

Bird Bash Report

March 2023

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

A surprising result of the recent Bird Bash was the total number spotted – **54 species** - and this despite very cold and snowy conditions over at least 1/4 of the weekend, as well as high levels of snow from many past snowy days. That number is even slightly above the average of the last 20 years, though there have been higher counts three other years. (One in 2012 was as high as 67, but that was during a very warm week in March.) Some 22 keen participants undoubtedly helped in reaching the current number of species seen.

And so, starting with birds not seen previously in the preceding two months, and roughly within the order of the “famous” *Seasonal Checklist of the Birds of North Bay and Area* and within a 50 mile (80.5 km) radius of North Bay, we begin with a Great Blue Heron! It was spied by Garry Waldrum as he was driving along Hwy 17 towards Mattawa. (Of course, he stopped and got some photos!)

Then briefly seen by Renee Levesque was our first Turkey Vulture, on Hwy 17 just before Sturgeon Falls.

Canada Geese had arrived in small numbers upon the few open waters in the district, noted by Keith Thornborrow, Gary and Connie Sturge, Lori Anderson with Ken Gowing, John Levesque, Grant and Shirley McKercher, Chris Sukha, young Jeremie Corbeil, Greg Jaski, Garry W., and Renee with yours truly.

Then we have Trumpeter Swans spotted by Chris at the West Arm Narrows.

A rather amazing, very rare in this area Canvasback Duck was carefully identified by Jeremie in Restoule. And unusually, a Greater Scaup was found by Garry W. and the Anderson duo within the open waters of Bonfield. Bufflehead had returned and were spotted by the Sturges.

A few predators had arrived, including a Northern Harrier spotted by the Levesque pair within the Powassan landfill site and by the Anderson pair in Chisholm Township; a Sharp-shinned Hawk was noted by Lloyd and Janet Sparks near their home at Wolfe Lake; one American Kestrel was upon the wires on Alsace Road and watched by the Levesque pair; and a Merlin was seen by Greg.

A normally hard-to-find Spruce Grouse was discovered by Keith near South River.

A pair of Sandhill Cranes was watched by the Levesque pair flying over Quesnel Road in Sturgeon Falls.

Recently arrived Ring-billed Gulls were identified at a few popular areas by Jeremie, the McKerchers, Chris, and the Levesque pair.

A Barred Owl was scrutinized carefully by the Levesque pair near a home south of Trout Lake, and one was seen elsewhere by Jeremie.

The Levesque pair also enjoyed a group of 8 Horned Larks sporting around the railroad tracks next to Gingras Road in Verner. Some were also noted by Chris.

A frisky Golden-crowned Kinglet was enjoyed by Sue Gratton at her home near South River.

Now to the popular, exciting when first discovered, American Robin. Very few were gratuitously placed in the sight of Chris, the Anderson duo, and the Sturges.

No shorebirds, flycatchers nor warblers were visible – but they will be coming soon!

And so we must now get to those species previously noted this year at a Bird Bash by following a similar path. That gets us to the only dabbling duck found this month, the very common Mallard, seen only by Greg, the Anderson duo, John, the Mckerchers, Chris, and the Levesque pair.

Common Goldeneye were spotted by the Levesque pair, Chris, the McKerchers, the Anderson duo, the Sturges, and Garry W. Hooded Mergansers were watched by Jeremie and by the Levesque pair who also found Common Mergansers, as did Chris, Garry W., and the Anderson duo.

At least one Red-tailed Hawk had found its way north and was spotted by the Levesque duo near Trout Creek; Bald Eagles have become rather remarkably common and were observed by the Levesque pair, Keith, the Sturges, and the Anderson duo.

Ruffed Grouse were noted by Donna Demarco, Mary Young, April McCrum, and the Anderson duo. Wild Turkeys, now increasingly common here, were eyed by Faye Oei, Keith, the Levesque pair, Sue, the Sparks, the Sturges, and John who has one coming to his feeder area.

A few more Herring Gulls had arrived and were spotted by Faye, the Anderson pair, Garry W., Chris, and the Levesque duo.

Rock Pigeons remain, of course, very numerous, while Mourning Doves were spotted by Sue, Jeremie, the Sparks, Keith, the Sturges, Faye, Mary, and the McKerchers.

The Red-bellied Woodpecker remains at Mary's place; the Downys and Hairys were at most feeders; and the Pileated was seen by John, Mary, the Anderson pair, April, Keith, and the Sparks.

A Northern Shrike appeared in our community again, seen this time by the Anderson pair in Chisholm Township at River Road, and by Chris in the west end.

The Canada Jay showed up once again and was seen by Keith near South River. Blue Jays

seemed to be coming back in greater numbers and were enjoyed by the Anderson pair, Faye, Mary, John, the Sturges, Keith, the Sparks, Donna, the Levesque pair, and Sue.

American Crows had come back in large numbers and were spotted all over, while the Common Ravens remained popular where the crows had not yet displaced them.

Black-capped Chickadees remained our most common (and enjoyable) winter (and summer) residents, and were enjoyed by almost all of us! But the very rare Boreal Chickadee was found again only by Faye at her home near South River.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were noted by Elsa Tafel, Faye, John, Garry W., Keith, Jeremie, Sue, Chris, and the Levesque duo; with the White-breasted on the lists of Elsa, Chris, the Sparks, Keith, Garry W., April, the McKerchers, Mary, Sue, Faye, and the Anderson pair.

A Brown Thrasher continued at Mary's feeder.

European Starlings remained very numerous.

The American Tree Sparrow appeared a bit more often – at the Levesque feeder, near the Sturges, at Keith's, and noted by Chris.

Snow Buntings were still around and flocks were watched by the Sturges and up to 200 by the Anderson pair.

The very elusive Northern Cardinal (to some of us anyway) was discovered by Angela Mills (at Gorman Street) and April (near O'Brien St.), both within North Bay.

A few Red-winged Blackbirds had arrived, some seen by Keith, Mary, and the Anderson duo.

There were still some Pine Grosbeaks about and seen by Jeremie and Mary. Evening Grosbeaks were noted by Keith, Garry W., John and Renee, Mary, the Anderson duo, and Donna.

The southerly flying Common Redpolls seemed to be appearing more numerous as winter is diminishing, being noted by Sue, Chris, the Anderson pair, Faye, Mary, John, the Sturges, April, Keith, Jeremie, and the Levesque pair; Pine Siskins were still about, but only a few, and seen by Elsa, Chris, Angela, and the Levesque duo; only a few American Goldfinches were around and noted by Jeremie and Angela.

The often impugned European House Sparrows were watched by the Anderson pair, Chris, and the Sturges.

And thus ends an amazingly successful March Bird Bash. One-quarter of the time was almost entirely lost due to an extreme snow storm, but our indefatigable observers prevailed! Congrats are in order once again. By the time our next Bird Bash comes around, there may be almost

double the number of species discoverable. Plan for it over the **weekend of April 29-30**. It should be even more exciting!