

Middlesex Birds 2020

What an outstanding year we had for birds in Middlesex, despite the overhanging threat of pandemic. We had an amazing 255 species this year, far better than the usual number. For instance, last year was a very high total and we had 240. There could be multiple reasons for the higher number. There were a number of birders going for a “big year” and many people who were off work or retired must have decided to spend their time going out and “exercising” by bird-watching. Most of the birding birders did was local, as distance travelling potential was shut down. Certainly, also the high number of local birders submitting their sightings in eBird enhanced our findings, and as there is instant broadcast as one entered their checklist, and by using other means of instant messaging, these sightings allowed many fellow birders to share the wealth of birds for many more observations. These results were also due to a few other natural factors such as weather conditions, and poor finch food supply resulting in the irruption of more northerly species into our area. No new species were reported, but Nelson’s Sparrow and Kirtland’s Warbler appeared for only the second time. A potential Green-tailed Towhee would also be a second record, if accepted by the Ontario Birds Record Committee.

We had an extraordinary number of findings this year, far more than ever before. I am receiving almost no sightings via the methods I had open to me back in the 80s when I started keeping track of records of the Birds of Middlesex, for Nature London. I am getting few phone calls, and few emails about bird sightings. Almost all are from eBird, where over 200 000 individual sightings were submitted by 649 Birders who have entered their checklists, from where I get a report of all birds that have been recorded in Middlesex County each year, sent to me by Gavin Platt.

I am also including a few bits of information from the 2020 London Christmas Bird Count, from our many field teams and feeders, and over 150 participants. More detailed info on this CBC can be found elsewhere.

I also derive dates from iNaturalist, another site dedicated to bird sightings and all nature. There were about 60 species for Middlesex listed there, with about 5 to 10 sightings for each.

And I would like to thank Jason McGuire who provided a spreadsheet of all his sightings for Middlesex, in the same spreadsheet form I use for the Annual Report, a form which helps to sort out dates easily.

I must put in a special thanks to all those who submitted many sightings to eBird report or to me personally. Particularly Bill Lindley, who was doing a “Big Year” and was birding almost daily. Besides submitting to eBird, Bill contacted me by phone numerous times to give me details. With all his efforts, it is no wonder that he has so many great sightings and added considerably to the number of species on the list. He often was alone, in poor weather, but was rewarded by many great findings, which he unselfishly shared so that other birders could have a chance to find them. The highest number of checklists entered, in order, were submitted by Quinten Wiegersma, Gord Saunders, Estela Quinero-Weldon, Don Pye, Mhairi McFarlane, Bill Lindley, Dave Wake, Gord Cameron and Laure Wilson Neish.

We have a variety of types of birds in Middlesex, and some of those categories are based on their duration in our County. I have used a color code in the Status Column which is noted in a legend on the spreadsheet but in general they fall into one of the following categories. Some species are changing in status and some will not completely fit into the categories.

Some are totally Migrant, ones which appear and disappear from the area seasonally. They do not nest here or perhaps nest in exceptionally low numbers and do not Winter here. Birds such as Tennessee Warbler. I have put in a First and Last Spring and Fall dates, and if lingering in the area, and rare Winter dates. As well, I found the High Count for a single date by summing all sightings on each date for most species. This might be skewed by the large number of people birding on a particular date as it might be on weekends or fine birding days. But hopefully helps show a peak period for movement. **Migrant Species**

Still others arrive and Nest within the County and then retreat southward for the winter months, but sometimes linger for a while to be forced out by poor weather or food supply. They do not regularly nest too far north of where we are located, mostly in Central and Southwestern Ontario. That would include species such as Gray Catbird. I contain the same column dates as for the Migrant species and include lingering Winter and CBC Dates. **Nester Species.**

Some species which nest in Southwestern Ontario and farther north are Hardy, being able to survive some winter conditions, and adapt to a variety of food, or remaining if the water is open. They are not exactly Residents but can be found year-round in variable numbers. Species such as Horned Lark, Northern Flicker, Hooded Merganser, and others nest hereabouts as well as farther north but live here during the breeding period and move south if conditions dictate. They may nest farther north and join the ones here as well, until they too are driven out. They are species which are awfully difficult to decide the various migrant dates. For instance, the crow population in winter is not high, unless there is a roost within Middlesex, so when 100 showed up moving along the 401 on February 29, this year, it was a clue that crows were moving and gave me a migration date. **Hardy Species.**

Others nested farther north, mostly boreal, which come into this area for the Winter, sometimes in numbers, and sometimes leaving if the weather conditions force them out, but if so, migrate back through this area on the way north, or simply head north after wintering here. These include Dark-eyed Junco, and many waterfowl like Goldeneye and Bufflehead. Some of these birds include irruptive species, ones that invade here only when food crop or other factors drive them here and include such as crossbills, redpolls, and Evening Grosbeak. Because some winter in this area and farther south, I try to give some of the migration dates, as well as the wintering period records, like first Fall and last Spring sightings as possible, and the CBC dates. **Winter Species.**

There are some species which drift southward after breeding farther north which are more Migrant than actual Wintering species and will move farther south when winter becomes too harsh. Species like many diving ducks, or White-crowned Sparrow. They may survive all winter but are subject to snow cover amount, or freeze-up of water and while we have some remaining for December, most seem to vacate the area by January. For these, we have migration dates and winter records, and CBC records, but few if any nesting records. **Migrant and Winter Species.**

Others are resident species remaining throughout the year such as Wild Turkey, or Cardinal. These will have only few strategic dates recorded, including the numbers located on the London CBC, at least the numbers in the Count Circle but can perhaps be extrapolated over all of Middlesex which might give an idea of general abundance. Some also have a migrant population which breeds to the north and migrate through the area to leap-frog over the residents here. I don't think the residents one leave here in any great numbers. These species, like Blue Jay will have some migration dates as well. **Resident Species.**

Also for Status, we have a table indicating the various degrees of abundance for a species. Unlike some guides which try to determine a numerical value for number of a species, I long ago decided to go with *chances of seeing a species when on an outing*. This varies seasonally so I have also put seasonal information. For instance, a species marked "ow om" indicates it is an occasionally seen species in winter and during migrations. Do not expect to see it very often while on an outing as some years will go by with very few recorded. Even if they are provincially very common, perhaps their movements or habits make them difficult to encounter, but more likely they are not a numerous bird species.

A final item I have attempted for nesting species is a column for Breeding Evidence. I have put an incomplete list of Breeding Codes, from the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. I only included ones that I have either found myself or have heard of from others. I did not have privy to that from the eBird records, which some people fill in on their checklists. So it is likely fairly incomplete. For instance, a species which is marked as T, for a territorial bird, indicating a lower level of breeding evidence may have additional information unknown to me which could indicate a Confirmed species. And I have put a Question Mark in some cells indicating I have no record in the Breeding Period. If anyone reading the table notices they can improve the Breeding Evidence, please get in touch. With the Atlas starting up in 2021 and going for 5 years, we should have much more complete material for this column.

I will run through the list in taxonomical order, including rare birds and seasonal anomalies, some trends, and other information.

Waterfowl were well-represented including geese. We had three records for Snow Goose, in three locations, all in the Fall and second winter months. One was hanging around with Canadas, at a spot on Hamilton Road, from October 6 until at least December 6. Another desirable species of goose is the Greater White-fronted and James Holdsworth found one with a multitude of Canadas on Hagmier Road on February 25. How many Canadas? James reported about 2000 of them, likely staging for continuing north, along with about 700 Tundra Swans, and 1500 Mallards, on that date. He reported no other goose species from there, but one other species was reported in Middlesex, on multiple dates and locations. It was a bumper year for Cackling Goose, the smaller near doppelganger of Canada Geese. We may get a half dozen sightings usually but this year our first were wintering birds noted in January and February, from Dingman Constructed Wetland, and from Fanshawe Lake. Later, in the Spring we had three sightings as they passed through, with the largest number 14, found by Peter Burke in the Adelaide North Aggregate Ponds. But in the Fall, the very profitable Hyundai Pond off Hamilton Road hosted up to 28 of them. They were also noted at another half dozen spots. Canada Geese wintered in numbers around 500 in some spots and after the main groups left for farther north, we had a good number local ones nesting and then as migrants returned in the Fall, many lingered until we found over 5000 at multiple sites on the London CBC.

Several Mute Swans nested at Komoka gravel ponds and in the Komoka Provincial Park, so it was not surprising to find a few arriving in early February, going on to nest and then later in the Fall, others must have shown up to bolster the population to 8. We had several Trumpeter Swans reported from our County, one report in the Spring and several in the Fall and second Winter period. There was even one on the London CBC. Tundra Swans were seen lingering in Middlesex during the winter and were joined by the end of February by migrants heading north, and the largest group seen on Greenway Drive northwest of London. The species arrived in late October, but many lingered well into December. A flock

of about 700 was seen on Hagmier Rd in northwest Middlesex, on December 18 noted by Bill Lindley and James Holdsworth but none seen on our CBC, but after the Count, a number of flocks flew through during December.

I was surprised to see how many ducks were found in Middlesex. Rebecca Gravel Pits, Komoka, Parkhill, Strathroy Sewage Lagoons, and Fanshawe all had record numbers of waterfowl reported especially during the Fall. Many lingered into December. Our only first winter sighting of a pair of Wood Ducks was by our little group out looking for winter birds along Amiens Road, west of Komoka on January 23. However they bred in good numbers and there were 4 sighted on the CBC. There were a few other dabblers which remained throughout the summer, perhaps indicating nesting by a few of them. It is possible that Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal nested in Middlesex, potentially in Strathroy Sewage Lagoons, Komoka PP and Dingman Constructed Wetlands. Besides Mallards in large numbers and a smaller number of American Black Ducks, some other dabbler ducks included Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, a few of each lingered into December.

Due to a few small spots of open water on lakes, and the running water on streams and rivers during December, a few diving ducks were also able to linger. Canvasback had a few more sightings than usual in the County and one was found in CBC Count week. Most divers were found in good numbers as usual.

For the first time in many years, all three scoters were located this year, with the rarest being a Black Scoter found out at Lake Fanshawe on November 8, reported by Bill Lindley and Quinten Wieggersma.

Another rare diver, the Long-tailed Duck, was only noted once in the Spring, but in the Fall, there were a few locations which hosted them, and a couple appeared to linger at Strathroy Sewage Lagoons from October to December.

All three merganser species were found in good numbers. The only one to remain and breed seemed to be the Hooded Merganser, but once again, Common Mergansers were found well into June, perhaps indicating non-breeding birds are not unexpected. Red-breasted Mergansers are usually not seen very often, but this year more were spotted in the County.

The last waterfowl species on our list is the Ruddy Duck which have increased greatly over the years so that the numbers migrating through are substantial. Only one first winter sighting was recorded but during Fall migration, a number lingered into December. There were a number which hung around in the Spring too, mainly at Strathroy Sewage Lagoons, and although at least one pair was located there in breeding season, it was not known to breed in Middlesex this year.

Gallinaceous species were once again at a low ebb as a breeding bird. The increase in predator species and the loss of habitats, are the likely causes of declining populations. There were only a couple of reports of Ring-necked Pheasant but their likelihood of being wild birds is low. Many are released for hunting purposes. However, the Ruffed Grouse found at Joany's Woods and Mystery Falls show that breeding of that species goes on in very limited numbers. And of course, Wild Turkeys continue to expand in range and numbers.

Three grebe species occurred in Middlesex this year and Pied-billed remained to breed in a couple locations. A few Horned moved through in both migration seasons. Only one of the rarer Red-necked moved through in the Spring, but in the Fall, about 4 locations hosted them in their passage.

A fairly good number of Common Nighthawks were reported this year and it is thought they bred somewhere in the County, but I have no record of proof. The only sighting of Eastern Whip-poor-will is from May 2, heard by Jill Crosthwaite on Becher Street right in London. Chimney Swifts were monitored again this year, and our Chimney Swift organizer for Nature London for the Ontario Swift Watch, Winifred Wake, reported the Fall peak from the 13 monitoring sites was on September 1 at 1166.

Wetland species including rails, cranes, and herons were well-represented. The main areas reporting in, included Northbrook Park and Wetland, Delaware Sportsman's Pond and Strathroy Sewage Lagoons. The latter spot yielded 5 each of Virginia Rail and Sora in early May, so likely breeding occurred. A now rare species for Middlesex, the Common Gallinule, was found at Westminster Ponds from May 7 to May 18, and later, in July, one was at Strathroy Sewage Lagoons. Likely no breeding in the County for this year. Ditto for American Coot, numbers of which are down yet again this year.

However, the number of Sandhill Cranes continued to increase, with several nesting in our County and some seen into the winter periods. On December 2, at least 4 flocks flew over either London or in Southwest Middlesex, with the largest flock being 200 over Fanshawe CA, which was reported by Bill Maddeford. Adding his sighting to the others there were 359 in all.

We had a remarkable year for shorebirds in Middlesex this year. They were found in a lot of places, with Strathroy Sewage Lagoons leading the way but also included area sod farms, Dingman Constructed Wetland, and new areas such as the Hyundai Ponds in south-east London, McCormick's Pond in east London, and several other smaller ponds. We had two particularly rare species, both found by Bill Lindley, and both at Strathroy. One was the 4 American Avocets, found on July 19, and the other was a Ruff, found on July 9. For the Avocets, the last sighting was 2015 and for Ruff, the last was in 2002. Bill also had a Hudsonian Godwit at Fanshawe in October, as did Reuven Martin, out at Komoka PP. These sightings were the first of those species since 2008.

Other rare ones were located there as well, such as Stilt Sandpiper, Willet, Sanderling, Baird's Sandpiper and Long-billed Dowitchers. The single Sanderling was found at the McCormick wetland on September 11 and 12. Strathroy hosted at least one Baird's Sandpiper from July 30 to September 19. Only two Spring sightings were for White-rumped Sandpipers, a couple at Strathroy and 4 over at Big Bend CA, noted by Donald Pye. Remarkably, there were 5 sites for Long-billed Dowitcher this year, all in the Fall. This is the second year in a row for that species, with previous sightings last reported in 1993 before that. Tracey Baber found 7 Willet resting at Strathroy in the Spring season. Our last of that species was in 2018, but before that back in 2011. Killdeers are common in Middlesex, but it was unusual to have one lingering at the Hyundai Ponds until December 19. Birders were delighted to see two species of Phalarope in Middlesex this year. A Wilson's was found in a temporary wet spot in east London in the Spring, and one was also seen in the Fall at Strathroy Sewage Lagoons and one at Komoka. As well one was found on Old Victoria Road for the late date on the chart. And two Red-necked Phalaropes were at Strathroy in the Spring and two were there in the Fall, often lingering near the Wilson's which was there at the same time. One of the latter species was noted up at Parkhill Sewage Lagoons as well, in the Fall.

Gull species were also well-represented. Probably the rarest this year was a Little Gull reported by Bill Lindley at Strathroy Sewage Lagoons in October. He saw it with about 60 Bonaparte's Gulls, but none landed there for other birders to see. The Westminster Dump is still a source for rare wintering gulls. About 4 Iceland Gulls were found at there in both winter seasons of 2020. Among those, several were Kumlien's, some Glaucoides, and some were Thayeri subspecies. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were also

found in both winter seasons. Surprisingly, 2 of this species arrived in August this year. Several different hybrids were also noted, but not on our chart as distinct species. Most were hybrids of Herring Gull. Our only terns found in the County appeared to be a single sighting in July at the Parkhill Sewage Lagoons, by Bill Lindley and the more often seen Caspian, which shows the continued decline for us with that family of birds.

Three sightings of Red-throated Loon were noted. Donald Pye saw them flying over in the Spring and the Fall, and Bill Lindley also had a fly by at Strathroy. But Common Loons were found on a few dates and at a few locations. We do not have Dave and Linda doing loon watches, but thanks to Donald Pye in southwest Middlesex and Quinten Wiegersma in North London, we have some great counts of migrants passing over in the Spring. On May 5, they recorded a high number of over 500 in their two counts.

We seldom see American White Pelicans, but Bill Lindley found 2 at Lake Fanshawe which did not cooperate for other birders to observe. They are becoming more likely seen since they are nesting in the Great Lakes.

American Bitterns are hard to pin down, but one was found in the Uplands North Wetlands which lingered for a week in Spring. Two other Spring sightings were reported, one from the Coves and one from Westminster Ponds. As well, Least Bittern are difficult to find, but one was present in the Spring at Westminster Ponds, and one was found out at Strathroy Sewage Lagoons in the Fall. It is not known if there is any Breeding Evidence. We had a good number of Great Egrets in the County. For both Spring and Fall, the usual visiting times for this species, each season recorded high numbers in the double digits.

A couple of Black Vultures were seen by Quinten Wiegersma, on June 11, in Virginia Park in north London, one of only 4 sightings of this species in Middlesex and the first time for more than one in a group. Last sighting was in 2011.

From the single nest of Osprey about 15 years ago, there are now about 6 nests along the Thames River, in and around Middlesex. Northern Goshawk was recorded once in April by Bill Lindley at Fanshawe CA, an adult, and a second sighting was a first Fall bird seen flying over in October by Greg Tilford at Strathroy CA. Bald Eagles were very often encountered and for good reason. There seem to be at least 6 nests in the London and Middlesex area and as well, a few of them appear to join the nesters to winter in our area. Also wintering in our area are Golden Eagle, with up to 5 being found in the southwestern part of the County. Red-shouldered Hawk are a fairly rare species but even more rarely reported in the winter months. So, it was surprising to see 6 sightings in the first winter and one in the second winter of the year. The week of September 11th to 18th will be remembered for Broad-winged Hawk migration in Middlesex. A total of 3440 were reported from about 20 locations, far more than we ever get. The winds must have been right?

Snowy Owls were located near Strathroy and Lucan, the two usual areas, during the first winter, but fewer were noted in the second winter, and as far as I know, only in the Strathroy area. What was really exciting was the finding of two Barred Owls in Middlesex. One was found at Westminster Ponds by Roy Geiger on December 18, which was seen off and on for the rest of the month. Another was in a wood near Komoka by Carolyn Denstedt. The latter was a location where the same family had one winter in 2012-13. Long-eared Owls were on our list this year. One was found late in the winter near Komoka, which was seen a few times in January. And another appeared at Gibbons Park, noted by Brandon

Holden on May 2, which was perhaps a nesting bird or a non-breeding bird. Finally, one was noted in December by Linda McCutcheon to the north of London. The usual fields near Melbourne held approximately 10 Short-eared Owls in the first winter, and almost the same in the second winter.

A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was found in each of the two winter periods and quite a few were found during migration. There could have been at least a half dozen locations for nesting birds as well. Red-headed Woodpecker were found in widely scattered places in Middlesex this year, with several breeding sites located. One was reported from Mt Brydges during early December. Pileated Woodpecker continues to expand in numbers with every major woods and wooded corridor along the rivers seeming to host them.

Merlins are again nesting in London, and likely elsewhere in the County, with potentially 2 or 3 nests. They are encountered more often than ever before, even wintering in the area. Even though there are Peregrines still located downtown, it is not known whether they have successfully bred. Both species have migrants passing through, as well as apparently resident birds so it is hard to pinpoint migration dates.

Olive-sided Flycatchers are generally quite rare on our list, but this year a larger number were noted in a few different locations. This was true in the Spring and the Fall seasons, as they migrated through. This was also true for another unusual species, the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and though there were only 3 reports in the Spring, while there were over 14 sightings in the Fall. The endangered Acadian Flycatcher was likely nesting in places like Joany's Woods, Mystery Falls, and Skunks Misery and potentially other spots.

We only had one report of a White-eyed Vireo this year, from Gord Saunders in the Lucan area, but it did not cooperate and show itself after Gord went home to get his camera. We have had them on territory a few times in the past, but only Probable nesting status.

There were about 20 sightings of Northern Shrike in the first winter and about half that number in the second winter. No reports of the much rarer endangered Loggerhead came in.

The regular Covid species, jays and crows were overshadowed by the number of Common Ravens reported. In fact, they are now breeding in at least two locations in our County. It is a remarkable new species for Middlesex and sightings came from at least 10 locations. The Jay migrants peaked in the first week or so of May, with the highest single count made on May 3 of 122 by Donald Pye in southwest Middlesex. The Fall highest single count was also Don with 844 streaming through on October 3. Crows peaked in early March and then in late October.

At least 8 locations were found for Tufted Titmouse in our County. In the odd bird story category, Bill Maddeford mentioned that his daughter was sitting in a tree stand along the Thames south of London and a Titmouse landed on her head, and then her arm, before flying off. Friendly little guy, eh. Other small birds included Golden-crowned Kinglet which may have bred in Joany's Woods, as one was noted in late June, rather late but not impossible for migrant movements. Another was spotted on July 1 at Parkhill Sewage Lagoons so perhaps they nested there too. Red-breasted Nuthatch is usually quite a northern species but from reports coming from feeders and wooded areas in Middlesex, they nested in small numbers in our County. And many more seemed to be moving south into our area for the second winter period.

Horned Larks arrived somewhat early back at the area, in early February, as weather permitted. But not as many were seen during the Fall and second winter month. And for the second year in a row, none were found on our London CBC, though some were located nearby.

Our swallow species are all suffering from declining populations. Most species which prey on flying insects are lower in population. In an effort to help, several people, including Brendon Samuels, noted that the Bank Swallow nesting site at the Byron Gravel Pit, with over 1900 birds reported from June 9, was under threat, and were hopefully able prevent the destruction of this colony.

Marsh Wrens were located at a few spots where they are thought to have bred. Other wren species were in usual numbers and it is not known if any Winter Wrens remained in our area to breed, but Dorchester Swamp seemed to host a few into breeding period. One sighting of Sedge Wren was recorded this year at Komoka, when one popped up for Lucas Foerster on October 8.

There was a Gray Catbird which resided almost all winter at Donald Pye's in the southwest of Middlesex. A number of Eastern Bluebirds seemed to linger in both the first and second winters, with most recorded in Komoka Provincial Park. The unusual Gray-cheeked Thrush appeared in greater numbers this year. Speaking of higher numbers, Quinten Wiegiersma was out on Uplands Trail on September 9 and was overwhelmed by 41 or more Swainson's Thrush. Wow. A Hermit Thrush appeared at Dave and Winifred Wakes property in January for a few days, as did one at Lucas Foerster's Property. And another was wintering and spotted in February in Big Bend CA. There was one located on the London CBC at Springbank Park which continued into the New Year. Many American Robins lingered throughout both winter periods in the area.

The only Bohemian Waxwings reported from south of Kitchener which were not on the lakeshore were 8 seen by Bill Lindley in November. Unfortunately, they were just passing through, as most of that species did this Fall and were not able to be found by others.

American Pipit were noted a good number of times in Middlesex this year. And there was a high single location count of 141 in Uplands North Wetland on November 2, found by Quinten Wiegiersma.

As part of an irruption of winter finches, we had Evening Grosbeaks come through in October through November, stopping in at numerous locations. Some feeders had them for several days but they vacated the region, perhaps to come back north in the Spring of 2021. As well, Common Redpolls were in greater number this year seen in a few large flocks of about 100 birds, and some lingered here and there. A few times within these flocks were Hoary Redpoll. Some of both were found on our CBC. Another winter finch group, the crossbills, arrived in October and November as well, both species being represented. Fanshawe Conservation was the prime source for sightings, and it was hoped that some White-winged Crossbills might stay to breed, as they did in 2009, and a few other years. Only one flock of the that species was seen on the CBC. Pine Siskins also arrived to stay in good numbers, beginning in September. There was a green morph of that species at Lucas Foerster's feeders during December, a morph which is only found in about 1% of these birds.

There were a few Lapland Longspur sightings in Middlesex in both winter seasons, but it remains a seldom visiting species. However, there were quite a few Snow Buntings in both winters, with a few flocks over 1000.

Sparrows were well-represented this year, with a few of the rarer ones noted and some unusual wintering ones. Grasshopper Sparrows were found in a few locations, and Komoka Provincial Park, on both sides of the river had several territories. Another rare sparrow which remained to breed was Clay-colored Sparrow, found at two sites to the west of Strathroy, perhaps hosting 2 or more pairs in each location. We do not get many Chipping Sparrows in winter, but 2 were noted in Fanshawe CA in the first winter of the year. Field Sparrow is also a rare wintering species, but Donald Pye hosted one at his bird feeders in both the winter periods. Song, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows winter in small numbers, but this year more of the White-crowns were noted than usual. And speaking of White-crowned, there is a western race of this sparrow, known as Gambel's which has gray in the lores instead of black and one was found on May 14, by Quinten Wiergersma in Uplands Woods. Two Nelson's Sparrows were found at Komoka Provincial Park by Reuven Martin this Fall, an exceedingly rare species for our County, this being only the second record. The first was on May 22, 1984, seen by Dalton Walpole and others at Strathroy Sewage Lagoons. There was a report of a Green-tailed Towhee from Fanshawe but it is awaiting confirmation from the Ontario Birds Record Committee.

Blackbirds numbers were high as usual, and Rusty Blackbirds, while not found at quite the same high levels as last year, were found on a good number of sightings in the Fall. A remarkable 93 Red-winged Blackbirds were seen in a single flock near Delaware on our CBC. This number actually exceeds the total number of that species we had on CBCs up until 2020.

The group of warblers we had was quite impressive, with a few rarer ones located in Middlesex. Quinten must have been extremely excited to find a Kirtland's Warbler on May 17, in Northbrook Park and Wetland. This was only our second sighting of this species, the first being in 1997 at our Club Property, Cedarcroft, found by Patricia Cole, Jean Griffin and Joanne Ewart. And Gord Payne was lucky enough to find a rare Kentucky Warbler at Killaly Meadows on May 23. Our last of that species was in 2013. Also, pretty tremendous, a few people got to see a Yellow-throated Warbler at Kirk Cousins CA on May 21, first reported by Debbie Hilaire. Only the 6th time and first since 2016. None of these species stuck around for others to observe. Louisiana Waterthrush was noted three times in the Spring season, but none in a breeding location. That was similar for Golden-winged Warbler, which was found in three locations in the Spring and 2 in the Fall, but no nesting areas were located. Orange-crowned Warblers were discovered in larger than normal numbers, especially in the Fall period. Only one Connecticut Warbler was reported in each migration season. They seldom sing and are rather skulky which makes them hard to find.

Breeding species included Ovenbird, especially in Mosa Forest (aka Skunk's Misery). Also, in that woodland area Northern Waterthrush were likely nesting and were also found in Dorchester Swamp during breeding season. Blue-winged Warbler were found nesting in a number of places, and of course are continuing to increase over the reduction in Golden-winged Warblers. At least one nesting of the rare Prothonotary Warbler was located by Lucas Foerster in Skunks Misery, which apparently produced young. It seems a few Mourning Warblers also nested in the County, perhaps at Sydenham River Nature Reserve, Joany's Woods and at Mosa Forest. The Hooded Warbler numbers at Mosa Forest are good, and they are likely nesting in a few areas elsewhere. Not too many Ceruleans were reported from Mosa Forest, a traditional location for them, but apparently, they were breeding at Mystery Falls, Joany's Woods, Sydenham River Nature Reserve, and a few other spots as well. Chestnut-sided Warblers are common during migration but enough are now breeding in Middlesex to make it difficult to register the

last Spring and first Fall dates for migration. This is the same for Pine Warblers which breed somewhat here, but mainly farther north.

Nashville Warblers are quite common, but it is rare to have one in a winter period, but we had one found at Greenway for a few days in early December, first noted by Paul Roedding. Also running really late was a Northern Parula, noted by Donald Pye on November 21, our latest ever by weeks. Our previous late record for this species was October 25. A couple of Blackburnian Warblers came through very late, on June 6, and 27 which is very unusual. Late dates do include one in July, but that was a potential nesting situation and these sightings seemed likely to be for migrants. Blackburnians were found nesting in Middlesex in the last Breeding Bird Atlas.

A few Summer Tanager sightings occurred in Middlesex. First on May 4, Tim Arthur found one at Westminster Ponds, and on May 8 one was found in Gibbons Park by Mhairi McFarland and Jill Crosthwaite which remained until the 9th. Finally, one was seen on November 22, and 23, at the Postenka home in old north London.

I am not sure if the Dickcissels that were noted in the Spring out near Strathroy nested, as they were only found from June 23 to June 29, first reported by Paul Pratt. Two were noted in October on the 25th, by Peter Burke in another location.

So, there you have it, the fabulous birding year, 2020, which will go down as one of the most remarkable for a number of reasons as mentioned above. And once again, thanks to all who submitted data. Next year is the first year of the new Breeding Bird Atlas of Ontario, so hopefully it will be a fruitful year for finding breeding statistics.