

Bird Bash Report

May 28-29, 2018

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

The weather was pleasant, the birds numerous, but the participants somewhat down during the “best” birding time for a Bird Bash in this area – namely May! And so some 21 birders found 130 species within our area over this lovely weekend. That actually is rather below average over the past 15 years – 137, while last year the number was 133.

However, great birds were discovered! We should start with the many new ones of the year (as always) in rough taxonomic order. Firstly, there was the pretty (in breeding plumage) Red-necked Grebe off the end of Jocko Point enjoyed by the Great Canadian Birdathon foursome of yours truly, along with Renee Levesque, Lori Anderson and Jackie Manella.

Then there was the Green Heron finally seen upon a Bird Bash by Chris Sukha in the west end.

Greater Scaup were seen in large rafts from the edge of Beaucage Road by the aforementioned Birdathon quartet. They also “spotted” the first Spotted Sandpiper, a pair of them off Sunset Park, a couple of Least Sandpipers at Callander Lagoon and one lonely Dunlin upon a rock just west of the government dock. The other Birdathon group, Fred Pinto, Kaye Edmunds, Louise Simpson and Sarah Whelan, caught a good view of Semipalmated Sandpipers (as did the other quartet) at the Powassan Lagoon – and they too “spotted” the Spotted Sandpiper and the Least Sandpiper. Both Birdathon groups saw American Coots, one group at Warren Lagoon and the other, at Powassan Lagoon.

But perhaps most excitedly did your writer's quartet enjoy three, tiny Wilson's Phalarope, both male and female, circling upon the waters at Verner Lagoon.

They also managed to enjoy an active set of Black Terns at Warren Lagoon (as did Chris). The two other local terns, Caspian and Common, were watched by both Birdathon quartets at various spots on Lake Nipissing. The Common was also seen by Therez Violette.

Chimney Swifts were still circling their favourite chimney on Main Street in North Bay, spotted by both Birdathon groups.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were seen by several during this Bird Bash, including Peter and Pam Handley within the city, Therez Violette in Sturgeon Falls, and Gary and Connie Sturge near Powassan. Gary and Connie also spotted the Eastern Wood-Pewee. Four other flycatchers were seen for the first time - the Alder, the Least, the Great Crested and the Eastern Kingbird, two of them by the Sturges, four by the other foursomes and by Chris.

Red-eyed Vireos were finally present – in very large numbers and spotted by many.

The three previously missing swallows – Bank, Northern Rough-winged and Cliff were observed, all three by your compiler's Birdathon quartet, the latter two by Fred's quartet, and the first two by Chris.

Wood Thrushes were observed by your compiler's group and the Veery, observed by both Birdathon groups, by Chris and by the Sturges.

Gray Catbirds were on several lists, as were the just-arriving Cedar Waxwings, the latter also on Therez's list.

Now we get to the warblers! Nineteen species were identified, all but two (the Pine and Yellow-rumped) being new for the year. The only reasonably possible ones missed were Golden-winged, Cape May, Blackpoll, Cerulean and Canada. Chris observed 13 of them, including the often elusive Mourning, while the Pinto Birdathon group observed the beautiful Northern Parula, among others. The Northern Waterthrush was among 11 warblers found by your compiler's group.

A very rare Eastern Towhee was spotted by Renee and John Levesque at their home.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were about, enjoyed by the two Birdathon groups, by Janet and Lloyd Sparks and by the Handleys.

Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks are also now in the district, spotted by the Birdathon groups and by Chris.

Beautiful Baltimore Orioles were also observed by both Birdathon quartets.

And so that gets through the first of the year observations by Bird Bash groups – some 46 species in all.

Now to birds recognized during previous Bird Bashes in the area:

We start off with the Common Loon. This was seen by most observers of the major

lakes, including the Sparks. The Pied-billed Grebe was located by the Pinto bunch near Sturgeon Falls.

Double-crested Cormorants were seen by many, as was the Great Blue Heron. But the American Bittern was observed solely by the Birdathon groups and by Chris.

Turkey Vultures were quite ubiquitous, as was the Canada Goose.

Among the ducks, including mergansers, some 17 species were spotted, the Blue-winged Teal only by the Pinto Birdathon quartet.

As to predators, the Osprey was seen by many participants, including Therez, but the Northern Harrier and Bald Eagle only by your compiler's Birdathon group. The Sharp-shinned Hawk was seen by Chris; the Red-tailed by the Sturges; the American Kestrel by many; and the Merlin by both Chris and the Pinto Birdathon group.

Ruffed Grouse were fairly numerous, being noted by the Sparks, among others. Sandhill Cranes were spotted along Highway 17 by many.

A Killdeer was found by Chris and by the Sturges. American Woodcock were located by several; likewise the two main gulls – the Ring-billed and the Herring.

Rock Pigeons and Mourning Doves were seen by several observers.

The Barred Owl was spotted along Alsace Road by the Pinto quartet, an adult and a youngster – and photographed by Kaye.

Belted Kingfishers were noted only by the Sparks and the Pinto Birdathon foursome.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Downy, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers and Northern Flickers were spotted by many.

The Eastern Phoebe was on several lists, including the Sparks and the Sturges.

The Warbling Vireo was noted by the Sturges and the two Birdathon groups.

Blue Jays, American Crows and Common Ravens were still fairly common – but no Gray Jay (soon to be officially renamed Canada Jay) was spotted.

Tree and Barn Swallows were seen by many; likewise, Black-capped Chickadees and both nuthatches. But, no Brown creepers!

Winter Wrens were discovered by the Sturges and by Chris, who also found the Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

Eastern Bluebirds were enjoyed by yours truly and his gang, while Hermit Thrush were noted only by the Sturges and Chris. The American Robin was upon most lists.

Brown Thrashers were also noted by many participants, as was the European Starling.

Now to the sparrows: American Tree and White-crowned were still at the feeder area of Mary Ann Kenrick. Chipping and White-throated Sparrows were fairly widespread. Savannah, Song and Swamp were seen by both Birdathon groups, by Chris and by the Sturges.

Red-winged Blackbirds were almost everywhere, as were Common Grackles.

Purple Finches, American Goldfinches and Pine Siskins were fairly numerous, but only Chris came upon Red Crossbills.

Evening Grosbeaks were at Donna Demarco's, while the Sturges and the Birdathon quartet led by yours truly found House Sparrows.

It was a bit disappointing that no one was able to get contact with any Whippoorwills, nor any rails, nor Wilson's Snipe, nor Hooded Mergansers, nor cuckoos, nor turkeys, nor Indigo Buntings. And Trumpeter Swans seemed to elude us this month.

At any event, it was a very successful outing all-round. Congrats to all participants and especially to the 8 involved in the 24-hour Birdathon.

By the way, if you want to financially aid the Great Canadian Birdathon, through Bird Studies Canada, with the money going to bird research and preservation, you can find your compiler's name at: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/bird-studies-canada/p2p/birdathon/team/tafelot/>. (Or you can give your donation directly to your compiler.) But don't forget to do it soon!

June's Bird Bash will be **over the weekend of June 9** when there should still be some migrants going through.