

## **Nipissing Area Bird Bash October 2017**

*By Dick Tafel, compiler*

Your compiler had been very disappointed with the number of songbirds (or passerines) he had observed during the amazingly warm weather of the past month. And he had feared a poor turn-out of birds would be the result of the October Bird Bash. However, as it turned out, nineteen stalwarts managed to locate 83 species, just one below the average number of the past fifteen years of our efforts. And so, it seems the world is still moving around in regular circles, at least around here.

Accordingly, starting with the new birds of the year in the normal, roughly taxonomic order, we must commence with the Red-necked Grebe, two of which your compiler observed briefly off the end of Jocko Point. Then we get to the dozen or so Tundra Swans discovered by Therez Violette at their regularly used site in Lake Nipissing near the edge of Nipissing Street, Sturgeon Falls.

Greater Scaup in the hundreds were within their often utilized raft at Cache Bay watched by Renee Levesque and your compiler from a long distance by a needed scope. They also found one American Golden Plover close to the Government Dock in North Bay. It was, no doubt, just taking a break before continuing its amazing journey from its breeding area in the Arctic to Argentina. And then there were the always active, and sort of fun-like, ground birds, the American Pipits, seen by the Levesque duo at Verner Lagoon, and also observed by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing. Rusty Blackbirds finally put in appearances and were noticed by Kaye Edmunds.

Now onto the rest of the birds. There were not as many Common Loons, but still some – found by many groups. The Levesque duo found at least 20 Pied-billed Grebes at Cache Bay. Just a few Double-crested Cormorants were discovered by Lake Nipissing observers.

Great Blue Herons were noted by Brent and Laura Turcotte and by three other groups. A Green Heron was on Kaye's list. There were a few Turkey Vultures still about, a number in the Powassan area noticed by Gary and Connie Sturge and John Levesque, and some seen by Grant and Shirley McKercher. A group of four Snow Geese were at Osprey Links, seen by both the McKercher and the Levesque duos. And still lots of Canada Geese, seen by many.

As to ducks, they were in full force. Counting the three merganser species, with the rarer Red-breasted seen by the Anderson pair, there were some 17 species of ducks observed. The McKerchers and the Anderson duo were the only ones to observe Bufflehead - last seen in May - and Redhead Ducks, both at Callander Lagoon.

As to predators, a Northern Harrier was observed by the Sturges and the Anderson duo. A Sharp-shinned Hawk was also on the Sturge list. A Broadwing was seen by Mary Ann Kenrick along Ski Club Road, while a Red-tailed Hawk was found by the Turcottes and by John. A Bald Eagle was on the Anderson duo list while only Kaye and Mary Ann saw the American Kestrel, presumably the last for this year in our area.

Ruffed Grouse were fairly common, but the Wild Turkey was observed only by John just north of Sundridge. American Coots were on the McKercher, the Levesque, and the Anderson lists. Sandhill Cranes were seen by Kaye and by the Levesque duo. No other shorebirds than the aforementioned

American Golden Plover were seen by anyone.

Our two main gulls were, of course, observed by many, as were the Rock Pigeons, but the Mourning Dove was seen solely by the Sturges, while the Belted Kingfisher was noted only by the McKerchers. Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers and Pileateds were on several lists, but it seems that only Donna Demarco caught sight of a Downy.

Now to the apparently rarer (to the compiler) songbirds. John saw an Eastern Phoebe, as did three other groups. The Gray Jay was found by the Sturges. Blue Jays were on almost all lists, as were crows and ravens and, likewise, Black-capped Chickadees. Both nuthatches were on many lists, but the Brown Creeper was seen only by the Anderson duo and the Sturges.

A Golden-crowned Kinglet was sighted by Kaye and by the Anderson pair, who also saw Ruby-crowns, as did the Levesque duo. Eastern Bluebirds were on the Anderson list, while American Robins, though few in number, were on many lists, including that of Peter and Pam Handley and Therez, – although (sadly) not on your compiler's list. No other thrushes were discovered. The Gray Catbird was on only the Turcotte list. Of course European Starlings seemed to be almost everywhere and in large numbers.

Now to the warblers: many saw Yellow-rumps, but only the Sturges saw others – Black-throated Green, Pine and Palm - in woods west of Powassan.

Six species of sparrows were seen - the Chipping only by the Anderson pair and the Sturges; Savannahs by the Levesque and the Anderson pairs; Fox Sparrow, not seen here since April, only by the Turcottes; Songs and White-throats by many; while pretty White-crowns from further north, which should be here now in large numbers, were observed by many including Helen McCombie and Mary Ann. The Dark-eyed Junco was found only by the Turcottes.

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was noted by the Sturges. Red-wings were seen by several, including Therez. Eastern Meadowlarks were solely seen by the Anderson duo and the Turcotte pair. Common Grackles were seen by many. Purple Finches were seen just by the Sturges. American Goldfinches were seen by a fair number. And finally, House Sparrows were seen only by the Anderson pair.

And that is it. Very well done, all. One can appreciate just how important everyone is to ensuring that all birds in the area are discovered.

**November's Bird Bash** will, as usual for the Fall, be on the first weekend – **November 4-5**.