

Nipissing Area Bird Bash Report, Apr. 25-26 '15

Great participation for this “spring’s” first birding journeys; 34 observers! And, such exciting discoveries, - 89 of them!

One must start with new birds of the year for the area, in roughly taxonomic order; and surely the most exciting were the 16 graceful Tundra Swans first noticed by Therez Violete of Sturgeon Falls, and viewed by the trio of Luke Sephenson, Renee Levesque and yours truly, - and by Brent and Laura Turcotte. They were at the foot of Nipissing Street, at the edge of the still present ice, on Lake Nipissing. Only rarely do we see as many of those around here, at once, if, indeed, at all, during the year.

Of course the first Common Loons are also especially great; and these were found by Deborah Sykes, and Grant and Shirley McKercher, on Nipissing, and Yvan Latour on Pine Lake, and by at least 5 other groups. Pied billed Grebes and Double-crested Cormorant were once again in Cache Bay and watched by the Turcottes, and by the Stephenson trio; and as to the cormorants, by Deborah, on Nipissing.

American Bittern have arrived and one was enjoyed by Alex Larade, not far from the overpass and Highway 17, and by Chris Suhka out at Field. Great Blue Herons were found by more, including Barb Stewart down at Magnetewan, Craig and Elaine Hurst near Redbridge, and the Stephenson trio at Jocko Point.

Some 12 ducks or duck-like species were enjoyed, by many, including 6 “puddle ducks” (new ones like the magnificent Wood Duck, and Green-winged Teal, Gadwalls, and American Wigeon); and 6 diving ducks; new ones like the Redhead (found only, it seems, by the Stephenson group up at the Verner Lagoon); and, - by many observers - Ring-necked Ducks, (everywhere?), Lesser Scaup, and Bufflehead.

Nine predators were located, three of them new for the year: many Ospreys were at their old nests already, lots of Northern Harriers were observed gliding low over open fields, and a “flap, flap, flap and glide” Coopers Hawk was watched by the Stephenson trio at Jocko Point.

Rare and exciting Spruce Grouse was found by Keith Thornborrow, near South River. Several Sandhill Cranes were seen by many, including Greg and Pat Boxwell, in the east end, Gary and Connie Sturge, and Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing near Powassan.

Even Killdeer had appeared, noticed by several groups. But, it must have been the imposing Greater Yellow-legs, among the shore-birds, which caused the most excitement. They were found near Cache Bay by Therez, and the Turcotte, and Stephenson groups. Wilson's Snipe was identified by Alex, and by Chris, who also observed American Woodcock (near Field), as did the Anderson duo (near Powassan).

Just three gulls species were observed, the Greater Black-backed Gull seen by the McKercher pair being the only new one for the year. But a Caspian Tern was found by the Stephenson trio at Cache Bay.

Three owls were located by the Sturges, during their 4-hour long owl prowl, just north of Mattawa, including Great Horned and Saw-whet, the latter also found by Chris.

Belted Kingfishers appeared for the first time, on many lists, as did the Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and Northern Flickers. But the Sturges were the only ones to identify the Black-backed Woodpecker, just north-west of Powassan.

The only flycatchers thus far, were the Eastern Phoebes found by many, including Nicole Richardson. Tree Swallows were upon only the Anderson list, and that of Barb Stewart near Magnetewan. Our only Winter Wren was heard by Yvan, near Pine Lake. But, both kinglets have shown up, and were observed by many, including the Golden-crowned by Paul Smylie, though only the Anderson pair, plus Luke and your compiler, saw both of them.

American Robins were certainly enjoyed by many, and Hermit Thrush appeared upon a few lists, including that of Marc Buchanan. The only warbler to make it so far was the Yellow-rumped, found by Chris, near Field.

Now as to sparrows, Chippings were identified by Nicole, and Alex, Helen McCombie, and by Pam and Peter Handley, all near North Bay. Savannah Sparrows were discovered by the Anderson pair, near Powassan, and by the Stephenson trio, near Verner. Fox sparrows were upon a surprisingly large number of lists, including that of Kaye Edmunds, Mary Anne Kenrick, John Levesque, and Chris. Swamp Sparrows were noted by Luke and your compiler in Laurier Woods, by the Sturges, and by Chris out in Field.

The Eastern Meadowlark was spotted by Lori and Ken, and by Barb (near Magnetewan). The Brown-headed Cowbird was discovered by just a few, including Keith (near South River), the Anderson duo, Kaye, and John. Purple Finches appeared on several counts, including the Boxwells, Donna Demarco, (near Eau Claire), Barbara, the Doug Patersons, and Kaye.

Finally, for the first time this year, there is the House Sparrow, which was upon only one list, that of the Stephenson trio out near Verner.

The preceding birds cover new spring arrivals within this area.

Now to get to some other discoveries, following a similar taxonomic order. First must be the Trumpeter Swan in the Callander area found by the McKerchers. Then there was an increasing number of Turkey Vultures noted by many. One should not leave out Canada Geese, still almost painfully common.

A Sharp-shinned Hawk appeared again, this time noted by Mary Ann Kenrick. A Red-tail was seen by Alex, Chris, and the Anderson duo, a tardy, northern mover, Rough-leg by Keith. Merlin were noted by Matt Walter and his father, and a few others. Bald Eagles were again on many lists, along with American Kestrel; Ruffed grouse, likewise.

Both main gulls have become commonplace. Mourning Doves were fairly often observed (but not as much so as their cousin, the numerous Rock Pigeons). Barred Owls were noted this month by the Sturges, and Chris.

Downy , Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers are still upon many lists, the latter being particularly noted by the Patersons. Northern Shrike were again with us, seen by Kaye, the Sturges, and Chris. Gray Jays were found only by Keith, but Blue Jays by many, as well as both Nuthatches. Brown Creepers were noted only by the Stephenson trio, and Chris.

American Tree Sparrows were very common, as were, now, Song Sparrows, and at last – White-throats; likewise, Dark-eyed Juncos. Snow Buntings were still around during the Anderson duo wanderings, though in much smaller numbers, now.

Red-wings have become noted in almost every swamp, along with Common Grackle. The Common Redpoll was still about, at a few feeders, such as the Hursts, and Mary Ann's, and Matt's in North Bay; likewise Evening Grosbeak, noted by Therez, and Chris – in the west end. Pine Siskins were only, it seems, this month, observed by Matt.

Such an exciting week-end! Congrats all!

And May's will be even wilder! – to be during the week-end of May 23-24. Mark it down!

You can check out the details of this and other counts by clicking on - www.nipnats.com <<http://www.nipnats.com/>>

Dick Tafel, compiler