

Bird Bash Report

September 2024

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

It would be hard to devise a less comfortable weekend for a Bird Bash than the one just accomplished! Except for some time on Sunday afternoon, the rest of the time saw rain and wind – and cold! But regardless of all that, the birds did not seem to mind, and some 20 hardliners managed to discover 100 species of them. That was below average, for sure, for the month, but during the past 20 years, there were at least six Bird Bashes that resulted in less species.

As always, we begin with birds not previously seen during the year, following the order set out in the *Seasonal Checklist of the Birds of North Bay and Area*, and occurring within the 50-mile or 80.5-km radius of North Bay. That starts with the Black-bellied Plover spotted by Grant and Shirley McKercher at Callander Lagoon.

Then there was the spirited, dainty Red-necked Phalarope at Verner Lagoon, enjoyed by the pair of Renee Levesque and yours truly.

Garry Waldram came upon the Tennessee Warbler amazingly not previously seen this year during a Bird Bash. It was among only a few warblers seen at all!

Finally, your compiler identified a Clay-coloured Sparrow in Warren near the lagoon.

As to the balance of the birds seen during this Bash, it starts with the Common Loon that was seen (or heard) by 5 groups - Steve Pitt, Sue Gratton, Faye Oei, the McKerchers, and Garry.

The Pied-billed Grebe was discovered solely by the Levesque duo, Faye, and Sue.

The Double-crested Cormorant was not widely dispersed, but was upon a few lists.

The American Bittern, rarely discovered, was noted by Garry and Steve.

The Great Blue Heron was upon several lists, including that of Linda Stoner and Pat Stack who saw the bird at three locations.

The soaring Turkey Vultures were seen by most.

Canada Geese remained one of the most common birds of our region.

Now as to “puddle ducks”, they were readily visible within most of the local lagoons - many Wood Ducks; Gadwall; a few American Wigeon; Black Ducks; many, many Mallards; Blue and Green-winged Teal; some Northern Shovelers; and a Northern Pintail (spotted by the Levesque pair and by Sue at Powassan Lagoon).

A few diving ducks showed up at various places – Redheads seen in Warren Lagoon by the Levesque pair, last spotted during April’s Bird Bash; Ring-neck Ducks; Lesser Scaup; Bufflehead; Hooded Merganser; Common Goldeneye; and Common Merganser.

Getting to the predators, somewhat surprisingly one group, the McKerchers, still found Ospreys in the vicinity near Callander. Northern Harriers were spotted by several participants, along with many American Kestrels. A Sharp-shinned Hawk was noted by Renee at her place, while the fairly common Broad-wing which has mostly migrated to Southern Ontario was still seen by a few, namely the Levesque pair, Faye, and Sue. The illustrious Bald Eagles were spotted by Bill and Carol Fleming, Lloyd and Janet Sparks, Garry, the McKerchers, and the Levesque duo. Garry also noted the Merlin.

Ruffed Grouse were spotted by some - the Flemings, Faye, the Sparks, and Steve, while the Wild Turkey was seen only by Sue and Faye.

Now to Sandhill Cranes! Many hundreds had arrived within some fields and were much enjoyed by several observers, including Therez Violette and Donna Demarco.

Getting to the shorebirds, the Semipalmated Plover was discovered by the McKerchers, Garry, Sue, the Stoner duo, and the Levesque pair. Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, the Solitary, Semipalmated, Least, Baird’s and Pectoral Sandpipers were all in Powassan Lagoon and some in the other lagoons.

Ring-billed Gulls were almost everywhere, and to a lesser extent, Herring Gulls. A Great Black-backed was spotted by the Levesque pair at the government dock area. Caspian Terns were still evident at Cache Bay and watched by the Levesque duo.

Rock Pigeons were everywhere, while the Mourning Dove was located by just a few – young Jeremie Corbeil, the Sparks, Therez, Faye, the Stoner duo, the Levesque pair, the Flemings, and Sue.

No owls, but one Common Nighthawk discovered by Katharine MacLeod.

Some still saw Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, including Mary Young who saw one take several 30 second drinks at her feeder, no doubt preparing for its long journey south, while many such had apparently already begun their voyage.

Belted Kingfishers were watched by Garry, Steve, and the Flemings.

As to woodpeckers, the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was spotted only by Steve and Garry. Downy, Hairy, and especially the Northern Flicker were widespread, but the Pileated was less so this month, being seen only by Garry, the Flemings, and Steve.

So now we get to the passerines (the song birds). Were some of our summer visitors still around? It seemed so, starting off with the flycatchers. The Eastern Phoebe was spotted by the Levesque pair, the Sparks, Jeremie, and Garry; the Eastern Kingbird only by the Levesque pair.

Red-eyed Vireos were still about and observed by Garry and Renee.

Blue Jays, American Crows, and Common Ravens seem to enjoy our climate and were about in numbers.

A few swallows were just passing through and seen quickly by some. The Tree was spotted by Garry and Sue, while Cliff and Barn Swallows were luckily spotted by the Levesque pair as they passed briefly by the Powassan Lagoon. Sue also saw the Barn Swallow.

Black-capped Chickadees were enjoyed widely within our vicinity. The Red-breasted Nuthatch was spotted only by Faye, Jeremie, Steve, and Sue, while the White-breasted was located by the Flemings, Faye, and Sue.

Now to the thrushes. Were they almost all gone except for the wonderful American Robins? It seems so. Robins were spotted by John Levesque, Alexander Dumouchelle, Faye, Sue, the Flemings, the McKerchers, Steve, Mary, the Levesque pair, the Stoner duo, Jeremie, Therez, and Garry. The Gray Catbird was caught sight of only by Garry. The Brown Thrasher was observed only by Sue.

European Starlings were still virtually everywhere, often in very large flocks.

Were there still some warblers about? Just ask Garry, who observed six others besides the Tennessee – Nashville, Chestnut-sided, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, American Redstart, and Common Yellow-throat, the latter also seen by Mary. Faye perceived the Ovenbird and the McKerchers came upon a Yellow-rumped.

Scarlet Tanager? This beauty was found by the McKerchers right within their own yard!

As to sparrows, some of the relatively commonplace ones - Chipping, Savannah, Song,

Swamp, and White-throat - were spotted by several participants. An early- returning Tree Sparrow was on the Fleming's list. The Dark-eyed Junco was located by Garry.

Was the marvelous Northern Cardinal discovered again? Yes, by the McKerchers.

Another lovely bird, the Rose-breasted Grosbeak was watched by John, Garry, Alexander, and Renee.

Even a Bobolink was still about and located by Faye. But no Meadowlarks were spotted.

A few Red-winged Blackbirds were observed by several participants. But the Rusty Blackbird was caught sight of only by Sue, Faye, and the Levesque duo. It too had not been discovered on a Bird Bash since April. The Common Grackle remained very common! No orioles showed up.

Purple Finch were noted by the Flemings and Garry, while American Goldfinch were on most lists.

Finally, we get to the House Sparrows. They were studied only by the Levesque duo and Garry.

And so that completes the Bird Bash report for September. Congrats to all participants who took part during some very unpleasant weather!

Our next Bird Bash takes place **October 5-6**. Mark the date on your calendar. Hopefully October's Bird Bash will take place in pleasant fall weather with the trees in splendid colour!