

# Bird Bash Report, April 2019

*By Dick Tafel, compiler*

What a great effort! Despite very chilly weather and a very long winter, some 31 participants managed to recognize 102 species of birds within our 50-mile diameter circle! That is well above the average of 96 species over the past 16 years!

And so let us get going with the first species for the year in rough taxonomic order. That must start with our Common Loon appearing in very limited numbers, with all larger lakes still basically frozen tight. Sarah Wheelan, Gary and Luanne Chowns, Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing saw one in Lake Nipissing, while Lloyd and Janet Sparks spotted one in Wolfe Lake, Ernie Frayle one in the east end, and Chris Sukha one in the west end.

Pied-billed Grebes were in Cache Bay, noted by Renee Levesque along with your compiler. They also saw Double-crested Cormorants in somewhat larger numbers, as did Laura and Brent Turcotte, Chris, and Grant and Shirley McKercher.

The Anderson duo found an American Bittern, as did the Sparks, Mary Young, and Steve Pitt. A Great Blue Heron was on the lists of the Levesque and the Anderson pairs, as well as that of the Turcottes, the Chowns and Gary Sturge. But a rare Black-crowned Night-Heron was observed only by Paul Smylie not far from Eau Claire. Two White-fronted Geese were discovered by the Anderson pair in the field beside Warren Lagoon.

Lots of new ducks, seen by many, were about - at last - within many flooded fields, the now open lagoons and at Cache Bay. Those seen included Wood, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Blue and Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked, Lesser Scaup and Bufflehead. But only the Anderson and Levesque pairs and Buddy Myles saw Redhead Ducks at Verner Lagoon. They also found a large number of normally uncommon Northern Pintail in a big, flooded field near Verner, while Gary saw some near Powassan. Chris was the only one to identify Greater Scaup.

As to new predators, Osprey had arrived and many were noted already at their old nest sites. They were seen by Therez Violette at the ball field at Cache Bay, the McKerchers, Kaye Edmunds, Steve, the Levesque and Anderson duos, the Turcottes, and the Chowns. Northern Harriers were similarly noted by many, usually soaring low over various wet fields. Broad-winged Hawks had just arrived in minimal numbers, but were noted by the Anderson and Levesque duos in the west end.

American Coot were found by the Anderson pair at Warren Lagoon. Greater Yellowlegs

were fairly well spread, being noted by the Levesque and Anderson pairs, by the McKerchers, and by Gary. The McKerchers were the only ones to also identify the Lesser Yellowlegs. Wilson's Snipe were found by Steve, Chris and the Anderson pair.

Barred Owls were discerned by Marc Buchanan, the McKerchers, and the Levesque duo. The McKerchers were the only ones to hear the Boreal Owl.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers had arrived and were noted by the Levesque and Anderson pairs, Gary, the Chowns, Chris, Paul, and the McKerchers. Northern Flickers were even more widely observed and seen by many, including Mary Ann Kenrick in town.

Eastern Phoebes seemed to be the only flycatcher yet around, noted by the Sparks, Gary, Chris, and the Anderson and Levesque pairs. A few swallows had made it to our area. The Tree was seen by Ernie and Rose McClelland, and the Barn by the McKerchers.

Brown Creepers were noted by Paul, Marc, Chris, Brent, Laura, the Levesque duo, the McKerchers and the Chowns. Winter Wren was on the Levesque pair's list, plus that of Paul, the Chowns, Chris, and Gary.

Tiny and very active Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets were about in fair numbers seen by the Chowns, the Levesque pair, the McKerchers, Chris, Brent and Laura. Marc saw only the Ruby-crowned, as did Kaye.

Gary Sturge came upon an Eastern Bluebird, and identified a Veery, as did the McKerchers and the Anderson duo. Hermit Thrush seemed to be the most abundant thrush (except for the robin) and was seen by many.

Now to our wonderful wood warblers. A few did appear - the Yellow-rumped seen by a lucky few including the Levesque pair, the Chowns, Brent and Laura, Ernie, and Gary. Very pretty Pine Warblers were showing up at a few feeders, including that of Elsa Tafel, Sarah, Kaye, and the Anderson duo. A Wilson's Warbler graced the eyes of Marc Buchanan.

New Sparrows: huge numbers of these seemed to find our area healthful during our strange spring season. A few Chipping Sparrows were noted amidst the others by Ernie, John Levesque, Linda Stoner, Gary, the McKerchers, the Chowns, the Anderson duo, Mary Ann, and Chris. A lone Vesper amidst a swarm of other miscellaneous sparrows was identified by the Levesque pair, as were some Savannahs, noted also by the Anderson duo, the McKerchers, Gary and Chris. Chris also found the Swamp Sparrow, as did the Levesque duo and Brent. Fox Sparrows were discovered by several, including the Chowns, Chris, the Turcottes, Kaye, John, Peter and Pam Handley, Mary, and the Levesque pair.

What of the grand flock of Lapland Longspurs discovered by Buddy near Verner! That must have been fun! But so must have been the few Eastern Meadowlarks that have dared set forth here so far and noted by the Anderson duo east of Powassan.

Rusty Blackbirds were identified by the Chowns, the Anderson and Levesque duos, Chris, Mary and Brent. A few Brown-headed Cowbirds were noted by Gary, the Chowns and the Levesque pair.

Purple Finches had returned to a few feeders, noted by Chris, John, Gary, Donna Demarco, Linda, Mary Ann and the Handleys. Pine Siskins had also returned, though to fewer places thus far. Two or three were noted at Elsa's feeder area, as well as at Mary Young's, Ernie's, and the McKercher's. And finally, what about the American Goldfinch, an often common winter feeder adherent? Well, only Brent had caught up to that one this year –at Laurier Woods no less.

And so that ends all the new birds caught sight (or sound) of during the April's Bird Bash. We will now get to the birds seen at some time during a Bird Bash over the previous 3 months, again in roughly taxonomic order.

That should start with Turkey Vultures, now quite commonplace and seen by many, mostly soaring. Eight graceful Trumpeter Swans were observed on the southerly shore of Cache Bay by the Levesque pair. (Might they have been Tundras? Very hard to tell from that distance, but such do not normally appear at Cache Bay, and normally are farther north by the end of April, whereas at least one pair of Trumpeters has been making the Bay their home in recent summers.)

Mallards, and to a lesser extent Black Ducks, were around at several places and observed by many; likewise, Common Goldeneye, Hooded and Common Mergansers.

Just a few Red-tailed Hawks were discovered and those by Gary, Mary, and Kaye. Bald Eagles were noted by several observers, as were American Kestrel. Kaye saw a Merlin within the City, and Chris one in the west end. No Rough-legs were noted on this Bird Bash.

Ruffed Grouse were again fairly wide-spread and noted by Donna, among others. Wild Turkeys were found by the Anderson pair and by Ernie. Sandhill Cranes were still about, though in small numbers, seen by Steve, Mary, Chris, the McKerchers, and the Anderson and Levesque pairs.

A few Killdeer showed up again, noted only by Chris and the McKerchers. And a few more American Woodcock were about, heard by your compiler at Laurier Woods'

parking lot, and by Chris and the Anderson pair.

Ring-billed and Herring Gulls were about in large numbers, but no other gulls or terns were yet spotted within the still frozen, main lakes.

Of course, lots of Rock Pigeons were about, while Mourning Doves were noted by just a few, including Donna, Kaye, Chris, and both the Levesque and Anderson pairs.

The Belted Kingfisher was seen again by some, including the Anderson and Levesque pairs, and by Chris.

The three main woodpecker species were widespread and seen by many. A Northern Shrike was noted only by Kaye.

The Canada Jay was seen solely by Ernie, but Blue Jays, American Crows and Common Ravens were, as usual, widely noted; likewise, the Black-capped Chickadee and the Red and White-breasted Nuthatches.

American Robins have made their presence well-known (at last) and were observed by many appreciative onlookers. A few striking Brown Thrashers were seen again (one had been about in January), and enjoyed by Mary Ann, Laura, Mary, Gary, and the Levesque duo.

Of course European Starlings were very widespread.

Now as to sparrows noted in previous Bird Bashes, we get first to the American Tree. They seemed to be everywhere and were seen by most participants. Song Sparrows and White-throats were also about, though in lesser numbers than the American Tree, but both were also noted by many. As to the White-crowned (seen before in January), they were spotted (so far) only by Steve, Linda, the Sparks, Mary Ann, Marc, Ernie, and Gary. Dark-eyed Juncos were as widely present as the American Tree Sparrow, and seen by almost all.

Snow Buntings: a very few were still about and noted by Kaye and by the McKerchers.

Red-winged Blackbirds were almost everywhere, as were huge flocks of Common Grackles.

No reports were made of Pine Grosbeaks, but Red Crossbills were still here, noted by Gary and by Kaye. Common Redpolls were the birds of feeders this year - in large numbers and everywhere! Evening Grosbeaks were also about and in fair numbers, and observed by John, the Handleys, Mary Ann, Therez and Chris.

Finally, the House Sparrows – observed again only by Gary and the Anderson and Levesque pairs.

And so that is it - a great list of birds seen by a great number of participants! Congrats to all! Even more birds should be seen at the May Bird Bash to be held the last weekend of May – **May 25-26**. The weather should be more pleasant then for even more active birds! Be sure to mark the date down!