

# Bird Wing Meeting

February 23, 2015

*Text and photos not indicated, Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe*

February's Bird Wing meeting was held in the Public Board Room of the Police Station. The change in venue was for two reasons: The auditorium of the North Bay Public Library was otherwise occupied and the alternative, the library's Board Room, was not large enough to hold all the birders interested in hearing our guest speaker, Kevin Hannah, talk about his winter finch assessment for Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Time constraints this month prevent me from providing a summary of Kevin's talk in this report; so instead, I will do a separate report for distribution in the coming weeks. At this time, suffice it to say that Kevin was in North Bay February 23, 24 and 25 banding Common Redpolls and Evening Grosbeaks and collecting feathers of each banded bird to determine its isotopic signature. Dick Tafel had arranged for Kevin to do so at the homes of Lori Anderson, Mary Young, Donna Demarco and Ernie Frayle.

**Birds Seen in the Last Month:** Because of the large group and Kevin's presentation, followed by many questions and answers, there wasn't time for much else besides talking about the birds seen since our last meeting in late January. Therefore, this report will focus only on this aspect of the meeting and photos of birds this month show all of them in winter.

The Common Redpoll (seen at right) is everywhere this winter and the Red-breasted Nuthatch is not far behind. The latter seems more plentiful this winter than the White-breasted Nuthatch, both of which were seen by Marc Buchanan on the Kate Pace Trail.



Pine Siskins do not seem as plentiful this winter; however, Ken Gowan has them at his feeders, as does Dick Tafel. There have been few sightings of the American Goldfinch, although Ken also has some at his feeder.

Nicole Richardson regularly sees about 40 Evening Grosbeaks on Cedar Heights Road where she parks her car before heading off to Nipissing University. Others have also seen all or part of this flock of Evening Grosbeaks on Cedar Heights. Pine Grosbeaks (seen below) have also been spotted by some on Cedar Heights and Larocque Road.



*Photo by Nicole Richardson*

Nicole has also seen Bohemian Waxwings near the university and Renee Levesque has seen a flock of about 40 in Pinewood. Kaye Edmonds gets some in her yard every now and then, as does Vic Rizzo.

Lori Anderson has some Purple Finches (seen at right) coming to her feeders and she continues to have a large group of Snow Buntings at her place. The only other members to report Snow Buntings were Dick and Renee who saw four or five with the 40 or so Horned Larks at the Co-op Feed Store in Verner (see top of next page). Also at the Co-op are about 20 House Sparrows, and about seven or eight are regular visitors to Gary and Connie Sturge's home in Powassan country.







Renee has had a Brown Creeper at her place every now and then. It could be coming daily, but can be difficult to spot as it circles the trunk of a tree, blending in with the bark.

Matt and Ray Walker were not in attendance to report the Dark-eyed Juncos they seem to have had for two winters now. However, Dick informed us they were seen by Keith Thornborough at his feeder in South River.

Woodpeckers seen include the Pileated and the Downy at Ed Rowley's place. And Kaye has had a Pileated and a Hairy feeding at the same time, although as you will see from the photo, the Pileated does not seem to be too sure it likes sharing. Seen earlier in the month was the Red-bellied Woodpecker in Luanne Chowns' backyard. Interestingly enough, Renee did not report on her recent sighting of the



*Photo by Kaye Edmonds*



Black-backed Woodpecker on Stillaway Line despite her constantly teasing Gary about his many sightings of it on the same road. Maybe she decided not to make a big deal about it at the meeting because she did not wish to shatter the myth that it makes itself visible only to Gary, and she did not want to upset Dick who has not yet seen it, much to his consternation.



*Photo by Gary Chowns*

Mourning Doves (seen at left) do not seem to be very plentiful this winter. There are at least four at the Sturge home and Luanne and Vic have them in their yards on a regular basis.

Curtis Irish saw Common Ravens, and Paul Smylie saw American Crows which are gathering in numbers in town, as well as Black-capped Chickadees which are seemingly in great numbers this winter.

Katherine Byers reports Ruffed Grouse (seen below is a rusty morph) at her place off Birch's Road, and Craig Hurst reports nine at his place near Rutherglen, four coming to his feeder daily.

Because our guest was the third last to report his

sightings, he was hard-pressed to come up with two birds considering this was his first full day here, but he did – Blue Jays and Rock Doves!

Brent Turcotte saw a couple of American Black Ducks and a sole Common Goldeneye with at least 140 Mallards in Trout Lake behind the Green Store. Four Common Goldeneye were also seen on South River at Maple Hill Road by Renee and later by Dick during the February Bird Bash.





Debra Johnson, despite being last, was able to add European Starlings and a Red-tailed Hawk (seen at right) in Chisholm Township.

Other raptors seen included a Rough-legged Hawk on Genesee Lake Road, also in Chisholm Township; Bald Eagles at the East Ferris Landfill Site; and Sharp-shinned Hawks which make their presence known in Luanne's and Vic's yards.

Although not a raptor, a Northern Shrike with its hooked-tipped bill used to impale prey was spotted by Connie and Gary on Maple Hill Road and by Renee and Dick on Purdon Line.

Over the very frigid Family Day weekend, the Snowy Owl was seen by Luanne and Gary Chowns at the Pro-Cathedral, and one was seen in early February by Dick, Renee and Chris Sukha on Hwy 64 towards Lavigne. Reminiscent of Lori a couple of years ago when she saw one in her yard on her way to Bird Wing, one was seen by Gary and Connie on the day of the meeting, at Maple Hill Road and Hwy 534.



Both Debra and Lori have seen a Ring-necked Pheasant in Chisholm Township in the Chiswick Line and Alderdale Road area. However, it could be that it is not wild, but rather an escapee. Seen by Keith in the South River area was a Wild Turkey.

In addition to Luanne's Red-bellied Woodpecker, other unusual winter birds seen were the American Robin (below), seen by Vic in his yard and in Sweetman's Gardens and, as reported on eBird, one recently on Huron Crescent in West Ferris. Renee has checked out Pinewood Road a few times since seeing the American Robin there in late January, but she hasn't seen it since. Nor has she seen the male Northern Cardinal that was also

on  
Pinewood  
Road in  
late  
January.





However, there are a few other Northern Cardinals this winter that have been seen – a pair on Huron Crescent according to eBird and a male at Kaye’s. Vic sees two males and a female in his yard.

When Renee saw the male Northern Cardinal on Pinewood Road, it repeatedly jumped from the top of the passenger side mirror to the front of the mirror where it saw its reflection. Because it was January, prior to mating and breeding season, Renee contacted Mike Burrell at Bird Studies Canada about this behavior because it was similar to American Robins batting away at themselves in reflection, fighting off a possible intruder and rival during mating and breeding season. Mike said Northern Cardinals are also well-known for this behavior and that it can become quite unhealthy, taking up a lot of energy, especially in the cold of winter. As far as it happening in January, Mike said that Northern Cardinals regularly start singing in January in Southern Ontario, “so it is not too surprising he was already getting excited with hormones.” Mike suggested that the Cardinal’s behaviour can be discouraged by covering up reflective surfaces.



*Photo by Kaye Edmonds*





Then there are the sparrows not often seen in winter: the American Tree Sparrow seen by Ken up until the extreme cold snap over the Family Day weekend, and Craig's White-throated Sparrow (at right) seen all winter by Craig and also up until the Family Day weekend when we experienced two of the coldest days this winter, followed a week or so later by an inordinate amount of snow.

**Bird Bash:** March's Bird Bash will be held over a 24-hour period the weekend of **March 26 and 27**. Surely some of our recent massive amounts of snow will have started to melt by then and spring and birds will be in the air!

**Bird Wing Meeting:** The next Bird Wing meeting takes place **March 22, 6.30 p.m. in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library**.



**Happy St. Patrick's Day:** *May songbirds serenade you every step of the way.*

