following in rough, taxonomic order we must start with the Red-necked Grebes, spotted by two groups – one, a trio of Martin Parker, Steve O’Donnell and Sean Smith in Lake Bernard, the other of Renee Levesque and yours truly off Jocko Point. Then there were the two Cackling Geese identified by Renee in the Powassan lagoon. A lone Northern Pintail was found by the Martin trio in the Callander lagoon, and they saw our first Red-shouldered Hawk (a first seen in October in any year, since our counts began in 2005). That was just south-west of Sundridge. Finally, they also found our first Horned Larks , as did Lori Anderson and Ken Gowding, east of Powassan.

Now the balance of sightings in general taxonomic order: Common Loons are still here, seen by several groups, Pied billed Grebes in large numbers, were noted near Cache Bay, and a few Double-crested Cormorants were still observed in Lake Nipissing .

The American Bittern had remained hidden later than September upon all previous bird-bashes until this one, when the Levesque duo had a good, close view at Cache Bay. Great Blue Herons are still about in fair numbers, noted by Jeremy St. Onge and others. Turkey Vultures are likewise still fairly common. A lone Snow Goose stood out in a field near highway 11, noted by Gary and Connie Sturge on Saturday and by Elsa Tafel, and the Martin trio on Sunday. Of course, Canada Geese were in large numbers almost everywhere.

Some sixteen species of ducks (or similar) came into the view of various groups, most of them in the various lagoons in the area. That included rarer Redheads noted by the Parker trio, and a lone Bufflehead discovered by the Anderson pair – again in Callander lagoon. Hooded Mergansers were found only by Bev

and Ray Kingdon on Lake Nosbonsing, but Common ones were noted by many.

Now as to predators, other hawks observed were the Rough-legged found by Greg and Pat Boxwell in the east end, first one this Fall. Ospreys were still about, seen by a few of you. Same goes for Northern Harrier and Bald eagle. Lots of Kestrel were still here, and a few Merlin. The Red-tailed Hawk was on the Parker list.

A Spruce Grouse was discovered by the Parker trio just north of South River. Ruffed Grouse were on lots of lists. Interestingly, many American Coots were at least three lagoons. Sandhill Crane in huge numbers (at least 500), were observed by Angela and Gary Martin in the west end.

Unfortunately shorebirds were very limited. A Greater Yellow-legs showed up for the Levesque duo in the Powassan lagoon; and that was it. Small numbers of Bonaparte Gulls were still seen especially in the Callander lagoon. Caspian Tern were noticed by the Kingdon's on Lake Nosbonsing. Mourning Doves were upon many lists. Same goes for the Belted Kingfisher.

The three main woodpeckers were well documented. But – where were those recently so common Northern Flickers? Not one was discovered, though normally they would be here during the whole of October?

One flycatcher was still present; the Anderson combo did find an Eastern Phoebe. And one vireo was still about. The Parker trio observed the Blue-headed. No Gray Jays, again, but Blue Jays are still fairly commonplace – with crows and ravens.

Of course Black-capped Chickadees were omnipresent, and this month White-breasted Nuthatches again showed up, with the Red-breasted, in fair numbers. Both kinglets are now appearing again, with the Golden-crowned being observed by the Parker trio, and Ruby-crowned noted by many.

Mary Young had Swainson's Thrush near her home at Corbeil, while the Anderson pair found Hermit Thrush at Ken's place. The only Gray Catbird was at Steve's home area. And, not

about since May, American Pipits are returning in fair numbers, being noted by Greg Jaski, and the Levesque, and Parker groups, mostly along the Lake Nipissing shoreline. Strangely, Cedar Waxwings were observed only by Mary Ann and Ted Kenrick, perhaps naturally amidst a Mountain Ash tree within town.

Four warblers were found. Nashville by Doug Patterson, near Mattawa. Pine by the Martin's in the west end, and Palm and Yellow-rumped by various groups.

Ten sparrows, or similar species, were identified. The first returning Fox Sparrows of the year (not here since April), were found by the Parker trio, who also located Lincoln's. Greg Jaski came upon the first returning American Tree Sparrows, also not seen here since April. Fred Pinto identified Swamp Sparrows. Dark-eyed Juncos are also showing up in good numbers, as noted by Peter and Pam Handley north of town, and others. White-crowned Sparrows, not here since May were discovered by many groups. The four other sparrow species have been pretty common all summer up here and were still noted in fair numbers by many observers.

Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles were still about in good numbers. Eastern Meadowlarks were upon three lists. Rusty Blackbirds, not found since June, were enjoyed by Jaski, by the Levesque duo, and the Parker trio. A Brown-headed Cowbird, though absent here in September, was found by the Parker bunch. Not any Purple Finches showed up. But, Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches were at a few feeder locations, while House Sparrows were observed only by the Anderson pair, up near Verner.

All in all it was a very productive week-end despite some wet, windy weather. Well done, everybody!

Next month's "bird bash" will be over the week-end of November 7. Plan for it.

Dick Tafel, compiler

