

January 2016 Bird Bash, North Bay & Area

Once again – surprises. Despite the cold, wintry weather, some 28 of you found 39 species of birds within the 50 mile radius of North Bay this week-end. That was exceeded only by the 43 discovered in 2007; (before global warming had become a recognized part of our culture?). Actually the average till now was only 34

All were “firsts” of the year, of course, and so I will simply relay the discoveries by a roughly taxonomic order.

And so that starts with the Trumpeter Swan, once again enjoying the open waters near Magnetewan – and noted by Barbara Stewart. She also observed Wild Turkey; (pretty near the beginnings of the orders).

But, more properly next in taxonomic order was the Black Duck found by Renee Levesque and yours truly within the North Bay water treatment plant – along with hundreds of Mallards – enjoying it seems, the warmth of that singular location. A few others observed Mallards also. Then came the often wintering Common Goldeneyes seen by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing at the Ottawa River near Mattawa.

Now – the predators: A Rough-legged Hawk was photographed by Linda Stoner and Rose McLelland. A Sharp-shinned Hawk was visiting the feeder of Luanne and Gary Chowns. And Bald Eagles were seen by many of you, including Chris Suhka near Field, Gary Sturge, near Powassan, and by Lori and Ken who noted some 9 of them at the East Ferris landfill site. Snowy Owls should be deemed a predator, and one of those iconic wonders was discovered by Angela and Gary Martin along hwy 94 in the west end. They, and the Anderson duo also came across Ruffed Grouse, as did Barbara, and a few others.

Rock Pigeons were of course, seen by almost everyone, but Mourning Doves were upon only a few lists, including the Martins, the Chowns, and that of Mary Young. One or more of the three major woodpeckers of our area were upon almost every list. The Pileated was the least common but was well observed by Elsa

Tafel, among others, at her feeder. A rare, but especially pretty Red-bellied Woodpecker was often at the Chowns feeder within the city.

The first of the Passeriformes order - or “perching birds” to be discovered was a Northern Shrike – on the Martin’s list. They also saw Gray Jays – as did the Levesque duo, the latter noted just north of the city. Blue Jays and Black-capped Chickadees were upon just about every list. American Crows and Common Ravens were almost as common. We could add Red-breasted Nuthatch to a commonly noted bird, but the White-breasted, was seen by a far fewer number, including the Chowns, the Martins, and the Anderson duo. The Brown Creeper was noted only by Yvan Latour near Pine Lake.

Now what was that American Robin doing here, still munching upon berries in Pinewood, observed well by the Levesque pair? Of course European Starlings are still about in very large numbers. Perhaps surprisingly no one discovered any Bohemian Waxwings this past weekend, though several had apparently been noted in the area earlier in January.

The American Tree Sparrow was seen by a few, including Mary, but the only one to discover any other sparrow, namely the White-crowned was Brent Turcotte – at his feeders. Dark-eyed Juncos were at the feeders of Helen McCombie, within the city. Snow Buntings were observed only by Graham Anderson near Powassan, and by the Martins.

The iconic Northern Cardinal was enjoyed by two groups, Kaye Edmunds and the Levesque pair, both within the city. A Common Grackle has been staying at the feeder of Doug Paterson near Mattawa. He also enjoyed Pine Grosbeaks as did Ernie Frayle in the east end and the Stoner combo.

The latter two groups also saw a few Purple Finches, as did several others including Elsa Tafel and Pam and Peter Handley within the city, and Donna Demarco near Rutherglen. Common Redpolls were fairly common, seen by the Martins, the Anderson and the Levesque duos, Kevan Cowcill (a flock of over 70), and

several others. I purposely have left out the Hoary Redpoll since it seems that bird is now being classified within the Common Redpoll hierarchy. Pine Siskins were only on Yvan's and the Anderson pair's lists. American Goldfinches are becoming somewhat more common this winter, seen by Mary Ann Kenrick, Kaye, the Levesque pair, and just a few others. Evening Grosbeaks seem also to be more common this winter, noted by Therez Violette in Sturgeon Falls, at Mary Young's yard near Corbeil (some 50 of them), and by the four or five wandering groups traveling about the area.

And so, it was a busier than expected week-end. Congratulations to all – to observe so many of the first birds of the year.

February's "bird bash" will be over the week-end of Feb. 20. Prepare for it!

Dick Tafel, compiler