

Bird Bash Report

March 2022

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

Spring birds were not much more keen than the observers this “spring” weekend! Although 26 participants braved some very cold weather, the total number of species observed was rather below the average of the last 19 years – at 49 species. Last March during much better weather, we noted a record number of 59. However, in many ways the birds seen did assuage some disappointments by showing up unexpectedly upon more lists than might have been hoped.

And so we shall start out with the rather large number of new birds for the year – mostly migrants looking for their ultimate nesting spaces. As usual, we will follow the historic order of the *Seasonal Checklist of the Birds of North Bay and Area*.

The first new bird is one remarkable Double-crested Cormorant sitting on the ice at the edge of the open water below the falls of the Sturgeon River. Spotted by Chris Sukha and the “team” of Renee Levesque and yours truly, it seems to have braved the scattered shootings promoted by the Ontario government last year to boldly reduce their innocent numbers. Hopefully there will still be many more as the waters open up upon the lakes.

Then there were a few Turkey Vultures, not noted near their more usual haunts beside municipal waste areas, but spotted by Grant and Shirley McKercher, the Levesque pair, and Chris.

Two Snow Geese happened upon the sight of Bill and Carol Fleming near their home on Birchgrove Road in Callander, before disappearing from view a short time later. But that did not alter the ubiquitous presence of their cousins, the Canada Geese. They were all over the place, some in large numbers, and spotted by just about everyone!

Trumpeter Swans made their presence known to Denise Desmarais, Chris, and the Levesque duo.

A few diving ducks had arrived and were located within the few bits of open water in the area. Buffleheads were spotted by Chris in the West Arm Narrows of Lake Nipissing, and by Keith Thornborrow in a bit of open water in South River. Common Goldeneye were observed by Chris, the Levesque duo, Lori Anderson with Ken Gowing, and Gary and Connie Sturge. A few Common Mergansers had

also arrived and were spotted by the latter four groups, as well as by Faye Oei with Sue Gratton, and by Keith.

Now we get to the predators. Generally they did not seem to be unduly affected by the still widespread snowy fields. Starting with the Northern Harrier, a few were seen by the Levesque duo, the Anderson pair, and Chris, who also discovered a Red-tailed Hawk, as did the Sturges. American Kestrels had also arrived, at least in a few numbers, and were found by Lloyd and Janet Sparks, the Oei duo, the Anderson combo, the Levesque pair, and Chris. The Levesque pair also spotted a Merlin, as did John Levesque. A Peregrine Falcon was observed by the McKerchers at its usual spot on the cross of the Pro-Cathedral.

Some brave Sandhill Cranes were noticed by the Sturges.

Gulls had arrived, though not yet in grand numbers. Herring Gulls, first to come, were spotted by the McKerchers, John, Keith, and the Sturges, and both the Herring and Ring-billed Gulls were found by the Levesque duo, the Anderson pair, Denise, the Oei duo, and Chris.

No owls were discovered, nor, of course, swallows, wrens, flycatchers, or warblers.

But the wonderful American Robins had arrived, at least a few of them. They were enjoyed by Paul Smylie, Chris, the Levesque duo, the Anderson pair, the Sturges, Keith, John, the Telfords, the Flemings, and the McKerchers.

A couple of Song Sparrows had arrived and were spotted by the Anderson duo, and by Renee at her home.

A few, soon to be very common, Red-winged Blackbirds made their presence known, and were observed by Mary Young, Steve Pitt, the Oei pair, the Levesque duo, the Anderson combo, the Sturges, Keith, John, the Telfords, and Chris. Common Grackles had also arrived in small numbers and were seen by Paul, Chris, Steve, the McKerchers, Mary, Keith, the Sturges, the Anderson pair, the Oei duo, and the Levesque combo.

And two birds noted for the first time during this year's Bird Bash were the Hoary Redpoll seen by Renee, and the Pine Siskin seen by Keith.

As to birds previously spotted during this year's Bird Bash, we will begin with the few puddle ducks, the American Black Duck and the Mallard. A few Blacks were

noted by the Anderson pair and by Levesque duo who saw them in the open water in Bonfield. The latter two groups also found Mallards, as did the Sturges, the Telfords, the Flemings, the McKerchers, and Chris. With few areas of shallow, open water present yet, no other puddle ducks apparently found their way here.

Bald Eagles were around in fairly plentiful numbers and were spotted by Chris, the McKerchers (already on its nest in Callander), the Telfords, the Levesque pair, Denise, the Sturges, and the Anderson duo.

Ruffed Grouse seem to have weathered the winter pretty well, for several were discovered by the Anderson pair, the Oei duo, the Levesque combo, Keith, the Flemings, Mary, and Steve.

Wild Turkeys were found only by the Sturges.

Rock Doves were as common as usual, but Mourning Doves were noticed only by the McKerchers, Mary, the Levesque duo, the Telfords, Keith, the Sturges, and the Anderson pair.

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were active at many feeders and elsewhere, while the Pileateds seemed to be staying a bit aloof, though they were spotted by the Sparks, Chris, Steve, Mary, the Flemings, the Telfords, and Keith.

Northern Shrikes turned up again, and were noticed by the Sturges and the Levesque pair.

As in the past, Canada Jays were discovered near South River only by Keith.

Blue Jays were very numerous as usual, as were American Crows and Common Ravens, with all three species being noted by almost everyone.

Pert and cheerful Black-capped Chickadees were on everyone's lists!

Red-breasted Nuthatches were spotted by Denise, the Oei pair, Chris, Steve, and Keith; the latter two also spotted the White-breasted, along with the Telfords, Mary, the McKerchers, the Sparks, and the Flemings.

European Starlings were noticed by most observers, though not yet in large numbers.

Bohemian Waxwings were still about, but discovered only by the McKerchers, a flock of about twelve on Strathcona Drive in the city.

American Tree Sparrows have bared the winter in small numbers, and were on the lists of the Levesques, Steve, the Sturges, the Anderson duo, and Keith. The latter three groups also spotted Dark-eyed Juncos.

Snow Buntings were still around, and seen, some in their glorious numbers, by the Oei pair, Denise, the Sturges, the Anderson pair, and the Levesque duo.

Common Redpolls were about in huge numbers, mostly clustered at many feeders, and were wondered at by Peter and Pam Handley, Elsa Tafel, the Flemings, the Levesque pair, the Sparks, John, the Anderson duo, Steve, Mary, Keith, the McKerchers, the Sturges, Denise, the Oei pair, and Chris!

American Goldfinches were on the lists of John, Chris, and the McKerchers. Likewise, Evening Grosbeaks were observed by the Anderson pair, Keith, the Sturges, Chris, John, and the Handleys.

Finally, as usual, last on the list are the House Sparrows, spotted by Chris, the Sturges, and the Anderson pair.

It was a rather extraordinary effort in very cold weather by both participants and birds! Congrats to all!

Our next Bird Bash is over the weekend of April 23, and should be much more inclusive, fruitful, and even more fun! Mark the date down!