

Bird Bash Report

September 2019

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

Although many birds have gone south already, fifteen local enthusiasts managed to observe 100 local species over the weekend of September 7-8. That is, however, some 6 below average over the past 16 years. Last year, the count was 107. The count this September was a bit disappointing to your analyst compiler, seeing the wonderful summer that we have had, and a not bad September weather so far. He thought we would see more.

However, we must summarize just what lovely birds were seen, as per usual in rough taxonomic order, and start off with three birds not seen previously during a Bird Bash this year.

That starts with a Ring-necked Pheasant found by Kaye Edmunds in the east end. She wondered if it had been locally reared, but it was loose and unhindered, and so we should enjoy its presence on our count.

Then we get to the Common Gallinule, formerly called the Common Moorhen, discovered at Cache Bay by Renee Levesque and yours truly. They also found a tiny Red-necked Phalarope at Warren Lagoon. It was typically pretending that it was a duck, swimming with gusto in circles near many much larger, actual ducks.

Now to the other species: the Common Loon was seen this time only by Lloyd and Janet Sparks in Wolf Lake; by Kaye in Trout Lake; and by Grant and Shirley McKercher in Callander Bay.

Pied-billed Grebes, missing last month, were discovered this time by Kaye at Powassan Lagoon and by the Levesque duo in Cache Bay.

Double-crested Cormorants remained plentiful.

American Bitterns were seen by Ernie Frayle in the east end and by the Sparks. The Sparks also found a Great Blue Heron, as did Kaye, Gary and Connie Sturge, and David Rooke.

Turkey Vultures remained ubiquitous, as did even more so, Canada Geese.

Ducks, mostly the “puddle duck” species, were concentrating in great numbers within lagoons and elsewhere. The number of species was similar (9) to the last Bird Bash, except for scaup which was not discovered this time round. Divers, like the Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser, were also about, but the latter found only by Buddy Myles and David. The normally rare Ruddy Duck was noted again by the Levesque duo at Warren Lagoon.

Now as to predators: Ospreys were still around in good numbers, though not as actively within their nests, from which the young generally have managed to safely fledge. Northern Harriers were noted by the Sturges and the Levesque duo. The latter pair also saw a couple of Sharp-shinned Hawks, as did John Levesque. They also saw Broad-winged Hawks, as did the McKerchers. The latter pair also detected the Bald Eagle, as did the Sturges and David. American Kestrel remained common, but the Merlin was noticed only by the Levesque duo, the Sturges, Buddy, and the McKerchers.

Ruffed Grouse were discovered by Kaye, the Sparks and Ernie. Ernie also found Sandhill Cranes, as did the Levesque duo, David, and Buddy.

Only a few shorebirds were discovered - the Semipalmated Plover by Kaye and John at Sunset Park where John also saw a Least Sandpiper, and Lesser Yellowlegs, spotted by the Levesque duo at Warren Lagoon.

As to gulls and terns, Ring-billed and Herring remain the main gull species, but the McKerchers managed to find a lone Great Black-backed along Lake Nipissing. Caspian and Common Terns continued to be present at Cache Bay and observed by the Levesque duo.

Rock Pigeons and Mourning Doves remained common.

No owls or Common Nighthawks were spotted.

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird seemed to be upon its last presence this year, saying goodbye through house windows to Elsa Tafel and others.

Belted Kingfishers were still upon many lists.

The six main woodpeckers (or their “cousins”) were still about in fair numbers, especially Northern Flickers. Pileateds seemed to be the least seen, noted only by the Levesque duo, the Sparks, and John.

Flycatchers were still about. The Eastern Wood-Pewee was discovered by David, the Least by John and by the Levesque duo, who, along with the Sturges, also saw the Eastern Phoebe and the Eastern Kingbird. Kaye also saw the Eastern Kingbird, and the Sparks, the Eastern Phoebe.

Among vireos the Red-eyed was still pretty common, while the Warbling was seen solely by John.

Blue Jays, Common Ravens and American Crows remained very commonplace, as did Black-capped Chickadees. Red-breasted Nuthatches were seen by most, but the White-breasted was noted only by the Sparks and David. The Brown Creeper was watched solely by the Levesque duo.

A Winter Wren was noted by Dave near Seguin Beach; a Golden-crowned Kinglet by John on a trail off Main Street West. No Ruby-crowned Kinglets were found.

As to thrushes, no bluebirds were seen, but the Veery was discovered by John at his home area, and the Hermit Thrush by the Sparks. Your compiler was very disappointed not to see even one normally very common American Robin during his Bird Bash day, but thankfully some others did –Mary Ann Kenrick, the McKerchers, Buddy, the Sturges, Kaye and David.

The Gray Catbird was noted solely by the Sturges, and the Brown Thrasher solely by John.

Huge flocks (murmurations) of European Starlings were clustering about.

Cedar Waxwings were very abundant, noted by many.

Now as to warblers: rather amazingly (to your compiler) some 15 species were spotted. He will identify those individuals who were the sole observers of a particular warbler and then add the other ones at the end. Starting with the Northern Parula, Mourning, Blackburnian and Wilson's - all those were found in a wave of warblers passing through by John on the little trail at the west end of Main Street. The Yellow was noted by Mary Ann; the Ovenbird by the Levesque pair; the Magnolia, by David; and the Pine by Kaye. Other warblers found were Nashville, Chestnut-sided, Yellow-rumped, Black and White, Black-throated Green, American Redstart and Common Yellowthroat. Quite a contingent!

The Scarlet Tanager was spotted by Kaye and by John.

As to sparrows, they were not particularly plentiful except for the Song which was widely noted. The White-throated was seen by the Sparks and by David, who also found Chipping, as did Mary Ann and Buddy. The Savannah was noted by the Sturges and by Buddy, who also found Swamp Sparrows near Verner.

Bobolinks were discovered solely by the Sparks.

Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles were fairly widespread. The Eastern Meadowlark was noted only by the Sturges.

Purple Finches were observed only by Mary Ann, and Pine Siskin was seen only by the McKerchers. American Goldfinches were upon a few lists.

And, finally we get to the House Sparrow seen this month solely by the Levesque pair at their usual spot at the Verner Co-op.

That concludes the report for September 2019. Thanks and congrats to those participating.

Mark down the next Bird Bash for the **weekend of October 5-6**. Birds will certainly be down in numbers then, but whichever are around will be interesting!