

Bird Wing Report

November 2017

Text by Renee Levesque; photos as indicated

November, like October, proved to be a good month for observing many species, always a joy for birders during a month of dull and dark days with little sun, and this November, days that alternated between snow and rain.

Birds Seen During November:

Grant McKercher: American Pipits were seen by many in many places this fall and seeing them well into November was no exception. Grant recently had three at his place.

In Callander Bay in front of his house, Grant saw a female Red-breasted

Merganser, a merganser species not often seen in our area and when seen, in few numbers. It is a first for Grant's yard list.

Grant also had a Red-necked Grebe outside his place in Callander Bay, as well as a White-winged Scoter, also seen by some at Sunset Park.

Grant was the only one present to report seeing a Brown Creeper (left). There may have been some in other birders' yards, but these tree creepers blend so well into the trunks of trees, they are often missed.

And as mentioned in October's report, Grant's sighting of four geese at Osprey Links turned out to



be Ross's Geese, not Snow Geese. Quite a nice find by Grant and subsequently by others

Lori Anderson: Lori saw the Bird of the Month at her place in early November and one rarely seen in our area, although it is making inroads - the Red-bellied Woodpecker! It came to her feeder a few times in early to mid-November and she saw it again in her hardwood forest shortly after our meeting.

The Red-bellied obviously appreciates November feeders and peanuts because Kaye Edmonds also had one at her place, as did Mary Ann Kenrick, a backyard birder who participates monthly in our Bird Bashes. Mary Ann lives near

Kaye, so it may be that the same female Red-bellied is visiting both yards. Lori's Red-bellied is also a female, but highly doubtful it would fly all the way from Chisholm Township to North Bay for a bite to eat!

Lori made the mistake of inadvertently mentioning Blue Jays and so she got stuck with Blue Jays being her second bird despite the fact that so many of us see so many of them! However, Lori later made up for this lapse by informing us she had a very late male and female Red-winged Blackbird at her feeders.

Lori also continues to see up to 15 Wild Turkeys near her place.



Lori Anderson

And if all those sightings weren't enough, it seems as if Lori is the first and only one of the Bird Wingers so far to have seen a Rough-legged Hawk. Seems they have been just trickling down from the far north, so here's hoping we will all get to see at least one.

Ken Gowing: Ken saw about 100 Snow Buntings in a field in Chisholm Township, as well as a Red-tailed Hawk.

Ken also had at his place an American Tree Sparrow (right), the only species of sparrow seen during November. I also had one occasionally come to my feeder.

At Ken's place was a Northern Shrike – seems he gets one at his place every year. Lori also saw it, and I know Kevan Cowcill saw one in West Ferris, but I am not aware of other birders in our area seeing one yet. Last winter was a good year for Northern Shrikes. I wonder what this winter will bring.



Renee Levesque



Grant McKercher

Connie Sturge: Connie had an American Robin in her yard the day of the meeting and has regularly had in her yard 20 to 30 Mourning Doves. Dick and I saw two American Robins on Quesnel Road by Sturgeon River, and Grant had one on a snowy day in his yard (left). Another summer passerine observed recently was a

Common Grackle, seen by Connie (and Gary) in their yard. One was also seen by Dick Tafel at a feeder on Marleau Road, Sturgeon Falls, and one came to my suet feeder one snowy November morning.

Gary Sturge: Not to be out-done by Connie in terms of large flocks, Gary saw a flock of 50 to 60 Pine Siskins (right). I also had a large flock in my yard, about 40 to 50. These flocks were not yet coming to

the feeders, but were still finding plenty of natural food. A few were also seen at the North Bay landfill site.

Gary saw Purple Finches, as had I. Many saw American Goldfinch,

but only Dick reported a large flock of about 30 in his yard.

Keeping up his monthly tradition of seeing a raptor, Gary saw the Merlin (left) at least three times in November. And he proudly has his very own adult Bald Eagle, an eagle that when not sitting in his yard trying to snare a Snowshoe Hare, flies over his house on its way to the more lucrative Powassan landfill



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site. During the November Bird Bash, Dick and I saw 13 Bald Eagles at the North Bay landfill site and staff there reports a total of 17 – adults and first to third year immatures.

Mary Marrs: At Mary's feeders were the ever-faithful Black-capped Chickadees and a Hairy Woodpecker. Others had also seen the Hairy, as well as the smaller Downy and the much larger Pileated.

Curtis Irish: Curtis was going to report a new species for him, a Blue Jay, but as it was already inadvertently reported, Curtis, alas, could not report it as one of his two sightings, so instead reported seeing Mallards and Canada Geese (right). There were



Peter Ferris

certainly hundreds of Canada Geese around this fall and well into November, but they have now migrated and we will have to wait until April to see them again.



Ernie Frayle

Renee Levesque: I saw a number of Horned Larks (left) at Powassan Lagoon in mid-November and nine Trumpeter Swans, four at the mouth of the Sturgeon River and five off Marleau Road. One had a yellow wing tag, but unfortunately I did not see it until I uploaded my photos. However, the swan was too far away for me to read the number with any accuracy. I also saw

two Trumpeters at Cache Bay early in November, an adult and a cygnet.

I had Dark-eyed Juncos (right) at my feeder, two males and a female, but the male and female have gone, leaving me with a lone male. Dick also had a junco at his feeder and Grant had one for a while.

I also had two or more Red-breasted Nuthatches at my feeder daily and Dick had the White-breasted. Lori reported hearing many Red-breasted in the woods around her place, but none were coming to her feeders.

Ruffed Grouse (below) were being seen frequently this November. I had one in my yard on a few occasions and



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two in the woods behind my house. Gary and Connie saw two the day of the meeting and Dick had been seeing them on his various travels. As reported in September's Bird Wing report, the populations of Ruffed Grouse appear to be cyclic and are tied to the Snowshoe Hare population that roughly follows an 8 to 11-year cycle. When hare numbers crash, their main predators, the Northern Goshawk and the Great Horned Owl, look to alternate prey, the Ruffed Grouse.

Dick Tafel: In early to mid-November at the Powassan Lagoon a number of shorebirds finally arrived, up to about 20 in total. Dick saw the Western Sandpiper, a sandpiper that if it comes to our area at all, comes late in the fall, much later than its almost look-alike, the Semipalmated Sandpiper. He also saw the Dunlin, the

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White-rumped Sandpiper and Greater Yellow-legs. The White-rumped is aptly named with its white rump very visible when it flies, helping to identify it.

Additional Birds Seen in November:

Ducks: Ducks not mentioned but seen in November on Lake Nipissing and Trout Lake, are: Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser and Hooded Merganser. And on Lake Nipissing by the dock were three Long-tailed Ducks (above). Started out with one, then two and then a third.



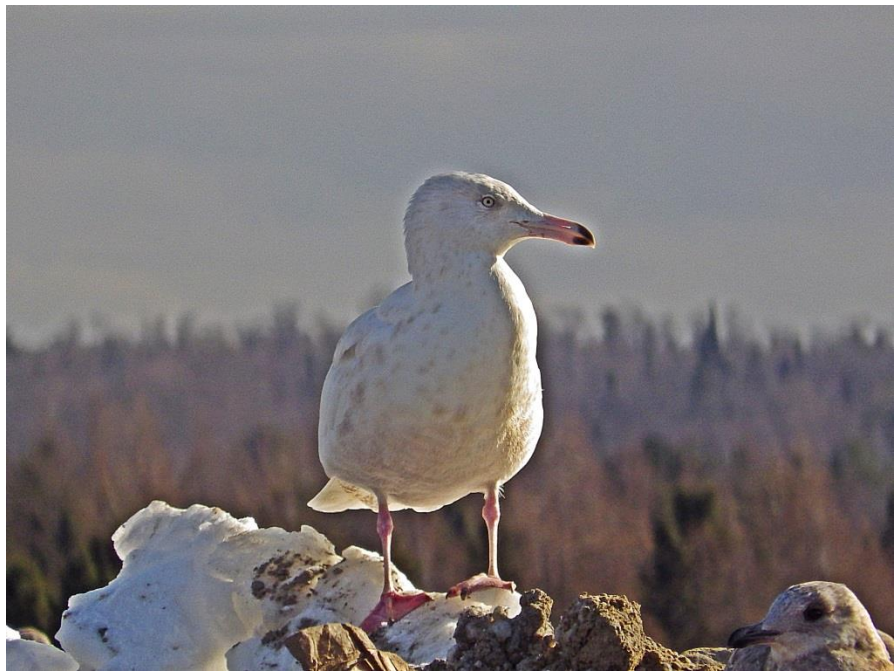
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Kaye Edmonds

Owls: No owls were reported but two birders not present at the meeting had seen the Snowy Owl. Kaye saw one at Sunset Park and Ernie Frayle on Gravelle Road near Mattawa. (Since the meeting, some of us have spotted Snowy Owls on Memorial Drive. If you look carefully, you may see two.)

Gulls: Dick and I paid a visit to North Bay's landfill site during the November Bird Bash and saw among the hundreds of Herring Gulls and some Ring-billed Gulls, a few great Black-backed Gulls, some Iceland Gulls and some Glaucous Gulls (right). It is the only time of the year we see the Arctic Iceland and Glaucous Gulls as they migrate through on their way south. Brent Turcotte also saw a Glaucous Gull along the Lake Nipissing waterfront.



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An outing to the North Bay landfill site is scheduled for Saturday, **December 9. If you wish to be part of the outing, meet at the former Visitors' Centre at 10:00 a.m.** If you have a scope, it would be best to bring it. We cannot always access the area where many gulls congregate.

And who knows, we might see a Lesser Black-backed, though I am not optimistic. I am thankful, as I am sure Lori is, that the Thayer's Gull has now been lumped in with the Iceland Gull!



Stephen O'Donnell

Notes from the Field:

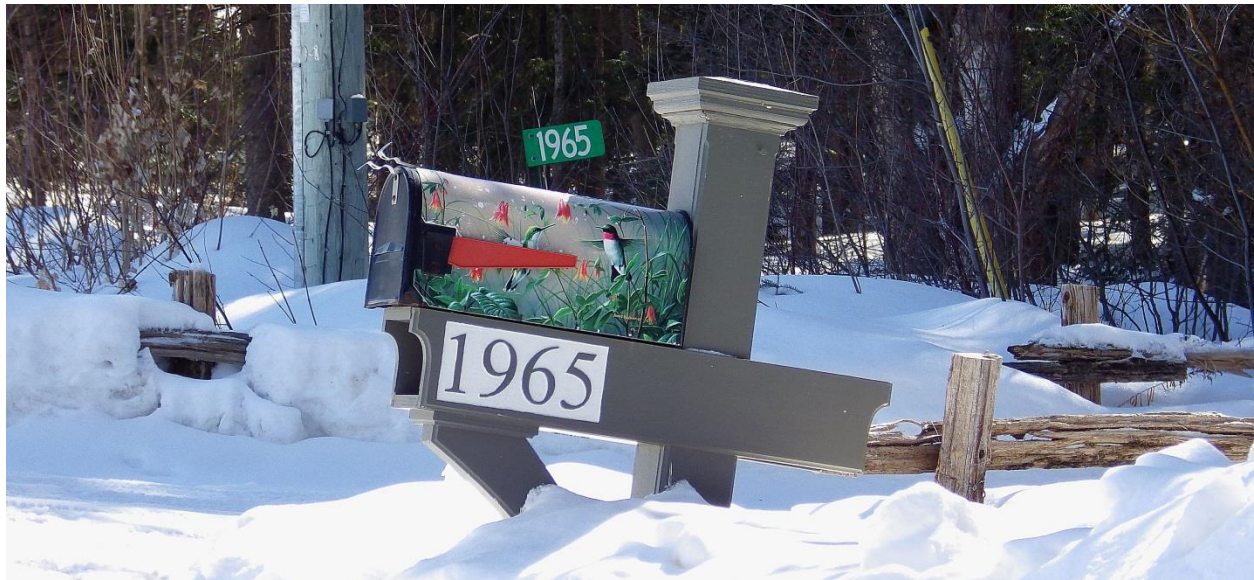
Stephen O'Donnell had a Rusty Blackbird and a one-legged Common Grackle (left) visiting his feeder in November. In Stephen's words:

"I have a Common Grackle with only one leg coming to the

feeder. I don't think it will make the winter. The Grackle has a buddy, a Rusty Blackbird that seems in good health. Both birds are often not far apart.

Then later: "The Rusty seems very healthy and since the Grackle first arrived at the feeder, I have noticed improvement in its ability to fly and hop on one leg and the stump of the other. Not sure what could have done this to the Grackle."

This Grackle and another one, one with a sore wing, are still present at Stephen's, although the Rusty left about two weeks ago.



Christmas Bird Count:

The 39th North Bay Christmas Bird Count is set to go for **Saturday, December 16**. Thanks to Lori, teams have been formed and ready to count birds seen within a 15-mile radius of Dugas Bay. The results of the counts and a pot luck dinner will be again held this year at the home of Grant and Shirley McKercher starting at 6:00 p.m. Lori will email Grant's address and directions to his home to the seven teams prior to count day.

In addition to field observers, there are also feeder watchers. These watchers will report the number of birds coming to their feeders for the entire day or any part of the day. The species seen and the number of each species seen, as well as the time

spent watching, need to be recorded and sent to Lori by email the evening of December 16. Lori's email address is lori.anderson58@hotmail.com.

Books:

Connie read *Birdology* and reports her favourite chapter was the one on homing pigeons, "Birds Find Their Way Home", basically because she did not know a lot about them and the subject is of interest to her. This book has now been given to Lori to read.



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Curtis Irish expressed an interest in *More Than Birds: Adventurous Lives of North American Naturalists* by Val Shuskewich, and so this book was passed on to him until the Bird Wing meeting in January.

Grant McKercher read and recommended *Birds Art Life*. His review of this book will appear in January's issue of *The Woodland Observer*.

Eastern Bluebird Nest Boxes:

In *OFO News*, June 17, 2017 issue, there is an article by Bill Read, President of the Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society. Bill states that "unmonitored boxes can become breeding grounds for House Sparrows and



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Deer Mice” and predation by raccoons – all negatives for native cavity nesting birds like the Eastern Bluebird and the Tree Swallow.

Raccoons can be prevented from reaching the nest boxes by the use of baffles and metal cone guards. House Sparrows are another issue and one Lori has to contend with because although House Sparrows are rare in our area, they like barns and Lori has a barn. So what Lori told us she will have to do based on the information in Bill’s article is to determine how this risk can be mitigated. Placement of nest boxes in suitable locations is important and Lori feels that it may help if she sets up her nest boxes a distance from the barn.

Bill also states in his article that it is important the nest boxes be monitored and records kept. The Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society, whose mandate is to be successful with all cavity nesting species, bluebirds and Tree Swallows in particular, can be contacted for assistance and information. Bill states that “building nest boxes amounts to only 5% of the total project – placement, predator protection, monitoring and record keeping make up the other 95%.”

Bird Wing will revisit this issue in March to determine how we can be of help to Lori in ensuring a successful nesting season. If anyone wants a copy of the article, let me know and I will scan and email it to you. I will be meeting with Lori in late April once the boxes have been installed so she can show me where they are placed and then hopefully some of us can help monitor them, even to a limited extent.

Motus Wildlife Tracking System:

Connie informed us that it would appear Nipissing Naturalists Club has the funding required to proceed this coming spring with installing the Motus Wildlife Tracking System at Laurentian Ski Hill. The Board has to meet to discuss how to proceed and Connie can provide us with an update at the January meeting.

To promote the Motus Wildlife Tracking System, Nipissing Naturalists Club had a booth at the Science Fair held at Nipissing University on November 18. Louise Simpson designed a poster using photos of winter birds taken by Bird Wing members (right), and she and Sarah Wheelan were on hand to answer any questions. To provide bird activity, Kaye displayed many of her bird rock paintings and had 47 children stop by her table to paint rocks – as well as two feathers and two pieces of driftwood used when Kaye ran out of rocks! Proved to be a very successful activity for the kids.



Ontario Big Year:

For those who have been following Jeremy Bensette and his quest to top Josh Vandermuellen's 2012 Ontario Big Year record, Jeremy topped Josh's record on November 20 when he saw a Northern Gannet in Hamilton. Read about Jeremy's Big Year by visiting <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/this-man-travelled-90-000-km-across-ontario-to-break-a-bird-watching-record-1.4410182>.

Jeremy's year is not yet over. He has until December 31 to top his own record.

Meeting Times:

It was decided we will continue to begin our Bird Wing meetings at 6:30 and end them at 8:30. The earlier time seems to be the more convenient time for most members and when we began at 7:00, members did not enjoy the feeling of being rushed out of the building by the janitor just before 9 so he could lock up and finish

his work day. By starting the meetings at 6:30, it gives us more time after 8:30, if we need more time, that is.

Bird Bash:

The next Bird Bash will take place the **weekend of January 13 and 14.**

Bird Wing Meeting:

The next Bird Wing meeting takes place in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library on **Tuesday, January 23.**

Thanks to Steve Pitt, I will be ending today's report and perhaps subsequent reports, not with pithy quotes as I often do, but with etymology/vocabulary related to birds, some of which has gone out of use, like the word below:

Raven-messenger: The raven was the first animal Noah released from his ark to determine whether the flood waters had abated. However, it did not return immediately to Noah to let him know, and so Noah had to release a dove instead. The dove flew back to the ark with an olive leaf in its bill, signalling the floodwaters had finally abated.



Stephen O'Donnell

This episode is the origin of raven-messenger, “an ancient expression referring to someone – and, in particular, someone bearing news or an important message – who does not return when required, or arrives too late to be of any use.”