

Bird Bash Report

April 24-25, 2021

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

A great, but somewhat surprising, collection of wild birds was provided by 32 local participants in this month's Bird Bash. Eighty-nine (89) species were identified, a good number considering the rains of Sunday and perhaps a lower number of species about than in many other years, but a number that is below the average of 96 over the past 18 years. Still quite a good number! Last year we saw 86 species.

As usual, we proceed in rough taxonomic order (as set out in the original *Seasonal Checklist of the Birds of North Bay and Area*), with species not seen previously within the 50 mile or 80.5 km radius of our Bird Bash.

And so, very wonderfully, once again, we start with the iconic Common Loon. It is just so great to have it back again though not, in your compiler's opinion, in quite the numbers yet of previous years. It was spotted by Chris Sukha, Steve Pitt, Denise Desmarais, Lloyd and Janet Sparks, yours truly, and Keith Thornborrow.

Next, a Pied-billed Grebe was spotted only by Chris at Cache Bay.

Double-crested Cormorants were back, somewhat happily since the slaughter authorized by the Ontario government last year. They were noticed by Grant McKercher, Lori Anderson with Ken Gowing, Renee Levesque with yours truly, and Chris.

American Bittern were discovered by Chris, Brent and Laura Turcotte, and the Anderson pair.

Great Blue Herons were finally about, but noted only by the Sparks, Faye Oei, and Keith.

A flock of 12 Tundra Swans were observed by Chris flying near Field, and 4 by Therez Violette at the end of Nipissing Road south of Sturgeon Falls.

Various first-time ducks were discovered by many, mostly dabbling ducks, and mostly very bounteously in the various local lagoons: Gadwalls, American Wigeons, Northern Shovelers, and Lesser Scaup. Other new ones were Northern

Pintails noted only by yours truly, Oriana Pokorny with Sarah Wheelan at the south-west of the end of Cranberry Trail; Greater Scaup identified only by the Levesque pair at Cache Bay; and Blue-winged Teal found by the Levesque pair and Grant at the now, unfortunately, newly trespassed-proofed Callander Lagoon.

Now to predators, and to the Osprey, whose prey is 99% fish, spotted by Therez (at a nest upon a lighting platform at the Cache Bay ball field), Grant, Chris, Denise, Gary and Connie Sturge with daughter Rachel, the Anderson duo, the Levesque pair, the Pokorny duo, and Keith.

A Virginia Rail was noted by Fred Pinto in Laurier Woods. An American Coot was spotted by the Anderson pair at Warren Lagoon.

Two Greater Yellowlegs were watched by yours truly adjacent to the end of Cranberry Trail.

Now to the amazing find of a very rare species for this area - an American Avocet found by the Pokorny pair who had the audacity to explore at the end of Cranberry Trail the “barrier marsh and islands that separate the main lake from Callander Bay”. That very noticeable bird must have been quite an exciting discovery indeed!

Wilson's Snipes were spotted by the Anderson pair, the Sturges trio, Chris, and by yours truly who saw one in Laurier Woods.

A Boreal Owl was unearthed by the Sturges trio during their evening owl survey.

A few Belted Kingfishers were spotted - by the Sturge trio, Chris, the Anderson pair, the Sparks, Brent Turcotte, and Keith.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were about and noted by Fred, Grant, Buddy Myles, yours truly, the Anderson pair, Corinne Urrutia, Steve, the Chowns, and Chris.

Now we get to the Passeriformes (or songbirds), and start with the first flycatcher seen this year - the Eastern Phoebe spotted by the Levesque pair, the Sturge trio, Chris, Grant, the Sparks, Steve, the Pokorny pair, and Keith.

Have the swallows returned? At least some Tree Swallows had, spotted by the Pokorny pair, Keith, Buddy, the Anderson duo, Chris, Brent, and the Sturge trio.

A new for the year Brown Creeper was found by Chris. It is a bit alarming that none had been found upon a count until this one since this bird normally is around all winter in small numbers.

Chris also discovered the remarkable songster, the Winter Wren, as did Buddy, April McCrum, Brent and the Pokorny pair.

Both kinglets were identified - the Golden-crowned by Brent and April, and the Ruby-crowned by Chris.

As for thrushes, the beautiful Eastern Bluebird graced the eyes of Chris in Field and the Sparks near their home. Hermit Thrushes were observed by Buddy, yours truly, the Anderson pair, Brent, Fred, the Sturge trio, and Chris.

A very early Gray Catbird was spotted by the Anderson pair.

At long last, and with great expectations upcoming, two warbler species were found. The Pine Warbler was spotted by Renee, the Sturge trio, and Buddy, while the Yellow-rumped Warbler was spotted by Chris.

As to sparrows, the Savannah Sparrow was watched by the Levesque duo and Denise, while the Anderson pair, Chris and your compiler identified both it and Swamp Sparrows.

Keith came upon a very early Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Brown-headed Cowbirds were noticed by John Levesque, Buddy, Chris, the Levesque pair, and Gary and Luanne Chowns.

Purple Finches were on the lists of the Sturges, Steve, the Levesques, and Buddy.

And so that finishes the long list of new birds seen for the first time by the birders during this year's Bird Bash.

Getting to birds seen previously within the area, we start with Turkey Vultures. In greater numbers now, they were spotted by the Sparks, the Pokorny pair, the Sturges, Grant, the Anderson duo, Chris, April, and the Levesque duo.

Canada Geese were about in very large numbers.

Somewhat strangely, the American Black Duck was noted only by Chris.

But Mallards, Wood Ducks, Green-winged Teals, Ring-necked Ducks, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, and Common Mergansers were about in fair numbers, and spotted by many. Hooded Mergansers were noted, however, only by Chris, the Anderson duo, the Pokorny pair, and Keith.

Northern Harriers were spotted by the Levesque pair, the Anderson duo, and the Sturge trio.

The Sharp-shinned Hawk was found solely by the Sparks and Keith.

Bald Eagles were watched by Shirley McKercher, the Sturge trio, the Levesque pair, the Chowns, and the Sparks.

American Kestrels were noted by the Levesque pair, Denise, the Sturges, the Anderson duo, and Chris.

Merlins were observed by the Levesque duo, the Sturges, Sarah and John.

Ruffed Grouse were on the lists of very many participants. Wild Turkeys, however, were seen only by Keith, the Anderson pair, and the Sturge trio.

Some Sandhill Cranes were still around and observed by the Anderson duo, Chris, the Levesque pair, Keith, the Sparks, Denise, the Sturges, the Pokorny pair, and Grant.

Killdeer were spotted by the Levesque pair, Grant, the Sturges, Keith, and the Anderson duo.

American Woodcock were observed only by the Anderson pair, Chris, the Sturges, and Grant.

Ring-billed and Herring Gulls were very numerous in many places.

Rock Doves remained ubiquitous, while Mourning Doves, much less egregious, were spotted by Buddy, the Sturges, Keith, Chris, Therez, Faye, Sarah, and Donna Demarco.

Barred Owls seemed to be fairly numerous this year, this being the third

consecutive month in which they have been observed. They were seen or heard during this Bird Bash by the Sturges, the Anderson pair, and Chris.

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and Pileateds remained fairly commonplace. Northern Flickers had arrived in fair numbers and were observed by Laura, Keith, the Levesque pair, the Sparks, the Anderson pair, Corinne, the Chowns, and John.

No Canada Jays were discovered this month unfortunately, a bird which some are trying to have established as Canada's national bird! And Blue Jays were much less common, being noted only by the Sturges, Chris, the Levesques, the Sparks, Keith, Steve, the Anderson duo, Donna, Laura, and Faye. American Crows were seemingly even more plentiful than usual, while Common Ravens were only a little much less so.

Of course, our wonderful, friendly Black-capped Chickadees seemed to be everywhere.

The two nuthatch species were somewhat less frequently seen this month, with the Red-breasted noted by the Sparks, Denise, Donna, the Handleys, and Faye, while the White-breasted was noted only by Grant and Corinne. Both nuthatches, however, were seen by Steve, Chris, and Keith.

American Robins appeared with lots of gusto and much enjoyed by many.

European Starlings were about in large numbers.

As to sparrows, the American Tree is still showing up at a few locations, noted by Corinne, the Chowns, Therez, the Handleys, Chris, the Turcottes, the Sturges, and the Anderson pair. Chipping Sparrows had arrived, being spotted by John, Donna, Elsa Tafel, the Levesques, the Sturges, and Chris. Song Sparrows have now become more plentiful, being noted by the Anderson pair, the Levesque duo, Chris, Denise, Grant, Fred, the Turcottes, the Sturges, the Chowns, the Pokorny pair, and Corinne. White-throats were on the lists so far only of the Chowns, Fred, Brent, the Sparks, Chris, the Anderson duo and Keith. So far, the lovely White-crown graced the eyes only of Keith.

Dark-eyed Juncos have been seen every month, this time by Fred, Therez, Steve, the Sturges, the Levesque duo, the Turcottes, John, Chris, Keith, the Anderson pair, the Chowns, the Handleys, and Donna.

Most surprisingly, the rare Northern Cardinals have been observed each month so far, but in April spotted only by Sarah.

Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles seemed to be almost everywhere this month.

Eastern Meadowlarks were spotted only by the Anderson pair and the Sturges.

A few Common Redpolls were still around and noticed by Steve and Faye.

Pine Siskins were on only the lists of the Levesques and Chris who also saw the American Goldfinch, as did the Sturges and Keith.

Evening Grosbeaks were still present and at the feeders of the Levesques, the Handleys, and Steve.

And finally, the often improperly maligned House Sparrows were observed by Chris, the Anderson pair, the Sturges, and the Levesque duo. (They have returned to the Co-op feed store in Verner, for which your compiler is very grateful.)

All in all an excellent effort by intrepid participants! Congrats to all!

And be prepared for next month's Bird Bash which should be the busiest one of all – over the weekend of **May 29 and 30**.