

Nipissing Bird Bash Report

February 17-18, 2017

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

It was a rather nice winter weekend for our February Bird Bash. Some 23 of you discovered 37 species of birds! That is two species above the average for February over the past 15 years!

As usual, we start off in taxonomic order with the species seen for the first time this year during our Bird Bash: Common Goldeneye noted by Kaye Edmunds in the open water at Bonfield; a Barred Owl observed by Doug Patterson near his home in Mattawa; a Gray Jay discovered by Brent Turcotte while snowshoeing north of the city, and one also seen by Renee Levesque and yours truly, again north of the city, on Cook's Mill Road. (Gray Jays seem to be less common than in previous years.) Also for the first time this year, the latter two observers enjoyed an active collection of Horned Larks at Verner Lagoon, and Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing discovered a lone Red Crossbill southeast of Powassan.

Now as to birds which were also on January's list: Mallards were around North Bay in bountiful numbers, seen by many. Bald Eagles were fairly prominent, especially in the Powassan vicinity, and Ruffed Grouse, likewise.

Of course Rock Pigeons were commonplace, while Mourning Doves, though less so, were certainly widespread.

Kaye saw the only Snowy Owl coming off Lake Nipissing near the city.

All three main woodpecker species, Downy, Hairy and Pileated, were noted at many locations.

Blue Jays were ubiquitous, certainly, as were both nuthatch species, Common Ravens, American Crows (the latter within the urban part of North Bay), and Black-capped Chickadees. European Starlings were managing well, especially in the Pinewood area and in various farm areas.

The next species in taxonomic order that were seen were sparrows. A few wintering American Tree Sparrows were noted by Steve Pitt, near Talon Lake; by Gary, Connie and Rachel Sturge; the Anderson pair (the latter two groups near Powassan); and by

John Levesque north of the city. John still had a wintering Chipping Sparrow at his feeder. A White-throated Sparrow and the provincially rare Harris's Sparrow continued to survive at the feeders of Gary and Luanne Chowns. Dark-eyed Juncos were noted by the Sturges, by John, and by Lloyd and Janet Sparks near Wolf Lake.

In open farm areas, Snow Buntings were enjoyed by the Anderson and the Levesque pairings. Interestingly, Bohemian Waxwings have not shown up during the two Bird Bashes we have had so far this year.

Kaye had a Northern Cardinal at her feeder. Single Common Grackles appeared at the feeders of the Sturges (near Powassan) and Ernie Frayle (near Rutherglen).

Wintering Pine Grosbeaks were fairly numerous, appearing at the home of Peter and Pam Handley (north of the city), at the home of Donna Demarco (in the east end), and elsewhere. A few Purple Finches were seen by Mary Young near Corbeil and by Doug near Mattawa. A White-winged Crossbill was discovered by the Levesque pair near South River.

Hundreds of Common Redpolls were observed by the Levesque duo on Riding Stable Road, and fewer were noted by the Sparks at their feeders. Pine Siskins were quite common at several feeders, including ten at Mary Ann Kenrick's. American Goldfinches were still the major wintering feeder species, noted by Elsa Tafel and several others. Evening Grosbeaks were less common, but were near the homes of Donna, Ernie and Doug, among others.

And finally the House Sparrow, seen only at a few locations, including the Sturges' and Lori's homes.

And that is it! Much thanks to all the contributors! February is a slow month, but certainly an important one for our wintering birds.

Anticipate a much more active Bird Bash in March, scheduled for the last weekend of that month, **March 24and25**.