

March, 2016 North Bay Area Bird Bash

Such a grand effort, over a good, March, Easter week-end! 64 species of birds were observed by 33 participants. That is the second largest number since our efforts began in 2004. Only in 2012 when 67 were reported was this number exceeded.

As usual I will start with the new birds for the year, in rough taxonomic order. And so up in the seemingly more luscious west end, Angela and Gary Martin came upon our first Great Blue Heron; while Canada Geese were observed in huge numbers by them, and by many of us. Wood Ducks were also found by the Martins, and by Renee Levesque and yours truly, the latter within a now fully open Sturgeon River. The latter pair also spotted 4 Lesser Scaup within the almost fully open Mattawa River. Hooded and Common Mergansers were spotted by several groups, but Red-breasted was noted only by Barb Stewart near Magnetewan.

A lonely Turkey Vulture was spotted by Deborah Sykes just south of Sundridge. Among other predators, Northern Harriers were spotted by Chris Suhka near Field, by Brent Turcotte, and by Barb; and by the Levesque duo near Sturgeon. The latter pair also noted Red-tails; as did Lori Anderson and Ken Gooding, and Gary and Connie Sturge, both near Powassan, and by Greg Jaski. He was the only one to find a Merlin. The Martins spotted a Cooper's Hawk. Many noted early arriving American Kestrel including Mary Ann Kenrick, within the city, and Ernie Frayle in the east end.

Even Sandhill Cranes had arrived, discovered by the Martins, and by Barb. She also was the only one to spy a Killdeer. Even some American Woodcock were observed – by the Anderson duo, by Laura Turcotte and Mom, Luanne Chowns, and by the Martins. Ring-billed and Herring Gulls had arrived in goodly numbers observed by many. The only owl found was the first Saw-whet, heard clearly by Jeremy St. Onge not far from Balsam Creek. Another first was the Black-backed Woodpecker discovered by the Anderson pair at the Corbeil conservation area.

A Golden-crowned Kinglet was identified by Greg. A first warbler for the season the Yellow-rumped, was discovered by the Martins in the west end; while the first Song Sparrow was noted by Renee; and by Greg, and by Laura's group. A few Red-winged Blackbirds had arrived, seen by the Sturges, John Levesque, and Therez Violette near Sturgeon Falls. An early Brown-headed Cowbird was noted by Ernie. Two Red Crossbills were found by the Levesque pair near the Mattawa ski hill. And, that covers the many new birds discovered by the group this year.

As to others, we shall continue to follow rough taxonomic order. Three Trumpeter Swans were enjoyed by the Martins and by John Levesque up at the now open part of the West Arm of Lake Nipissing. Of course Mallards were all over the place along with a few Black Ducks. Common Goldeneye were still at various open water spots.

A Northern Goshawk was seen again, this time by Deborah Sykes near Callander. Rough-legs likewise, by the Levesque and by the Anderson pairs, and by John L. Bald Eagles were still being discovered by many participants, including Doug Paterson near the Ottawa River, and by Greg. Ruffed Grouse were still about in fair numbers, noted by Pam and Peter Handley, just north of the city, and others; and the Wild Turkey was seen by Keith Thornborrow near South River, and Barb up near Magnetewan. Rock Pigeons and Mourning Doves were noted by many, including Linda Stoner and Rose McClelland, and by Pam and Peter Handley.

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were upon many feeder lists, and Pileateds, likewise. A Northern Shrike was observed by John L. Gray Jays were seen by the Martins, by Keith at South River, and by Brent. Blue Jays were pretty well everywhere, as were the many arriving American Crows and still here, Common Ravens. Horned Larks were spotted by Chris. Black-capped Chickadees were all over the place, and somewhat less so, were Red-breasted Nuthatches. White-breasted were not so common but were seen by a few such as Marc Buchanan, the McKerchers, the Martins, and Deborah. Brown Creepers were spotted by Greg, and by Jeremy.

American Robins have arrived – though as yet in small numbers, but enjoyed by many, including Grant and Shirley McKercher, in Callander, and Barb. European Starlings were, of course, abundant. A few observers, like Therez, Barb, and the Martins, saw American Tree Sparrows, the only other sparrow than the earlier mentioned Song; though the Dark-eyed Junco is within the same Emberizid family and was observed again, this time by Linda and Rose, and by Keith. Snow Buntings were found by the Anderson duo and by the Martins, and by John L.

A Northern Cardinal was noted this month by Deborah, and by Greg. Common Grackles were seen by a few, including the Levesque duo, Kaye Edmunds, and Mary Ann. Pine Grosbeaks were found only by Keith, and by the Stoner pair, but Purple Finches were at many feeders. However, the main feeder bird seemed to be Common Redpolls, which were in the hundreds at some including that of Elsa Tafel, and Mary Ann Kenrick's. Pine Siskins were also fairly numerous, found at Doug's, and at Donna Demarco's, both in the east end, among others. American Goldfinch were only at a few places, including that of Mary Ann, the McKerchers, and Therez. Evening Grosbeaks were still about in fair numbers, at the feeder of Therez, and at Craig Hurst's, near Redbridge.. Finally, House Sparrows were discovered only by the Anderson duo near Powassan, and by Chris near Field

It was an auspicious beginning of spring birds in our area. Good going to all participants!

April's "bird bash" will be during its likely, most active week-end, namely 23-24. Prepare for it!

Details of this and other monthly "bashes" should soon be in the web pages of the Nipissing Naturalists Club.

Dick Tafel, Compiler