

Bird Bash Report

March 2021

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

Weather-wise, there was one good day for birding this past weekend, and despite the weather, the birds did not seem to mind - nor did 33 participants who managed to locate 59 species of birds within our 50-mile or 80.5 km radius area! That is better by five than last year, and is the third best record in March over the past 18 years of “bird-bashing”. In 2012, we found 67 species, and in 2016, 64 species. (March 2012 saw temperatures reach record highs.)

Starting as usual with the many new birds of the year in our roughly taxonomic order (per the *Seasonal Checklist of the Birds of North Bay and Area*), we must firstly note the Turkey Vulture. Two were spotted by Renee Levesque and yours truly adjacent to Stewart Road northwest of Sturgeon Falls. Also spotting these returning vultures were Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing, Janet and Lloyd Sparks with friend Nancy, and Chris Sukha.

Next are Canada Geese. They have arrived already in pretty large numbers and were noted by just about every participant who wandered beyond their feeders.

Then comes the Trumpeter Swan. Chris spotted them, as did the Levesque duo.

The Wood Duck was noted by Chris and by Buddy Myles near Lavigne. Buddy also spotted Green-winged Teal, as did the Levesque duo, and Gary and Connie Sturge. The latter couple also saw Ring-necked Ducks, as did Buddy, Chris, and Brent and Laura Turcotte.

One male Bufflehead was seen by the Levesque duo at Cache Bay. They also saw Hooded and Common Mergansers, both also seen by the Turcottes, Chris, Buddy, Denise Desmarais, and Keith Thornborrow. Cindy LaFleur, Fred Pinto, the Sturges, and the Anderson pair noted just the Common Merganser. Both species of merganser looked particularly handsome – almost all of them male.

Now we get to the other predators, besides the vulture. Northern Harriers were spotted by the Levesque duo and the Sturges. A Sharp-shinned Hawk was photographed and identified by Pam and Peter Handley. American Kestrel were seen by Chris, the Levesque duo, Grant and Shirley McKercher, the Sparks, and Bill and Carol Fleming. A Merlin was watched by April McCrum, Chris, Greg Jaski, and the Anderson pair.

Great Blue Heron and Double-crested Cormorants eluded everyone, though they are often seen in March. Red-tailed Hawks were seen recently, but unfortunately not during the Bird Bash.

A few Sandhill Cranes were spotted by the Levesque duo, by the Sturges, and by the Turcottes.

Killdeer were found by the McKerchers, the first and only “shore-bird” discovered, and American Woodcocks were heard and observed by the Anderson duo.

Both Ring-billed and Herring Gulls were spotted by many participants, although only the Herring was identified by the Flemings, Denise, and Cindy, while only the Ring-billed was upon Fred's list. Chris identified a rather rare Glaucous Gull.

Now to the passerines – among which almost everyone was surely delighted to discover the just-arrived American Robins.

And there were some new sparrows - a Chipping Sparrow identified by the Sparks trio; Song Sparrows viewed by Chris, the Anderson pair, the Sturges, the Turcottes, Buddy, Denise, Donna Demarco, Fred, Corinne Urrutia, the Levesque duo and Keith; and the White-crowned Sparrow seen also by Keith.

Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles seemed suddenly to be almost everywhere, and were seen by most participants, but the beautiful - especially when seen front-on - Eastern Meadowlark was watched only by the Sturges and the Levesque duo.

Now we must get to those birds seen previously during this year, starting with American Black Ducks noted by Fred, the Sturges, the Levesque duo, the Turcottes, and Chris. Mallards were by far the most common duck, seen by almost everyone who went beyond their feeders.

As to diving ducks, the only ones seen previously were the Common Goldeneye observed by the McKerchers, Buddy, Keith, the Sturges, the Levesque duo and Chris.

Bald Eagles were fairly widespread and spotted by the Sturges, Keith, the Anderson and Levesque duos, Cindy, Steve Pitt, and the McKerchers.

Ruffed Grouse were noted by Donna, the Handleys, the Flemings, Mary, the Anderson duo, Steve, Keith, and Chris. Wild Turkeys, from 8 to 18 in number, were discovered by the Levesque pair, the Anderson duo, the Sturges and Keith.

Rock Doves, as always, were very numerous, while Mourning Doves were spotted only

by Keith, the Sturges, Chris, the Anderson pair, Buddy, Mary, the McKerchers, and the Levesque duo.

A Barred Owl surprised Oriana Pokorny and Sarah Wheelan, and one was also seen by the Anderson pair.

The rare (around here) Red-bellied Woodpecker was at the home of the Sparks. Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers remained among the most common of birds spotted by the majority of the participants. Pileated Woodpeckers, however, were less common and noted by Fred, Denise, the Sturges, Chris, Cindy, John Levesque, the Pokorny/Wheelan pair, the Handleys, Corinne, and the Flemings.

A Northern Shrike was noted again – this time by Buddy, near Verner.

Canada Jays were discovered only by Keith, but Blue Jays were upon almost every list.

American Crows seemed to be everywhere, with Common Ravens being not quite so numerous, but appearing upon the lists of Keith, the Flemings, the Turcottes, Cindy, the McKerchers, the Levesque duo, Mary, the Anderson pair, Chris, the Sturges, Fred, and the Sparks.

Black-capped Chickadees, as per usual, were on almost everyone's lists. Red-breasted Nuthatches seemed to be fewer in number than usual, but were perceived by Steve, Denise, the Sturges, Chris, Cindy, the Flemings, Keith, the Handleys, the Turcottes, and John. White-breasted Nuthatches were noted only by the Sparks trio, Keith, the Flemings, Mary, the Anderson duo, Chris, and the Sturges.

No Brown Creepers have appeared on our Bird Bash this year yet.

Bohemian Waxwings were spotted by Chris.

European Starlings were very numerous and noted by most observers.

Larger numbers of recently arrived American Tree Sparrows were spotted by the Sparks trio, the Levesque pair, the Flemings, Cindy, Chris, John, the Anderson pair, Keith, Therez Violette, Mary Young, the Sturges, Buddy, and 5 of them by the Handleys.

Dark-eyed Juncos had become considerably more profuse and were noted by Therez, John, the Turcottes, the Handleys, Corinne, Donna, the Levesque duo, the Spark trio, the Sturges, Chris, the Anderson pair, Mary, Cindy, the Flemings, Keith, Buddy, and Fred.

A single Snow Bunting was seen by Denise.

The Northern Cardinal was upon the list of Therez in Sturgeon Falls.

Now we get to the Common Redpoll. Have we ever seen more of these energetic souls – at least 100 often at some feeders - than this year? Your compiler will not attempt to ascribe the names of each of the observers but will just say that almost all the participants saw them. As to the sometimes difficult to identify Hoary Redpolls, these were noted by Mary, the Anderson duo, John and the Sparks trio.

Pine Siskins were spotted only by Keith in South River. He also saw American Goldfinches, also seen by Steve. So they are coming!

Evening Grosbeaks were on the lists of Chris, the Anderson duo, John, Renee, and the Handleys.

All of which leaves us with the unduly defamed House Sparrow. In your compiler's opinion, these European-introduced birds have attained an unjust bit of mispropriety, They were once in very large numbers within North Bay, but are now, it seems, in big numbers locally only at the farm of Lori.

A pretty good weekend considering the lion-like ending of the month, and so congrats once again to all participants!

Look forward to many more species at the next Bird Bash over **the weekend of April 24.**