

Bird Bash Report

November 9–10, 2019

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

What weather! But for 26 stalwart bird-watchers it must have been – stimulating! For, despite the very early, very wintry weather, some 52 species of birds were spotted. As good as that was in such conditions, it is, however, the lowest number for a November Bird Bash since it was started here 16 years (yes) ago! The previous low was 54 in 2015, while last year we observed 69. Average is 68.

But to start off in roughly taxonomic order with the species not seen previously during this year's Bird Bash, as is our regular practice, we begin with the Tundra Swan. Some 15 or so of these beautiful birds were still biding their time at the swamp area on the lake near the end of Nipissing Road, Sturgeon Falls. They were much enjoyed by Therez Violette and by Renee Levesque and yours truly.

The Levesque pair was surprised to find the first Iceland Gull for the Bird Bash year, cavorting about in the bit of open water still present at Verner Lagoon.

Then we have White-winged Scoters, spotted off Sunset Point by Grant and Shirley McKercher and by Brent Turcotte.

And finally, the Levesque pair spotted one very black Brewer's Blackbird at a farm on Rainville Road.

Now to birds observed previously during the year's Bird Bashes, we start first with the Common Loon. A few were still around and noted by Sarah Wheelan with Marc Buchanan, by Keith Pearson, Grant and Shirley McKercher, Elsa Tafel, and Lori Anderson with Ken Gowing.

Canada Geese were still in very large numbers – though invariably within a patch of water rather than upon the snowy fields.

Two Trumpeter Swans were still about – in Cache Bay noted by the Levesque duo.

As to ducks, very large numbers of Mallards were about, especially along Lake Nipissing at the end of Nipissing Road, along with a few Blacks and Gadwalls. But that seemed to be it for the “puddle ducks”, with the lagoons and ponds being almost all frozen over. However, some diving ducks like Greater Scaup were also in large numbers, along with a few Ring-necks, and many Common Goldeneye and Buffleheads

at the open water near Lavigne and elsewhere.

Hooded Mergansers were located by the Anderson pair, the McKerchers, Steve Pitt and the Levesque duo. The latter pair also spotted some Common Mergansers which seemed generally to be few and far between, though also discovered by the Wheelan and Anderson duos, by the McKerchers and by Brent.

Now as to predators, the Anderson pair found Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks. At least eight Bald Eagles were noted by Gary and Connie Sturge near Powassan, while the Levesque duo saw a similar number at the North Bay landfill site. Laura Turcotte also spotted one, as did the Anderson duo. Kaye Edmunds spotted a Merlin.

Ruffed Grouse were discovered by Mike Arthurs, by Keith Thornborrow, by Kaye and by Janet Sparks. Twelve sort of “talky” Wild Turkeys were come upon by the Anderson pair in Chisholm. No cranes were found this month, though they had been on our “books” each month since March. No shorebirds were noted anywhere.

Huge numbers of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls were still about, especially at the landfill sites, with just a few Black-backed also around – the latter noted by Brent, Keith, the McKerchers, and the Anderson and Levesque pairs.

Rock Pigeons were as numerous as ever, but Mourning Doves were noted only by the Sturges, Therez, Keith, the McKerchers, Buddy Myles and the Anderson pair.

No owls were reported again -none since April - nor were Belted Kingfishers which had been seen each month since March, and nor were Great Blue Herons, seen monthly since April.

The only woodpeckers seen were Downy, Hairy and Pileated, the first two very common, the latter seen by Elsa, Kaye, the McKerchers, the Sturges, the Handleys and the Anderson and Levesque pairs.

A Northern Shrike, not hereabout since April, was spotted by Peter and Pam Handley, by the Anderson duo and by Janet.

The now-named Canada Jay was seen by Mike near Marten River. Blue Jays were as usual, very common, as were American Crows (still) and Common Ravens.

Horned Larks, also seen last month, were located by the Anderson pair east of Powassan.

Black-capped Chickadees and Red and White- breasted Nuthatches were pretty common

at most feeders. But the Brown Creeper was spotted only by Keith.

As to thrushes, a late Hermit Thrush was photographed by Janet. The American Robin was still about in small numbers, and located by Mary Ann and Ted Kenrick, Mike, Therez, Kaye, the Anderson duo, the Sturges and Buddy.

European Starlings were still flocking in large numbers.

No warblers were spotted, and only a few sparrows were: the Tree being the most numerous and noted by many; a White-throat identified by Mike and by the Sturges; Dark-eyed Juncos , not noted since June, seen by John Levesque, the Handleys, Keith, the Anderson pair, Janet, Therez, the Wheelan combo, the Kenricks and Steve.

Snow Buntings, not here since April, were fairly numerous in large groupings, and noted by Brent, the McKerchers, the Anderson pair, Kaye and the Wheelan duo.

A very few Red-winged Blackbirds were found, and these by Therez, the Kenricks, Buddy and the Sturges. The latter pair also found Common Grackles which were still about in small numbers and also seen by Buddy and Therez.

Pine Siskins were spotted by the Sturges and by the Anderson pair. The latter pair also saw many American Goldfinch which were noted as well by John, Keith, the Kenricks and the Levesque pair.

Finally, House Sparrows were, as usual, observed by the Anderson pair and by the Sturges.

And that concludes the November report! Congrats to all the participants during a very tough weather weekend!

Perhaps the weather will be better come our December count which will be over the weekend of **December 7-8**. Plan for it!