

Bird Wing Report

November 22, 2016

By Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe

The last Bird Wing meeting of 2016 was held in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library on November 22. As usual, there will not be a meeting in December, but instead there will be the Christmas Bird Count. More about that later in this report.

Birds Seen in November: Although we are not getting many Common Redpolls (right) and Pine Grosbeaks because of the poor cone crop, Gary Sturge had Common Redpolls on his property near Powassan and in the same general area, saw Pine Grosbeaks. I had some Pine Siskins with American Goldfinch that spent a few minutes in a tree in my yard, but the Pine Siskins haven't been seen since, although the American Goldfinch continue to come. Others, including Ken Gowing, are also getting American Goldfinch. It looks as if it will be the finch that we will see the most this winter, unlike last winter when the Common Redpoll was prominent. Evening Grosbeaks were also seen by Gary, as well as by Kaye Edmonds and Lori Anderson.

Lori had 32 Snow Buntings on her property and an American Robin at her feeder. I also had an American Robin (below) at my feeder and eating berries from a spirea bush in my yard.

Connie Sturge had a large flock of Bohemian Waxwings arrive on her property the day of our meeting. Shirley McKercher had a Northern Shrike at her place in Callander, as well as a Mourning Dove that was chased off by the shrike.



Photo by Nicole Richardson

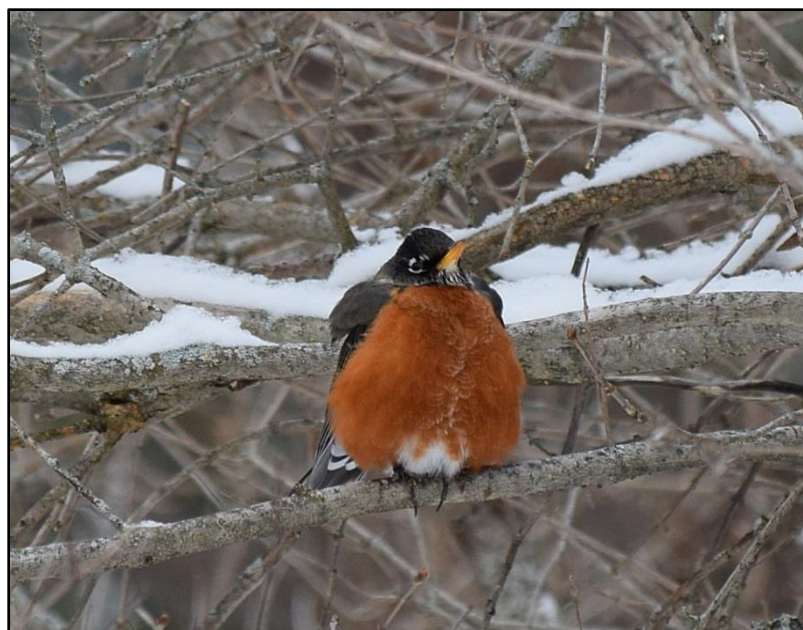


Photo by Renee Levesque

Sparrows continue to be seen. I have a very shy immature White-throat that I see daily in my yard; Ken had an American Tree Sparrow; and Grant McKercher had White-crowned Sparrows (see top of next page) the week prior to our meeting. Brent Turcotte and I had a Dark-eyed Junco in our yards. House Sparrows were seen by Lori, Gary and Connie.



Photo by Marc Buchanan



Photo by Renee Levesque

All three woodpeckers were seen - the Hairy by Janet Phillips, the Downy by Irene Kasch and the Pileated (left) by Rob Rodger and Mary Lord.

Both nuthatches were seen, the White-breasted and the Red-breasted. Naturally all the birds we can expect to see have been seen – Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, American Crow and Common Raven.

Kaye saw a lone American Pipit at Sunset Park on November 19, and Kurtis Irish saw Canada Geese. So many Canada Geese gathered in large flocks this fall that one just expects them to be around until one day we wonder where most of them went, seemingly all at once.

Lori saw Wild Turkeys near her place – ten of them!

Raptors seen were a Red-tailed Hawk seen by Kaye in Calvin Township; Rough-legged Hawk seen along Hwy. 17 West; and I woke up one morning to find a young Northern Goshawk in a tree in my yard. Saved me a trip to Gary's

Stillaway Line where Gary never fails to find a Northern Goshawk and a Black-backed Woodpecker!

In the world of ducks, many stayed around this fall for some time because of the relatively mild autumn, but the most exciting duck found, and rare for our area, was a female Canvasback Duck seen first by Lori and Ken at Callander Lagoon during the November Bird Bash and subsequently seen by Dick Tafel, Kaye Edmonds and me. Dick, and others, also saw hundreds of Bufflehead and Ring-necked Ducks at Callander Lagoon; Grant saw Common Goldeneye (right) in Callander Bay and others saw them at Sunset Park and at Callander Lagoon. Fred Pinto saw Hooded and Common Mergansers in the pond at Laurier Woods. An American Wigeon, a pair of Green-winged Teal and a few American Black Ducks were also seen at Callander Lagoon by Dick.



Photo by Kaye Edmonds



Photo by Renee Levesque

All three scoters were seen at Sunset Park – White-winged, Black and Surf.

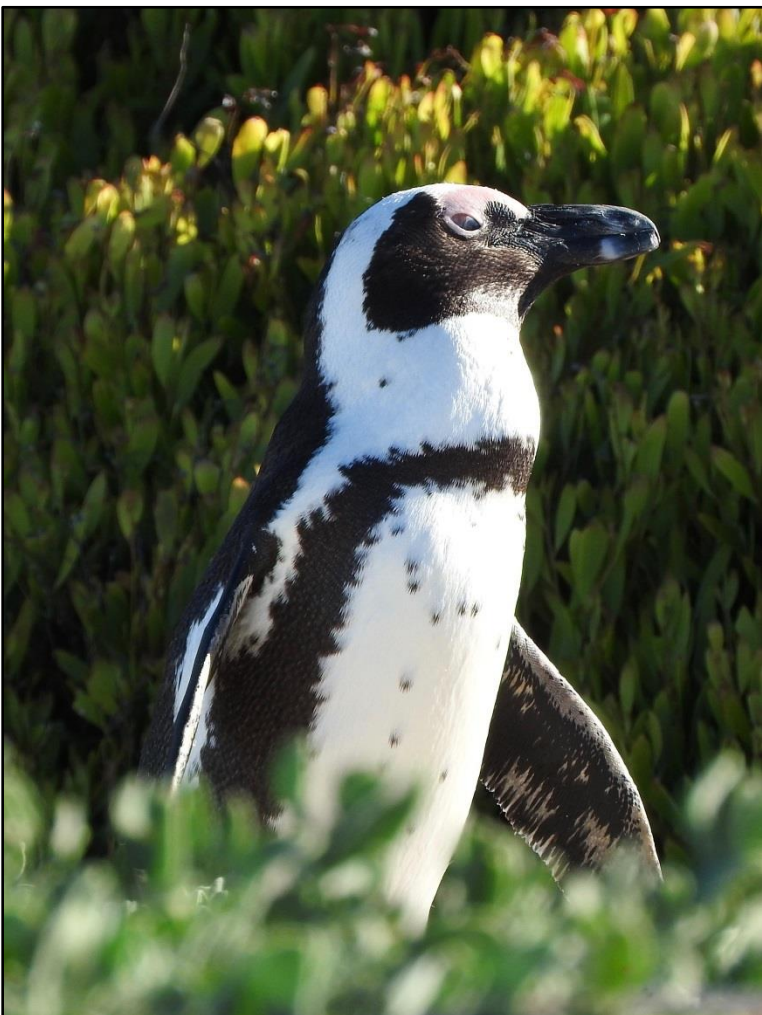
Horned Grebes were seen at Sunset Park by Brent, Dick and me; Red-necked Grebes were also seen at Sunset by Grant and others; and Pied-billed Grebes were seen at Cache Bay by Dick during the early November Bird Bash.

Great Blue Herons were seen by some and a Double-crested Cormorant (left) was still around and seen by Dick and me at King's Wharf during the November Bird Bash. (I hear that two others were subsequently seen during the December Bird

Bash, one by Paul Smylie in Trout Lake and one by Grant in Callander Bay.)

Gulls seen included Ring-bills, Herring and Great Black-backed at Sunset Park and elsewhere along the Lake Nipissing shoreline. (See “Gull Outing” later in this report for even more gulls.)

South African Birds: Grant and Shirley McKercher recently took a trip to South Africa where Grant saw 209 species of the 850 species to be seen in South Africa! This was in addition to his seeing many of those animals we only dream of seeing, to say nothing of his being charged by an elephant! Grant told us about his trip, with some humorous interjections by Shirley, and he showed us some of the bird photos he took. Two are seen here, the pretty Cape Weaver (above right) and the only



breeding penguin in Africa, the African Penguin (left), that has taken over Boulder’s Beach near Cape Town. Other bird photos Grant took can be seen in January’s edition of *The Woodland Observer*, to be sent to Nipissing Naturalists Club members sometime in early January and subsequently posted on our website, <http://www.nipnats.com/>.

Christmas Bird Count: Lori Anderson reported that the field leaders of all the areas have been firmed up and we are ready to go count Christmas birds for our 38th year on **Saturday, December 17!** Leaders have been provided with their booklets and new this year is a blank sheet on which we are to jot down a synopsis of our route. Lori is looking for written information, for example, on where we generally stop to look for birds; where we walk and how far; and where we scope. Information such as this is important so that if anyone takes over our route in the future,

they will have a better idea of where the birds might be.

Last year, we counted 2,755 birds and 37 species, and in 2014, 2,835 birds and 34 species. If the mild weather continues, this could be a good year for the number of species seen. If you come across penguins as Grant did in South Africa - and some breed of penguins are scattered here and there throughout North Bay at this time of the year as you will see from the photo at right - they do not count!

Lori is also looking for feeder watchers, so if you are interested, please let Lori know immediately by emailing her at lori.anderson58@hotmail.com or phoning her at 705-724-5780. You must, however, be watching feeders within a 15-mile radius of North Bay. If in doubt, Lori can tell you.

The pot luck dinner and compilation of species and numbers seen will be held at the home of Grant and Shirley McKercher. Lori will provide the address and time, but probably the time will be anywhere from 5:30 to 6:00 to allow us time to get home for our pot luck dish.

Gull Outing: The gull outing to Merrick's Landfill Site was a very successful one in which participants were rewarded with seeing a good thousand Herring Gulls, one Ring-billed Gull, about a dozen Great Black-backed Gulls (below), five first year Glaucous Gulls, about the same number of first year Iceland Gulls and a couple of first year Thayer's Gulls (see next page). Also present were a dozen Bald Eagles, although staff told us they counted 16 earlier that morning. And, as usual, seen were about 40 or so Common Ravens and a number of European Starlings. A great outing all around, and not too, too cold, except at the top of the mound. There the wind doth howl and blow coldly, but rewarding us with a close-up of a Glaucous and views of Lake Nipissing and the surrounding forest.



Photo by Renee Levesque



Photo by Rob Rodger



From left: Glaucous Gull, Thayer's Gull, Iceland Gull, photos by Renee Levesque

Going on a Saturday gull outing as opposed to a weekday worked out well. The employee at the entrance gate, who is usually there on Saturdays, knows Dick and knows by now that what Dick wants to see are the white gulls of the Arctic. There were no restrictions in terms of movement and the need to wear high visibility vests.

Canada's National Bird: The Royal Canadian Geographic Society has now weighed all their options and has recommended the Gray Jay (below) become Canada's national bird. Their reasoning: the Gray Jay is seen in every province and territory; it does not migrate but winters in the boreal forest; and it is a friendly, intelligent and hardy bird like the average Canadian. In the public vote, it came in third behind the Common Loon and the Snowy Owl.

Although I think the Gray Jay is a very fine bird and one that deserved to get as many public votes as it did, my concern is that most Canadians don't get to see it. Even we in the boreal forest hardly ever see it, and although it is nice to think that for a change we northerners get recognized for having a species southern Canadians hardly ever see, I think we need a bird many Canadians see at least once a year. And for that reason, it should be the Common Loon, the bird that got the most votes in the first place. No point having a vote if then the Society disregards which bird the majority voted for. In case you think I voted for the Common Loon, I didn't, but I do believe that when a vote is held and thousands take part in the vote, the majority should win. Anyway, who doesn't love the call of a loon in the distance on a summer's night. How Canadian is that!



Photo by Renee Levesque

The government has not yet committed itself to having a national bird. Whether they will go with the Society's recommendation or go with the majority or even agree to having a national bird is anyone's guess at the moment.

Project FeederWatch: Project FeederWatch began on November 12, but if you haven't yet registered for this project and joined Bird Studies Canada to take part in it, it is not too late. See: <http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/pfw/>.

For those who are registered and entering their counts, there is a **new feature this year**. There is a section on **bird behaviour** where you can indicate whether a bird has been displaced by another bird or whether one bird has been attacked by another. For the definition of displacement and predation and the instructions for entering information see:

<http://feederwatch.org/uncategorized/instructions-for-using-the-bird-interaction-data-form/>.

Motus Station: Dick read a letter he received from Steven Price, president of Bird Studies Canada, about donating money for or hosting a Motus station. Steven's letter reads in part, "The [Motus] system's accessibility (using relatively inexpensive tags and receivers that are easy to deploy and maintain) creates opportunities for broad participation. Universities, schools, and nature clubs could play an important role in bird conservation by hosting a Motus station, helping us complete the array of receivers throughout the continent." (Motus is the Latin word for movement.)

Because interest was expressed in hosting a Motus station in North Bay, I contacted Stuart Mackenzie, Motus Programme Manager, Bird Studies Canada, about the possibility of one being hosted here, perhaps in Laurier Woods. The information Stuart has since provided will be shared with members at the January Bird Wing meeting.

The Motus Wildlife Tracking System tracks birds and animals using transmitters that emit pulses on high radio frequencies. Tags are fitted onto the backs of birds, including warblers, and even onto bats and large insects such as Monarch butterflies and Green Darners. The transmitters weigh as little as 0.3 g. and emit a digital pulse every 5 to 40 seconds. These pulses can be



Photo by Kaye Edmonds

detected by automated receivers at a distance of 15 to 20 km. This automated radio telemetry system enables researchers to track large numbers of individual birds and animals.

At right, is a **photo taken by Stuart Mackenzie** of a Motus station in Waterford, near Simcoe, in Norfolk County. The station needs to be placed in a relatively high location in relation to the surrounding landscape

The system is a not-for-profit programme of Bird Studies Canada in partnership with Acadia University and other researchers and organizations, funded by user fees and support from various government organizations and private foundations.

To view a map of the live Motus stations and to learn more about the Motus Wildlife Tracking System, go to: <https://motus.org/>.

Membership Cards: Doug Patterson clarified with Burrows that our membership card entitles us at Burrows not only to 10% off bird seed, but also to 10% off bird feeders and all wild bird items. At Laporte's, the discount entitles members with cards to 10% off bird seed only. So if you don't have your card, bring your \$5.00 annual membership fee to the January Bird Wing meeting and get your card. Feeding birds is very important during the cold winter months. It can get expensive to do so, especially if the deer are also eating the seed, so every little bit helps.

Bird Friendly Coffee: Please consider purchasing bird friendly coffee or buying some as a Christmas present or stocking gift. You can buy many varieties online. See: https://birdsandbeans.ca/shtm/bird_friendly_coffee.shtm, and once you have decided after clicking on Details beside each type of coffee, click on Shop Online, top right, and make the purchase of your choice. If you buy The Messenger blend, Bird Studies Canada gets 10% of



each bag sold. While you are on this site, be sure to also read Ken Kaufmann's blog at [Bird Friendly® Coffee](#), as well as the article on migratory birds and coffee at [migratory birds](#).

Correction: I erroneously credited Bev Kingdon for the photograph of the flying Trumpeters in October's Bird Wing report. The actual photographer is Erich Buss.

Bird Bash: January's Bird Bash will be held the weekend of **January 14 and 15**. A reminder will be sent.

Bird Wing Meeting: The next Bird Wing meeting and the first of the New Year will take place on **Tuesday, January 24, starting at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library**. Gary ordered, and now has in his possession, the recently released PBS Nature documentary on hummingbirds entitled *Super Hummingbirds* which will be screened at this meeting. You might want to consider bringing some popcorn!

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Season's Greetings, and...



Photo by Renee Levesque