

Bird Bash Report

December 2023

By Dick Tafel

What a grand Bird Bash! Twenty-five participants discovered 49 species of birds, a bit above average for the 21 years of the Bird Bash – and it included one rare bird seen in Ontario only three times in the historic past. And so, let's get going!

As per usual, we will begin with those few birds not seen on a previous Bird Bash this year, following the order within the long-used *Seasonal Checklist of the Birds of North Bay and Area*. That starts with the Iceland Gull found by Renee Levesque along with yours truly at the North Bay landfill site.

Then there is that remarkable thrush, the Fieldfare, a native of Northern Europe, found very rarely within Ontario, but recently discovered in Sturgeon Falls. It was spotted after some long waiting by Mary Young, Diane and Alvin Deagle, June and Kevin Telford, Grant McKercher, and Sturgeon native, Therez Violette. (It was seen on November 30 by Chris Sukha and Craig Evans in the morning and by Sheldon McGregor, Renee and yours truly in the afternoon after a 4.5 hour wait! It was also seen by other Bird Wing members - Linda Stoner on November 30 and Kim Stahl on December 2.)

Now to the rest of the species following the same order. The Common Loon was still present but found only by Katharine MacLeod in Lake Nipissing.

Next is the Canada Goose. A few of those hundreds previously about were still withstanding the cold and spotted by Faye Oei, Grant and Shirley McKercher, and the Levesque pair.

Some Mallards will no doubt stay all winter, and were seen this month by John Levesque, Chris, the Levesque pair, the Deagles, Katharine, Faye, and the McKerchers.

Diving ducks were still apparent. The Bufflehead was spotted by Chris and the Levesque duo, along with Common Goldeneyes and Common Mergansers, the latter two birds also located by the McKerchers and the Telfords. Katharine also noted the Common Goldeneye, while the Levesque duo saw the Red-breasted Merganser in Callander Bay, and yours truly saw the Hooded Merganser on Trout Lake. The Deagles spotted both the Common and Red-breasted Mergansers.

A few predators were about, some having just arrived from their more northern summer sojourns. That included both the Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks, observed by Brittany Tartaglia, Mary, the Deagles, and Chris; the Rough-legged by Lori Anderson with Ken Gowing, the McKerchers, and the Levesque duo; and the Red-tailed by the Telfords. Bald Eagles were on the lists of the McKerchers, Brittany, the Anderson pair, Chris, Katharine, and the Levesque duo who daw many at the landfill site.

Ruffed Grouse were seen by Donna Demarco, Keith Thornborrow, Mary, Faye, the Anderson duo, the Telfords, and Katharine. Keith also had upon his list the Wild Turkey and Spruce Grouse, the latter appearing on our Bird Bash list for only the second time this year.

No shorebirds were observed.

A few Ring-billed Gulls were still around and identified by the Telfords and the Levesque duo who also saw many Herring Gulls, gulls also noted by Angela Mills, John, the McKerchers, the Anderson duo, the Deagles, Faye, and Chris. The Deagles also found a Lesser Black-backed Gull along North Bay's waterfront.

Rock Doves seemed to be as commonplace as ever, noted by most observers. But the Mourning Dove was discovered only by the Telfords, the McKerchers, Mary, and Keith.

A Belted Kingfisher found itself upon Chris's list.

Hairy Woodpeckers were observed by Lloyd and Janet Sparks, Chris, Therez, and the Levesque duo, while it and the Downy were noted by Elsa Tafel, Keith, the Anderson pair, Mary, Donna, the McKerchers, and John. Young Jeremie Corbeil and the Telfords found the Downy, as did Angela. Mary, the Anderson pair, and Jeremie were the only ones to find the Pileated Woodpecker.

A Northern Shrike was discovered solely by the Telfords, the last one being seen during March's Bird Bash.

The Canada Jay was found again only by Keith.

Blue Jays continued upon most lists, as did American Crows and Common Ravens.

Black-capped Chickadees remained our favourite friend.

The Red-breasted Nuthatch was noted by Faye, Mary, Chris, the Sparks, and John, while the White-breasted was spotted by the Telfords, the McKerchers, Mary, Elsa, the Deagles, the Anderson pair, and Angela.

A few American Robins remained around and were enjoyed by Denise Desmarais, the Levesque duo, Brittany, Mary, Chris, the Deagles, Therez, the McKerchers, and the Telfords.

European Starlings remained quite numerous and were spotted by most!

Rather excitingly, several pretty Bohemian Waxwings came into the views of the Deagles, the Anderson pair, the McKerchers, Denise, Chris, Brittany, Angela, and the Levesque duo.

The only sparrows still around were the Tree Sparrow, seen by John, Renee, Mary, and Keith, and the White-throated spotted by the Deagles. They also discovered the Dark-eyed Junco, as did the Telfords, Chris, Angela, and Elsa.

Snow Buntings were solely upon Chris's list, as was a Northern Cardinal, seen by him in Verner.

There were still a few Common Grackles around, sighted only by the Levesque pair and Donna.

The Purple Finch found itself upon the lists of the Anderson pair and Chris.

Red Crossbills were discovered by the McKerchers, the Anderson pair, and Mary.

Common Redpolls were noted by Brittany, Mary, Angela, the Anderson duo, Chris, the Sparks, and Keith.

Pine Siskins were watched by Keith, the Sparks, Chris, and the Anderson pair.

The American Goldfinch now seemed to be widely spaced and was seen by Angela, the Anderson duo, Chris, the McKerchers, the Sparks, John, the Levesque duo, Mary, and Therez.

The Evening Grosbeak came upon Chris's list, as did the House Sparrow, which also was upon the lists of the Anderson pair and Denise.

And so that concludes a generally very exciting last month of the Bird Bash year! Congrats to all participants, especially those who waited for long periods to catch sight of the Fieldfare.

We should wait a little while for the year 2024 to rest upon us before starting its first monthly Bird Bash – **over the weekend of January 20-21.**