

Bird Bash Report

October 6-8, 2018

By Dick Tafel, compiler

Despite very disagreeable Fall weather, some 24 participants did a great job looking for and finding birds within 50 miles of North Bay this past weekend. Maybe it was that extra (but very rainy) Thanksgiving Day which helped.

At any event, we discovered 89 species! That was above the average of 84, and last year's score, also of 84. (Only in 5 of the last 17 October Bird Bashes were the numbers higher.)

So, let's start off in roughly taxonomic order with new birds not discovered this year in previous Bird Bashes. There were only two: a Sora Rail noted while scoping the shoreline at Verner Lagoon by yours truly and Renee Levesque, and Orange-crowned Warblers discovered by each of us at our own home feeder areas within the 24-hour allotted period. And that's it for new birds for this year.

Continuing on, in roughly taxonomic order, with other birds discovered, we get first, as per usual,, to the Common Loon. This was seen by several, including Janet and Lloyd Sparks, Kaye Edmunds, who saw 24 of them within Callander Bay, and Sheldon McGregor. The Anderson and Levesque pairs saw many Pied-billed Grebes at Cache Bay and likewise, Double-crested Cormorants.

American Bittern were found by Kaye and by Steve Pitt. He also saw a Great Blue Heron, as did Mary Ann Kenrik, Elsa Tafel, Ernie Frayle and others.

Turkey Vultures were still about in large numbers.

Canada Geese were very abundant, but Snow Geese were noted only by Kaye and the Levesque duo, the latter seeing 9 of them on Stewart Road, just north of Sturgeon Falls. They also saw a dozen Trumpeter Swans off Nipissing Road, some also noted there by Therez Violette.

As to ducks, 15 species were found altogether, counting all three mergansers. But Blue-winged Teal were identified only by the Anderson pair and Redheads were found solely by Kaye. It was nice to see Bufflehead in fair numbers again during their southerly journey.

No Ospreys were around, but soaring Northern Harriers were found by both the

Levesque and Anderson pairs and by Steve. A Red-tailed Hawk was seen by Brent Turcotte, Gary and Connie Sturge and possibly others who may have misidentified it for Broad-wings. The latter presumably left the area some weeks ago on their migration south. A Bald Eagle was seen by Sheldon and by Kaye. American Kestrels were still about in fair numbers and noted by many. But a Merlin was observed by just the Levesque pair. Rather interestingly, Peregrine Falcons were seen by several observers, including John Levesque, Laura Turcotte and Gary and Luanne Chowns, all near the Pro-Cathedral, and by Steve Pitt.

Spruce Grouse, not seen since June's Bird Bash, were discovered by Brent and noted also by Laura and by Luanne off Four-mile Lake Road. Ruffed Grouse were seen by the Sparks and by Steve. Wild Turkeys were noted by the Sturges near Powassan.

Common Moorhen and American Coots were watched by the Anderson and the Levesque pairs at Cache Bay. Sandhill Cranes, over 50 of them, were enjoyed by the Levesque pair, and seen also by Sheldon, Therez and the Anderson duo.

Now we get to the shorebirds. A few were unearthed, including Black-bellied Plover and Spotted Sandpipers by the Levesque duo and by Kaye, who also found a Dunlin, as did Sheldon. He also saw Lesser Yellowlegs. The Anderson pair also spotted the Spotted Sandpiper, while the Levesque pair saw Greater Yellowlegs at Verner Lagoon. Steve found a Wilson's Snipe in the Astorville area.

As to gulls, Ring-bills and Herrings were still about in large numbers, but Great Black-backed were noted only by the Levesque duo and by Kaye who was the only one to observe Bonapartes. No terns were still about, it seems.

Rock Pigeons and Mourning Doves were noted by many. No owls, however, were seen or heard.

The Belted Kingfisher was on the Anderson and Levesque duo's lists.

Downy, Hairy Woodpecker and Pileated Woodpeckers were upon many lists, but the Northern Flicker is beginning to disappear down south, and so was not seen by quite so many. And did anyone see a sapsucker?

The Sturges were the only ones to find an Eastern Phoebe. No other flycatchers were observed.

Brent found the sole Canada Jay, but very many found Blue Jays. American Crows were still about in very large numbers, but Common Ravens less so.

No swallows are here any longer. However, Black-capped Chickadees, as well as Red and White-breasted Nuthatches were very evident. Mary Young was the only one to note a Brown Creeper. She also saw a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, as did John and Brent.

Several Eastern Bluebirds were enjoyed by the Levesque pair and by Sheldon, all in the west end. A Hermit Thrush was also seen by the Levesque pair, while American Robins were still upon many lists, including that of Peter and Pam Handley.

European Starlings have become rather ubiquitous. But American Pipits were seen solely by the Levesque pair.

As to warblers, a few were still around, two found by the Levesque duo, namely Palms and Yellow-rumps. The Sparks also saw Yellow-rumps.

Now for sparrows – lots of them were about, especially the returning White-crowns, seen by very many, including Donna Demarco. White-throats were the second most numerous, followed by Song, then Savannahs. Chippings were noted by Mary Ann and by Sheldon and a Lincoln's Sparrow by the Levesque duo. A returning Fox Sparrow was spotted by Brent, first one since April. Dark-eyed Juncos were also fairly numerous, noted by the Handleys among others.

Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles could still be found in large flocks. Brewer's Blackbirds were sometimes inter-mixed, especially in the Sturgeon River vicinity. But Rusty Blackbirds were less common, noted solely by the Anderson and Levesque duos.

Purple Finches were seen by several observers. But Pine Siskins were upon the lists only of Ernie Frayle and Mary Ann. American Goldfinches were somewhat more numerous.

The Anderson pair had the House Sparrow exclusively for themselves.

And so that ends the compilation for the October Bird Bash. Congrats to all participants during a not too pleasant, weather-wise, Fall week-end!

Please mark down **the weekend of November 3-4** for the November effort.