

Bird Bash Report

October 2023

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

Rather crummy, wet, cold weather seemed to have destabilized some of our birders – as well as the birds – with our October Bird Bash producing just 76 species. Only two of our previous 20 October Bird Bashes were less successful. Although some frequent birders were not able to take part, seventeen birders did participate despite the weather and the Thanksgiving weekend.

Nevertheless, the variety of birds discovered was quite exceptional. As always, we start with birds not previously seen during this year's Bird Bash. Following the order set out in the *Seasonal Checklist of the Birds* within 50 miles or 80.5 km of North Bay, we commence with a Red-throated Loon, very rare for our area. This was identified flying across part of Lake Bernard by Sue Gratton with the aid of some local experts, Bird Wing members, Stephen O'Donnell and Dan Burton. Then came another very rare bird for our area, the Western Grebe. It was also seen in Lake Bernard by Renee Levesque with yours truly, a bird initially discovered earlier in the day by Stuart Mackenzie.

The Levesque pair had another new-for-the-year discovery - seven Snow Geese in a field across from Warren Lagoon – 5 white morphs, a blue morph and an immature. And Sue found yet another new species, a White-winged Scoter that she also saw at Lake Bernard.

And the last new species was a sparrow that had not yet been reported during any of our Bird Bashes this year - a Lincoln's Sparrow unearthed by Garry Waldrum in the east end of our district.

Now we shall get back to birds previously seen during our monthly Bird Bashes, following the same order. This begins with the Common Loon, seen by Grant and Shirley McKercher, Denise Desmarais, Steve Pitt, Garry, Sue, and the Levesque pair.

Then there were several Pied-billed Grebes spotted by the Levesque pair at the westerly end of Cache Bay. They also noted Double-crested Cormorants, as did Sue, the McKerchers, and Steve.

Next in order comes the Great Blue Heron spotted by Lloyd and Janet Sparks and Linda Stoner with Rose McClelland.

Turkey Vultures were still around and were watched by Donna Demarco, the Levesque pair, the Stoner combo, Denise, Steve, and Garry.

Canada Geese were about in huge numbers and noted by most participants.

Lots of dabbling ducks were still about, often within the local lagoons. Garry and the Levesque duo spotted Wood Ducks, American Black Ducks and Mallards; the latter duo also saw Gadwalls, American Wigeons, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teals; Wood Ducks were also found by Steve, while Mallards were also seen by Faye Oei, Denise, Sue, and the McKerchers.

Diving ducks seen by the Levesque crew mostly at Callander Lagoon were the Ring-necked, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye and a lone Redhead. They also saw Common Mergansers, as did Sue, Faye, the McKerchers, and Garry who also found the Hooded Merganser. No Buffleheads were seen.

As to predators, the Northern Harrier was still around and was spotted by Lori Anderson with Ken Gowing and by the Levesque pair. Bald Eagles were discovered by the McKerchers and the Levesque pair, who also viewed a Merlin and a couple of American Kestrels. The Red-tailed Hawk was spotted only by the Stoner pair.

Ruffed Grouse were noted by John Levesque, the Sparks, Faye, Garry, the Levesque pair, and the Stoner crew. Wild Turkeys were discovered only by the Anderson duo.

American Coots were noticed by the Levesque duo, who also saw Sandhill Cranes in huge numbers as did Denise. Cranes were heard by the Stoner combo.

The only shorebirds found were Greater Yellowlegs by Garry and a Short-billed Dowitcher by the Levesque pair.

Ring-billed Gulls were still very prominent, but Herring Gulls not quite so much, though identified by the Levesque pair, Faye, the Sparks, Denise, Sue, Garry, and the Anderson duo.

Rock Doves remained very common, while Mourning Doves were noted only by the McKerchers.

The Barred Owl was discovered by the Anderson pair.

Belted Kingfishers were spotted by the Levesque pair and Garry.

Some woodpeckers were quite active: the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was seen by John; the Hairy by Garry and Steve, who also found the Pileated, as did the Sparks and Denise; and the Northern Flicker was noted only by the Levesque duo. No Downys were reported.

The Levesque pair and the Sparks discovered the only flycatcher species still about, the Eastern Phoebe.

Blue Jays were observed by most participants, as were American Crows. Common Ravens were on the lists of the McKerchers, the Stoner duo, Faye, Sue, Garry, Steve, Denise, the Sparks and the Anderson and the Levesque duos.

Black-capped Chickadees were a major presence within our area. The White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches were found by Garry and Steve; the White-breasted alone by Denise, the McKerchers, the Anderson duo, and the Levesque pair; and the Red-breasted alone by Faye who also noticed the Brown Creeper, as did Garry. Two Winter Wrens were seen by John.

John also discovered the Golden-crowned and the Ruby-crowned Kinglets, both of which were also seen by Garry. The Ruby-crowned alone was identified by Denise and Faye.

Some thrushes were still around: the Eastern Bluebird was enjoyed by the Anderson pair; the Hermit Thrush by Garry and John, the latter two also having the iconic American Robin on their lists, as had Denise, the Anderson and Levesque duos, Sue, Faye, and the Sparks.

European Starlings were widespread in large flocks.

American Pipits were still present and discovered by the Levesque and Anderson duos, Denise, Garry,

and Sue. Cedar Waxwings did not show up on any of the participants' lists.

A few warblers were still flowing through: the Yellow-rumped was spotted by Garry, the McKerchers, John, the Anderson pair, Sue, Faye, and the Levesque duo; the Pine was noted by the Sparks; and the Palm was found by the Anderson pair.

Sparrows had a very noticeable presence. The newly-returned White-crowned seemed to be the most common, being noted by the Levesque pair, Donna, Denise, John, Garry, the Anderson duo, and the Sparks; the White-throat was still very much present being spotted by John, Sue, Denise, Faye, Garry, the Anderson and Levesque duos; Chipping and Song were seen by the last two groups and by John; Songs and Savannahs were watched by Denise; Swamp was identified by the Levesque duo; Song was on Garry's list; and Dark-eyed Juncos were seen by Garry, Faye, the Sparks, Denise, and the Anderson duo.

Red-winged Blackbirds had generally disappeared, but some were still spotted by Faye, the Anderson duo, and Sue.

The Eastern Meadowlark was only upon the Anderson pair's list.

Rusty Blackbirds had come back momentarily and were spotted by Sue, Faye, the Levesque duo, and Denise. Common Grackles were still around, but seen only by the Anderson pair, the Levesque duo, Steve, and Sue.

Finally the enigmatic (and tough) House Sparrow was noted solely by the Anderson pair.

And so that ends the details of a difficult October Bird Bash effort. Much congrats to the participants who had to endure some awkward weather to conclude their great bird-watching efforts. Look forward to different results at our next **Bird Bash over the weekend of November 4-5**.