

## Nipissing Bird Bash April, 2016

It was a rather great week-end for birds, despite the cool weather. Some 89 species were observed by 27 participants. Spring must surely be here, though the average for April in the past 12 years was a bit higher at 95. (week-ends at later dates in some months could have been more productive).

As usual I will start with new birds for the year, in roughly taxonomic order.

So, of course that must begin with Common Loon! Despite the main lakes still being frozen, it was observed in some open areas, such as at Cache Bay, where 3 of them were noticed by Therez Violette, and by Renee Levesque and yours truly. Others seeing this iconic member of our bird world were Gary and Connie Sturge near Powassan, Keith Thornborrow down at South River, Kaye Edmunds, Marc Buchanan, Grant and Shirley McKercher, Gary Chowns, and Lori Anderson with Ken Gowing. The Levesque duo also heard the distinctive Pied-billed Grebe song in the Cache Bay area.

Double-crested Cormorant are back in large numbers again, seen by many of the same groups as saw the loons. An American Bittern was spotted by Paul Smylie in the marsh off Booth Road.

Then we get to the puddle ducks. Most, if not all have arrived now and may be seen in any of the lagoons nearby. That includes Gadwall, American Wigeon, and Northern Shoveler, both teal, yet in few numbers, including early Blue-winged spotted by the Sturges. Very beautiful Northern Pintail were found in wet fields by the Anderson, and the Levesque pairs. Newly spotted, diving Ring-necked Ducks, and Bufflehead were about in large numbers as well.

Then to the predators. Many have now seen Osprey at their nesting areas all over the place, A first of the season Broadwinged Hawk was spotted by the Anderson pair east of Powassan. But the Golden Eagle identified clearly by the Sturges near Powassan was certainly a highlight of the month.

Now a couple of shorebirds did show up. The Greater Yellow-legs was found by the Sturges, in a low-lying area west of Powassan, and Keith Thornborrow near South River, while the Lesser and Greater were briefly in Cache Bay spotted by Therez. And the Anderson pair enjoyed Wilson's Snipe. Somewhat unfortunately no one observed any Woodcock during this month's "bash", though I know they are around.

Belted Kingfishers are now back, seen by the Levesque pair, by Brent Turcotte, and by the Anderson duo, as are Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and Northern Flickers seen by many of you. Eastern Phoebes, likewise.

The only swallows noted were Tree, found by Keith, the Anderson pair and by the Sturges. Ruby-crowned Kinglets were in the area in large numbers spotted by many but the Eastern Bluebird was seen only by the Anderson pair. The Veery Thrush was on Marc Buchanan's list, as was the Hermit Thrush, the latter also noted by yours truly, both spotted in Laurier Woods, and the Swainson's upon the list of Grant and Shirley McKercher seen near Callander.

Brown Thrashers arrived in small numbers, so far, observed just by the Sturges. and by Donna Demarco east of Rutherglen. Pine Warblers also showed up in small numbers, within sight of Ernie and the Sturges, while the latter pair, and Donna, saw our first Chipping Sparrows. Savannah Sparrows were watched by the Levesque duo out at the Verner lagoon area, and by the Anderson pair east of Powassan. Lovely, but here only for short periods, Fox Sparrows were enjoyed by many, including Gary Chowns, Mary Young, Brent Turcotte, and Kaye Edmunds. Swamp Sparrows were noticed by Marc, yours truly, and Paul; while White-throats were discovered by many, including Pam and Peter Handley.

The Eastern Meadowlark was observed by the Anderson duo east of Powassan. Rusty Blackbirds were identified by Brent Turcotte. And, that concludes the birds of the area seen for the first time this year, in our district, during a monthly "bird bash".

And so, to those birds seen previously at our monthly “bird bash”, we must start with Great Blue Herons. The Sturges saw one, as did Marc, Kaye, Ernie, and Keith. Turkey Vultures were noted by many, as were Wood Ducks, and Mallards. Blacks were seen only be a few. Lesser Scaup were still around, while Common Mergansers had become ubiquitous, in most open waters, as were Common Goldeneye. Hooded Mergansers were less bountiful, but seen by a few of you, including Gary Chowns .

As for predators, Northern Harriers were seen fairly often in open fields. A Cooper’s Hawk was identified by Renee, and Red-tailed by the Anderson pair. Once again Bald eagles were spotted by many, as were American Kestrel. A Merlin was observed by Elsa Tafel , Gary Chowns, and by Ernie, who also saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk.

Ruffed grouse were noted by a few of you. And Turkeys again this month, were seen by several including Kevan Cowcill, Stew Greig and Keith. Sandhill Cranes were in few numbers but were noted by the Levesque , and by the Anderson duos, and by Ernie. Killdeer were found by the Sturges. Of course gulls were here in huge numbers, especially Ring-billed, which must be now in the thousands. Mourning doves were seen by several , including the Handleys and Mary.

The three main woodpeckers were on many lists. Gray Jays were only upon that of Keith, down at South River. Blue Jays , Crows and Ravens were of course common with most observers, as were Black-capped Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches. White-breasted were not so common, being only upon a few lists, including Keith’s and Ernie Frayles. Brown Creepers also were just seen by a few, including Marc, and the Sturges. Golden-crowned Kinglets were identified only by the Anderson pair.

American Robins were, of course seen by most of you. Aren’t they an enjoyable spring arriver! Starlings, still lots of them, are not quite as much appreciated. Yellow-rumped Warblers were seen by a few , including yours truly, the Sturges, and Marc, Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos seemed to be the most common

birds all over the district. Song Sparrows also were fairly common, but White-crowned were seen so far, only by Ernie and Brent.

Red-wings and Grackles were, of course quite numerous all over, but Brown-headed Cowbirds were found only by Gary Chowns, Ernie, the Sturges and the Levesque and Anderson duos.

Purple Finches were at most feeders, along with (still) Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins. American Goldfinches seemed to be coming back, seen by a few, including yours truly, Marc, Keith, and Mary Ann Kenricks. She had also Evening Grosbeaks which were still about in small numbers, including at Kayes place. House Sparrows were observed only by the Anderson duo at the Anderson farm, and by the Levesque pair out at the Verner farm co-op depot.

And so congratulations go to all for a very successful April bird outing!.

Be prepared for the best month of all coming up in May – over the May 28-29 week-end.

And look for detailed results shortly in the Nipissing Naturalist Club Web page.

Dick Tafel, compiler