

Bird Bash Report

January 2023

By Dick Tafel, Compiler

It is truly a bit hard to get excited about birding during well-below freezing temperatures. But I bet all 25 participants in our local Bird Bash, first for the year, enjoyed their new year discoveries, for, surprisingly, some 42 bird species were uncovered! That is 6 above the average for January counts over the past 19 years. Only one count was higher. In 2007, 43 species were found. Last year, the number was but 30!

And so let's get at it, with all birds noted being the first birds spotted in the Bird Bash year. As per usual, we will follow roughly the order of the *Seasonal Checklist of the Birds of North Bay and Area*.

And so we start with American Black Ducks and Mallards mostly found at this time of the year, when lakes and ponds are frozen, within or near the waters of the North Bay Wastewater Treatment plant, or at the kept-open water areas near the Trout Lake Green Store, or at the open waters of the Ottawa River in and near Mattawa. Both ducks were watched by new participant Garry Waldram and also by Renee Levesque with your reporter, while just Mallards were spotted by Diane Deagle and Greg Jaski.

Common Goldeneye were also spotted in Mattawa on the open Ottawa River by Garry W. and the Levesque duo, while the latter pair and Lori Anderson with Ken Gowing discovered a lone Red-breasted Merganser also upon the Ottawa. Young Jeremie Corbeil also identified three Common Goldeneye flying overhead in East Ferris.

Now we get to the predators. A Cooper's Hawk was photographed by Diane at Sweetman's Gardens. A Northern Goshawk was spotted by the Anderson duo while snowshoeing the Wasi Lake trails. They also found one Red-tailed Hawk near the Anderson farm. A Rough-legged Hawk was identified by Gary and Connie Sturge on the Chiswick Line. They also found Bald Eagles, as did Linda Stoner, the Levesque duo, the Anderson pair, Greg, and Garry W.

Ruffed Grouse were noticed by, Bill and Carol Fleming, Steve Pitt, Donna Demarco, Keith Thornborrow, and the Anderson pair. Wild Turkeys were about in

fairly large numbers, but watched only by Faye Oei, the Sturges, and the Anderson duo.

Of course, no shorebirds were around. However, a sole Herring Gull was seen briefly by the Levesque duo on the Ottawa River.

The very common Rock Pigeons were on almost every list. Mourning Doves were spotted by Grant and Shirley McKercher, new arrival, Brittany Tartaglia, the Anderson pair, the Levesque duo, the Sturges, the Flemings, and Keith.

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were at almost all feeders, but the Pileated was spotted only by Linda, the Anderson duo, Garry W., and the Flemings.

A Northern Shrike was watched carefully by the Levesque duo on Stewart Road north of Sturgeon Falls.

The Canada Jay was only on Keith's list near South River. Blue Jays were not nearly as common as is often the case, but were spotted by Sue Gratton, Janet and Lloyd Sparks, Denise Desmarais, Therez Violette, Keith, Donna, Steve, the Levesque duo, the Anderson pair, the Sturges, Faye, and the Flemings.

American Crows were still pretty widespread in and around cities, while Common Ravens were widespread in the more rural sections of our area.

Black-capped Chickadees remained our favourite bird at all feeders. But to find a Boreal Chickadee, as did Faye and Sue (with good photos) just west of South River - well, that, I believe, is the second time this rarity has appeared on our Bird Bash during its almost 20 year history! The first time was in February 2021 when one was spotted by Gary and Connie in the South River/Sundridge area.

A few Red-breasted Nuthatches were spotted by John Levesque, Renee, Keith, Donna, Steve, Sue, and Gary W., who also saw the White-breasted Nuthatch, as did Elsa Tafel, Greg, Faye, Therez, the Flemings, the Sturges, the Levesque duo, the Sparks, Diane, Sue, Steve, and Keith.

A Brown Creeper was caught sight of by the Sparks, after hitting a window and briefly becoming dazed.

Very oddly, an unseasonal Brown Thrasher was watched by the Levesque duo at Mary Young's feeder area. (Mary was away and asked us to check out her feeders.)

European Starlings remained pretty much all around the place, though no doubt some have managed to migrate.

No Bohemian Waxwings were found by anyone, earlier flocks seemingly having flown off.

The American Tree Sparrow showed off its endurance quality by appearing before John, Renee, Steve, Keith, and the Sturges, who also discovered a Song Sparrow. A Dark-eyed Junco was spotted by Diane.

A large number of Snow Buntings was enjoyed by Steve, Garry W., and the Anderson pair.

The lovely Northern Cardinal was watched only by Therez and by Brittany, who also caught sight of a Red-winged Blackbird and a Common Grackle, the latter bird also found by the Levesque pair.

Pine Grosbeaks were about in fair numbers and were discovered by Garry W., the Levesque duo, the Anderson pair, the Sturges, the Flemings, and Denise. Evening Grosbeaks were clearly more common than usual for they were seen by many – John, Renee, Faye, Sue, the McKerchers, the Sturges, the Anderson duo, Garry W., Steve, Donna (about 50!), Keith, and Brittany.

The often prolific Common Redpolls, which seem this winter to be quite rare, were spotted by the Anderson duo, the Sturges, and the McKerchers.

Pine Siskins were on the lists only of Elsa and the McKerchers. Also on their lists were American Goldfinches, also noted by Therez, Diane, the Sturges, the Levesque pair, Brittany, and Linda.

Finally, the often wrongly maligned House Sparrow was observed by the Anderson duo and the Sturges at the same feeders.

And so that concludes a rather remarkable and unexpectedly large-numbered January Bird Bash! As usual, congrats go to all the many participants who found so many species of northern birds!

Look forward to February's Bash over the weekend of **February 18-19**. Will it be another record-breaker? We will have to wait and see!