

Nipissing Area Bird Bash

February, 18-19, 2017

By Dick Tafel, compiler

What a lovely, winter weekend that was! Just great to be outside! Some 28 active participants were involved in our area's Bird Bash. However, the birds were not quite as co-operative - only 34 species were discovered. Mind you that compares closely with other Februaries during our past 13 years of monthly participation – with the average during that time being but 35.5.

And so, let's get at it in the usual taxonomic order, although with first birds of the year at the beginning. That includes some 25 or so Common Goldeneye found by Renee Levesque and yours truly along the Ottawa River from Thorne to Temiskaming. And Common Mergansers were observed by the team of Marc Buchanan, Sarah Wheelan and Fred Pinto at Lac Clair (?) north of Sturgeon.

Wild Turkeys were around South River seen by Keith Thornborrow, and the female Northern Cardinal was seen by Therez Violette at her feeder in Sturgeon Falls.

Then there was the Red-tailed Hawk seen by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing at the Astorville land-fill site. A Barred Owl returned to Doug Patterson's feeder area near Mattawa. Purple Finch were found by the Levesque pair on Jocko Point Road, as well as by Doug at his home. And, the Anderson duo came upon some Red Crossbills east of Powassan.

Now to continue with the other birds in roughly taxonomic order: lots of Mallards were seen by many at the open water on the north side of Trout Lake, at the North Bay water treatment plant and occasionally noticed flying over – and a few Blacks with them.

Ruffed Grouse were fairly widely observed, seen by Donna Demarco in the east end, Linda Stoner with Rose McClelland in the west, and Keith in the south. Rock Doves were readily noticed, at least within the urban areas, but Mourning Doves were certainly less common, though found by the Sturges and by the Turcotte foursome, among others.

Then there were the becoming- common Bald Eagles. Gary and Connie Sturge found them at the Powassan landfill site, while the Anderson pair saw them at the East Ferris landfill site. They were also seen by Brent and Laura Turcotte, along with Luanne and Gary Chowns. No other predators were noticed, other than those previously mentioned.

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were plentiful, but Pileated Woodpeckers less so, though spotted by Kaye Edmunds, Steve Pitt, Mary Young and others.

The interesting Gray Jay was seen by Keith near South River and by the Levesque duo in the northerly part of the city. Blue Jays were noticeable at most feeders as were, of course, Black-capped Chickadees.

American Crows have become somewhat more noticeable especially in the urban areas, while Common Ravens were almost as abundant, particularly rurally.

Nuthatches were less frequently seen, the White-breasted being discovered in East Ferris at Elsa Tafel's feeder and at Mary's, among others; and the Red-breasted, somewhat less so, but seen at Doug's and at Steve Pitt's, both in the east end.

European Starlings were very abundant, especially in Pinewood, but Bohemian Waxwings were enjoyed only by the Turcotte foursome within the Lakeshore area, and by Mary Ann Kenrick who had up to 200 feeding near her home on Ski Club Road.

American Tree Sparrows, normally the only sparrow to winter with us, were at Peter and Pam Handley's home in North Bay, and were also seen by the Sturges near Powassan.

Snow Buntings were found by the Turcotte group and by the Anderson pair.

The Common Grackle was still at Therez's feeder in Sturgeon Falls, while the interesting Brown-headed Cowbird was discovered this month riding on the back of its horse friend by John Levesque at the farm in the southwest area of our district.

The Pine Grosbeak was found only by the Levesque duo at a busy feeder on Jocko Point Road, along with many Evening Grosbeaks, which were also spotted by several others elsewhere. American Goldfinch were by far the most common finch, seen almost everywhere, along with a few Pine Siskins. The latter were at the feeder of Mary Ann's, as well as a few others.

Finally, we have the House Sparrow, once very abundant within North Bay, and still internationally common, and now found only occasionally within our rural areas, and seen this month by the Sturges near Powassan and by Chris Suhka in Verner.

And that is it. No Horned Larks, Northern Shrike or Lapland Longspurs during this month's Bird Bash, but lots of other winter birds and a few not so winter-driven. Congrats all for your persistence.

Next month reserve the weekend of **March 25-26** for the Bird Bash. There should certainly be a lot more species about by then.