

the Caller

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January Meeting Notes

Date: Monday, Jan. 28
Time: 7:00 PM social; 7:30 PM program
Location: John Donnelly Conference Center
Aquinas College
Speaker: Carrie Rivette, City of Grand Rapids
Topic: Surface Water Sustainability
in Grand Rapids

The City of Grand Rapids has spent \$400 million to prevent combined sewer overflows in the river. While this is a benchmark to show a portion of our dedication to improving surface water quality on the wastewater treatment side, we have accompanied it by also improving our stormwater discharge.

Our green infrastructure program is unmatched by other cities of our size and stands with the leaders in the nation. Learn about the innovative projects that we have implemented and our plans for future improvements for both our wastewater and stormwater discharges to city surface water.

This presentation will be led by Carrie Rivette, Wastewater/Stormwater maintenance superintendent for the City of Grand Rapids.

President's Corner

by Sheryl Helmus

Over the holidays I spent time with family, and talk turned to New Year's resolutions. We joked about resolutions that birds might make. Would some robins vow to join the fit group and fly a migration marathon to the south rather than laze near home with their couch potato friends? Are any gulls resolving to eat healthier and pass up McDonald's parking lot leftovers? We wondered about the juncos' and sparrows' resolutions. Would any give up carb-laden millet meals and switch to a suet-heavy keto diet?

After some laughs, I was ready to be serious. What bird-related resolution could I make? Hawk and sparrow identification are a weakness of mine. Perhaps doing an in-depth study of one species each week would give me confidence in identification.

I see habitat loss as a major threat to birds. I could commit to choosing one action each month that would help keep healthy places for birds available. Some political advocacy and time and financial involvement might be out of my comfort zone, but would make an impact.

As part of a fitness effort, I could resolve to go birding in challenging environments. Hikes through sand, up and down hills, and to areas far from parking could increase my fitness level and bring me close to more birds.

Have any of you included birds in your 2019 resolutions? I'd enjoy hearing about them. And I'll let you know what I decided to do.



Deadline for February newsletter articles: **Feb. 1**

Send to: newsletter@graud.org



GRAC Field Trips

Contact Becky Kuhn with field trip suggestions/ideas. Watch the *Caller* for future trip announcements. Visit www.graud.org for the most up-to-date trip list. Safety hazards: Driving in a caravan can be hazardous. Get directions from the leader and exercise caution on the road at all times. Have a passenger handle all radio or phone communications. Dress and drive for the weather, particularly in the event of hazardous winter weather. Particularly bad weather may cancel a trip.

Thursdays, Jan. 10, 17, 24 and 31, 9:00 AM

Leader: Katie Bolt, Jeanne Griffin or Kathy Haase
Recurring Millennium Park Hikes

Hike Millennium Park to see what's hanging around (route varies). A good variety of birds have been reported from this diverse habitat near the river, which includes open and swampy ponds, lowland forest and various secondary growth.

Essentials: Meet at the east end of Veterans Memorial Drive parking area.

Saturday, Jan. 19, 8:00 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

Winter Field Birding

This winter trip will search for winter birds such as Snowy Owl, Northern Shrike and Snow Bunting. These can be quite nomadic and hard to find, so we'll try to cover lots of territory. We'll search fields in northern Ottawa County and Muskegon County northwest of Grand Rapids. We'll probably check some of the Crockery Creek bottomlands looking for Red-shouldered Hawk. If conditions permit, we'll try to include the Muskegon Wastewater in our search. Expect to spend most of the time in the car searching the fields for anything different. Bring your CB or Family radio if you have one and we'll try to keep in touch between cars. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the Boy Scout Headquarters west off Walker Road just north of I-96 at 8:00 AM. We plan to bird until noon. You may want to bring a snack to hold you over until lunch.

Saturday, Feb. 9, 7:30 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

Allegan State Game Area Winter Trip

Explore the Allegan State Game Area, including the Swan Creek Highbanks and the Todd Farm Unit, for winter birds. Bald Eagle and Rough-legged Hawk are likely to be near the flocks of Canada Goose at the Todd Farm Unit. Wild Turkey, Northern Shrike and Ross's Goose have been found here in past winters. With luck, winter finches will make an appearance. Bring your CB or Family radio if you have one and we'll try to keep in touch between cars. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the McDonald's in Hudsonville and carpool from there. A spotting scope will come in handy on this trip. A bit of food and a warm beverage are a good idea. We plan to bird until noon; lunch after is an option.

Saturday, April 20, 7:00 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

Spring Marsh Birds and Hawks

Join us to look for marsh birds at Lane's Landing in the Muskegon State Game Area. Rails should be in the marsh by this date, and Swamp Sparrows should be on territory. After checking out the marsh, we'll see how the winds blow and either head over to the Muskegon Wastewater to check out the waterfowl or Grand Haven to check out Harbor Island and hawk-watch locations to look for migrating hawks. At the wastewater, Northern Shoveler and Ruddy Duck are likely; in Grand Haven, we could see Caspian Tern on Lake Michigan or a Peregrine Falcon at the power plant. Rails also can be seen in Grand Haven. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the Boy Scout Headquarters west off Walker Road just north of I-96 at 7:00 AM. We plan to bird until noon. You may want to bring a snack to hold you over until lunch.

Tuesday, May 7, 6:30 PM

Leader: Steve Minard

Tuesday Evening at Reeds Lake

This trip is an evening walk to the Hodenpyl Woods area at the west end of Reeds Lake. Varied woodland, marsh and lake habitat provides a variety of birds right in town. On this trip, we will concentrate on waterbirds and early warblers. The boardwalk provides good views of the lake and marsh areas so we will visit it. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the East Grand Rapids Utility Building parking lot on Reeds Lake Boulevard north of Gaslight Village at 6:30 PM. Waterproof footwear and insect repellent may be useful. Poison ivy is thick in places.

Tuesday, May 14, 6:30 PM

Leader: Steve Minard

Tuesday Evening at Reeds Lake

This trip is an evening walk to the Hodenpyl Woods area at the west end of Reeds Lake. Varied woodland, marsh and lake habitat provides a variety of birds right in town. The second week of May should be near the peak of spring migration, and just about anything is possible here. We will be looking for migrants. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the East Grand Rapids Utility Building parking lot on Reeds Lake Boulevard north of Gaslight Village at 6:30 PM. Waterproof footwear and insect repellent may be useful. Poison ivy is thick in places.



Theresa's Membership News and Thought for the Day

by Theresa Dykhuis, Membership Chairperson

We have started the New Year with a bang by adding new members:

Nadine Bawkey; Sonja, Simon and Ben Harrison; David Isabell; Kent McPherson and Lee Ann Shedleski-Holmden.

As always, please make our new members feel welcome if you should see them at the next meeting and invite them to participate in one of our wonderful special events.

Even though it doesn't feel like we have had much of a winter so far, here we are in January, typically the snowiest month. And yet my thoughts are already turning to spring as the seed catalogs and magazines highlighting the new plants show up in my mailbox on a regular basis. Then there are the emails I receive about the progress of the purple martins, who have already arrived in parts of Florida! However, I am not anxious for spring yet as I love the winter and its beautiful quiet. I hope you do, too.

Here are a few thoughts to get you started on the right foot in the new year:

"This is a new year. A new beginning. And things will change," Taylor Swift.

"Dreams are renewable. No matter what our age or condition, there are still untapped possibilities within us and new beauty waiting to be born," Dr. Dale Turner.

And my personal favorite:

"Every day is a chance to begin again. Don't focus on the failures of yesterday, start today with positive thoughts and expectations," Catherine Pulsifer.

If you aren't currently a member and enjoy attending the meetings and other activities, please consider joining. The cost of an annual membership is low; \$20 for an individual or \$12 for a senior. Please feel free to stop by the membership table at the monthly meetings and we will be happy to help you. Applications for membership also are available online and in this *Caller*.

Thank you once again to those who renewed their membership. GRAC relies upon memberships and fundraisers to finance our operations. If you have questions about your membership, please do not hesitate to contact us at membership@graud.org or stop by the membership table at the monthly meetings.

I want to give special recognition to the following people who not only paid for memberships but also made additional contributions to support our general fund or specific programs: General; **Martin Blagdurn, Ray Leppik**; Junior Audubon; **Rick and Eileen VanHorn**; Patron; **William Sweetman**; and Sustaining: **Lee Ann Shedleski-Holmden.**

Remembering Faye Miller

by Mary Austin

It is with sadness that many of us learned of the passing of Faye Miller, a long-time member of Grand Rapids Audubon Club. She hailed from Rockford, Michigan. Although Faye Miller had not been active in the club for a few years, many of us recall her knowledgeable and friendly presence at meetings and on birding trips.

Faye was born on Nov. 22, 1925, in Machias, Maine. She passed away on Nov. 15, 2018. Faye was quite adventurous, and she and her husband John (who went by "Jack") had a shared love of travel, birding and the outdoors.

Faye trained as a nurse, a career that gave her the opportunity to travel from Maine to Hawaii to Colorado and Washington. Her *Grand Rapids Press* obituary reports that Faye was a mountaineer and enjoyed spending time outdoors. She was a lifelong member of the National Audubon Society and had been active in the Bostwick Lake Congregational Church, Rockford Garden Club and North Kent Connect Store. Faye was preceded in death by her husband Jack (who passed away July 28, 2017) and two children. Faye is survived by her daughter Janet Susan Miller.

A memorial service celebrating Faye's life was held Dec. 1, 2018, at First United Methodist Church in Grand Rapids.

Birdathon 2019

by Jill Goodell

Birdathon 2019 will be held from April 15 through May 31. New this year, in addition to Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon counties, and GRAC's Maher Sanctuary in Barry County, the event also will include counts from any part of Barry County.

In addition news is the option for teams to submit results from feeder watching and/or "birds recorded on your property" events with various fundraising options. Stay tuned for details.

We encourage everyone to consider birding – either as a team in the field or on someone's property as a group – on Global Big Day 2019 (date to be determined). That gives everyone another opportunity to contribute to global bird population data.

It is not too early to start planning your teams and getting ready. This is a good time to encourage new participants to join your team or help them start a new team.

Updated rules and registration forms will be available on the GRAC website by the end of February. If you have questions or would like to help the committee, please contact Jill Goodell at jillgoodell@yahoo.com.



Armchair Naturalist

by Ranger Steve (Mueller)

I am becoming more of an armchair naturalist and I expect other senior birders are finding that necessary. I appreciate the inquiries and well wishes I have received. On bird count Saturday I planned to arrive for the intro and head home for a family day celebrating Christmas with relatives. I became quite ill Thursday and by Sunday, family convinced me that I needed to go to hospital emergency at 10:30 PM. I had been doing well for three weeks but I spent most of our family gathering in bed quite ill. Bummer.

The good news is I am rebounding on disgusting drugs. I spend more time birding from my window and saw a male Cooper's Hawk on Jan. 1. Good start for 2019. My friend Greg Petersen drives us to good birding locations. I continue with productive work even though limited in too many ways. I am working on completing Bryce Canyon NP moth research with specimens here at home and hope to complete the project this winter and present results at U of Calif Davis in July. There are still several field studies in progress. Like others, I have too much to complete to die off any time soon. The January Nature Niche discusses one of those projects. We each have our own health issues whether it be heart, diabetes or one of the multitude. The name of mine is different but yours might be as challenging to contend with. My best wishes for you for 2019 and hope we each make it through another successful, productive and enjoyable year. Tom told me several inquired about my condition and sent well wishes. Thank you.

When first diagnosed at age 47, survival expectations were one to three years and reaching age 50 might be a long shot. My multiple myeloma cancer is not curable but treatments can prolong life. I had ten years of smoldering MM before I was disabled and unable to continue regular employment. I needed a walker because of seven spinal fractures and now can walk again. My skull is riddled with holes and bones are brittle. I now have ten fractures and getting out of bed can break bones. My last break was the fibula when I stood up on a butterfly survey. After two bone marrow transplants and the current clinical trial, I have exceeded the survival mean. Survival is now seven to eight years. The oncologist said there are a couple others who have been in the program as long as me but I am at the top end for survival. Doctors count from when treatment begins and consider me in year eleven. I count from diagnosis and that is 21 years. I have made it to age 68 and U of Chicago hospital oncology staff regularly comment on my longevity. The message is, **work to stay positive and continue productive work that gives meaning to your life.** The chemo is important but I consider the support I have received from you and

my work in the Sanctuary to enhance biodiversity equally vital. Thank you again.

Ody Brook Nature Sanctuary is open for your visits and birding. Give me a call or email to let me know when you would like to visit or volunteer. We can walk the 1.5 miles of trails and perhaps you will hear the Barred Owl, see the Red-tailed Hawk or Cooper's Hawk. Wild turkeys might show themselves. My hearing has gotten poor so I appreciate help from those who hear birds. If you are only up to birding from the window, come and enjoy the dozen + or - bird species seen daily. I watched a Pileated Woodpecker from my window as it drilled a fifth hole in a cherry tree last week. A Great Blue Heron flushed from the creek a couple weeks ago.

I realize this is a bit of an unusual contribution for the *Caller* and asked Tricia to print if there is room and it does not deviate too far from our primary bird focus. Continue to enjoy what works for you whether it is active field birding or birding through the window. Birders are important for helping birds and GRAC helps us learn better ways to support bird life.

Ranger Steve (Mueller) at odybrook@chartermi.net - Ody Brook Nature Sanctuary, 13010 Northland Dr. Cedar Springs, MI 49319 or call (616) 696-1753.

Christmas Bird County: Early Results

compiled by Tom Leggett and Ranger Steve (Mueller)

Thirty-six field observers and five at feeders—for a total of 41—worked to count 58 species on the Dec. 29 Christmas Bird Count. Mild December weather allowed us to not be dependent on the Grand River for our open water. Areas like Reeds Lake were wide open with species like Goldeneyes in larger numbers. The lake also had three Bald Eagles. Canada Goose was the count leader in numbers.

Key sightings were Evening Grosbeaks at Wittenbach Wege Center in area E; this is a bird that has been missing on the count for many years. Also spotted was a Northern Shrike in area C. Carolina Wrens made a good showing with five of seven areas recording them.

Surprisingly missed were Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers and Ring-necked Ducks.

Joan Heuvelhorst's hot soup, excellent bread and salad were deeply appreciated at noon on a cold day!

We had a surprise visit by WZZM channel 13 in the afternoon at the WWC center. Visit GRAC's Facebook page to find a link to the story if you missed seeing it air on live TV.



Ranger Steve's Nature Niche

Birds Collide with Buildings

by Ranger Steve (Mueller)

Nearly one billion birds are estimated to die annually by colliding with building windows. Gathering definitive data is a monumental task. Scientists have two ways for analyzing events in nature.

One is **qualitative** where numerical information is not present. It includes things such as "it is bright outside," "leaves are becoming colorful," and dead birds are found by buildings. The other is **quantitative** with a numerical measurement. Light meters measure light intensity, 50 percent of leaves have changed color or 127 dead birds were collected by buildings this year. Quantitative data is needed for scientific analysis.

Under my permit, 127 dead birds were collected in 2018 for a study coordinated with Michigan Audubon and Michigan State University to gather quantitative data for birds killed by collisions with buildings.

I hold US Fish and Wildlife Service and Michigan DNR permits to collect dead birds. Possessing an American Robin or Red-tailed Hawk feather is illegal without a permit. People wonder why. There are people who will kill song birds to possess a few feathers or to use them in products sold at craft fairs. Conservation officers visit craft fairs to see if illegal nongame feathers are being sold. Possession of game bird feathers is legal.

At the Howard Christensen Nature Center (HCNC) birds learned to trust us and land on our hands to eat seeds. Several birds were shot at the birdfeeders. Someone thought it fun to shoot birds that learned to come close to people. Laws were enacted in the early 1900s to help species survive in nature niches because unregulated hunting was threatening several with extinction. Today hunters help bird populations even though they kill birds. Hunting license fees are used to manage habitats for gamebirds and the DNR monitors numbers quantitatively to manage population size. Nongame species like woodpeckers, goldfinches and warblers benefit from habitat management. Duck hunters have helped increase waterfowl populations by maintaining wetlands.

It was a tradition on Christmas Day for hunters to compete to see who could kill the most birds in one day. Frank Chapman began the first citizen science Christmas Bird Count in 1900 as an alternative to encourage people to count birds quantitatively instead of killing them. Bird counts are important for documenting winter bird population numbers and distribution. I have coordinated the Grand Rapids **quantitative** Christmas Bird Count 32 years but I also **qualitatively** enjoy birds daily at Ody Brook without keeping number records.

My salvage bird permit allows me and people I list on the permit to collect dead birds for educational and scientific analysis. Many birds at HCNC were collected and mounted in life-like positions for visitors to see closely and others were mounted in what is called a study skin. Study skin mounts look like the bird is lying dead on its back. Those specimens were used when I taught ornithology at Grand Rapids Community College and for natural history programs and at HCNC. Please consider an HCNC membership and visit to see birds you might not get to see easily in the outdoors. At present I have 1,619 birds and mammals listed on my permit. In addition, I collected and mounted 70 birds at Bryce Canyon NP including two Golden Eagles.

The salvage project with Michigan Audubon and MSU collects birds that hit buildings and provides data that quantifies bird deaths to learn the dates and species impacted. Monitoring weather conditions, wind direction and fog conditions helps us understand when birds are at greatest risk. That knowledge is used to help us make recommendations that can reduce deaths by adjusting our human behavior to help birds survive.

It is especially important to darken buildings during spring and fall bird migration above the second floor. Most birds migrate at night but fly toward light in the dark. They collide with lighted buildings in the dark. By closing shades to darken windows we can save birds. Schools were recently closed for fog and there are school fog delays to protect our kids going to school in those conditions. Birds do not stop migration for fog delay announcements but we can help them survive by darkening windows and maintaining dark skies.

I submit a list of the birds collected each year to the US FWS and DNR. Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Brown Creeper, Brown Thrasher, Indigo Bunting, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Nashville Warbler, Ovenbird, Sora and Pine Warbler are some of the casualties this year. To enjoy birds in nature it is important that we each take responsibility for helping bird neighbors survive.

Natural history questions or topic suggestions can be directed to Ranger Steve (Mueller) at odybrook@chartermi.net - Ody Brook Nature Sanctuary, 13010 Northland Dr. Cedar Springs, MI 49319 or call (616) 696-1753.



November and December 2018 eBird Summaries

Very Unusual and Rare Sightings by Carol VanOeveren

The following are overviews of the very unusual and rare eBird sightings for November and December 2018 for Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. These reports do not include rare birds that are flyovers, unchaseable and those with sketchy details. Rare and unusual eBird sightings are updated daily on the GRAC website.

November: Most of November was below normal temperature-wise. The first full week was very wet ending with temps in the 30s and our first measurable snowfall on the 9th. Cold and on-and-off snow showers continued through Thanksgiving. A brief warmup was followed through month's end by more cold, rain and a winter storm with accumulating heavy snow. This was the second cloudiest November on record in the Grand Rapids area.

Waterfowl were still congregating at the Muskegon Wastewater throughout the month. Twelve species were seen on an Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society (Grand Haven) field trip Nov 17 including 3,000 Canada Geese, Trumpeter and Tundra swans, 4,000 Northern Shoveler, 400 Bufflehead and others. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49995084> to view the entire checklist of 31 species.

Finds of the month: a **Cattle Egret** was found at 18th St and 128th Ave in Allegan Co Nov 6 by Tanya and Thomas Smythe and continued Nov 7. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49721850> for photos. A **Purple Sandpiper** seen by many was at Pere Marquette Park in Muskegon Nov 18-25. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S50028296> for photos. One also was found at Holland SP Nov 29 by the Mannings and Chace Scholten and continued Nov 30. The first **Snowy Owls** of the season were reported Nov 18 at the Wastewater (up to five present later in month) and at the Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport in Kent Co (see below for other sightings). **Evening Grosbeaks** made an appearance in our area for the first time in many, many years: four stopped at Brad Heath's feeders near Hoffmaster SP before heading toward the park Nov 1. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49601347> for Brad's photos. One was observed at a feeder at a private residence north of Rockford Nov 11. Another was coming to feeders at the Zach DeBruine residence in Rockford and at Jess Sory's residence in Jenison Nov 12. One showed up Nov 25 at the Mannings' residence in western Ottawa Co.

Other notables: a **Cackling Goose** at the Wastewater off and on throughout the month; huge influx of **Tundra**

Swans in the area Nov 9-10: 53 at Reeds Lake, **231** at Byron Lake in Kent Co, at least **242** at Gun River Aggregates gravel pit lake in Allegan Co and more reports at various other locations in the four-county area; **17 White-winged Scoters** at Holland SP Nov 1; up to six **Surf Scoters** at Douglas Beach Park Nov 7-26, up to five at Chippewa Pt Lake Macatawa Nov 10-13, three at Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Co Nov 23; two **Black Scoters** at Holland SP Nov 2 and 13, up to 36 at Douglas Beach Park Nov 7-26, up to four at Chippewa Pt Lake Macatawa throughout the month, up to 22 at Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Co Nov 23-25; **550 Long-tailed Ducks** at Douglas Beach Park Nov 7; **68 Hooded Mergansers** on lake at Bay Meadows housing development in Holland Nov 16; **3,700 Red-breasted Mergansers** at Douglas Beach Park Nov 7; a **Red-throated Loon** at Holland SP Nov 23 and 29, one at Pere Marquette Park Nov 25, two at the Kalamazoo River mouth in Allegan Co Nov 30; **41 Horned Grebes** at Douglas Beach Park Nov 7; a **Red-necked Grebe** at Holland SP Nov 4, one at Green Lake in Allegan Co Nov 10, one at Reeds Lake Nov 18-25; up to three **Eared Grebes** continued at the Wastewater Nov 8 and one there Nov 25; an **American White Pelican** in Montague north of Maple Grove Yacht Club Nov 14, one at Harbor Island in Grand Haven Nov 17; two **Rough-legged Hawks** at 128th Ave and Bingham St in Ottawa Co Nov 1 – first report in Nov; an **American Golden-Plover** along 23rd St between 116th Ave and 118th Ave in Allegan Co Nov 6; a **Ruddy Turnstone** at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Nov 2; two **White-rumped Sandpipers** at Fennville Sewage Ponds in Allegan Co Nov 1; three **Short-billed Dowitchers** at the Coopersville Sewage Ponds Nov 2; an **Iceland Gull** at Holland SP Nov 27-29, one at South Kent Landfill in Kent Co Nov 29, one at the Wastewater Nov 29; a **Glaucous Gull** at Pere Marquette Park in Muskegon Nov 18, one at the Wastewater Nov 25, up to two at Holland SP Nov 25-30, one at Kalamazoo River mouth in Allegan Co Nov 25, one at Grand Haven SP Nov 27; a **Snowy Owl** along Moorland Rd S of Heights-Ravenna Rd in Muskegon Co Nov 25, one at Grand Haven SP Nov 28, one continued Nov 29 at the Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport, one at 128th Ave and Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Nov 30; a **Short-eared Owl** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Nov 21, one found by the Mannings at 128th Ave and Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Nov 30 – visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S50324427> for photos; a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** heard at Allegan SGA 44th St wetland Nov 21; **Red-headed Woodpeckers** are residents at the new Ottawa Sands County Park – up to six have been seen there since the park opened in Oct; a **Northern Shrike** along 56th Ave S of Adams St in Ottawa Co Nov 30 – first report;

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80 Lapland Longspurs along 23rd St between 116th and 118th Aves in Allegan Co Nov 10, species present in all four counties; **100 Snow Buntings** at 128th Ave and Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Nov 10, **440** at the Wastewater Nov 23, species present in all four counties; a late **Field Sparrow** at Plaster Creek Park in Kent Co Nov 18; up to two late **Swamp Sparrows** at Reeds Lake Nov 22-23, two at Muskegon Lake NP Nov 29; an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Mill Point in Ottawa Co Nov 3; two very late **Nashville Warblers** at Hodenpyl Woods Reeds Lake Nov 22; a very late **Common Yellowthroat** at Reeds Lake Nov 22; a very late **American Redstart** at Reeds Lake Nov 20; at least **4,900 Red-winged Blackbirds** at Fennville Sewage Ponds observed in streaming flocks heading south Nov 1; est **200 Rusty Blackbirds** at 128th Ave and Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Nov 9, seven along Hayes St between 76th and 84th Aves in Ottawa Co Nov 11, 25 at Brookside Park in Allegan Co Nov 16; an extremely late **Baltimore Oriole** at a residence near Huff Park Nov 27 – visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S50257732> for photo; five **Common Redpolls** at Ottawa Sands County Park Nov 2 – rather early, up to **250** at the Wastewater from Nov 5, other sightings in the area; up to **45 Pine Siskins** at Pine Creek Park in Ottawa Co throughout the month, many other sightings in the four county area.

Note: Whooping Crane “Lily” was still being observed with two Sandhills at Packard Rd and M-156 near Schoonover WPA in Lenawee Co as of Nov 18.

December: Rain and mild temps in the 40s started the month, but by the 4th the cold returned with a little snow. Then we entered a partly sunny and pleasant (by December standards) period through the 11th. Above-normal temps followed through most of the remainder of the month with rain on New Year’s Eve. Snow was definitely hard to come by this month with only flurries on Christmas.

Snowy Owls continued at these locations: **Kent:** one at Gerald R Ford Int’l Airport. **Muskegon:** two at Muskegon Wastewater, two at Pere Marquette Park/Muskegon SP area, one at Cline Rd and Ensley Rd. **Ottawa:** one at 128th Ave and Bingham St area, one at Grand Haven High School. **Thousands of waterfowl** (Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks and other divers) were seen along the lakeshore Allegan through Muskegon Co. See below for some of the more impressive numbers. **This is an irruptive year for Common Redpolls** (100s observed throughout the month at the Wastewater, including one Hoary seen by Caleb Putnam Dec 30) and **Pine Siskins** (well-represented throughout the area).

Finds of the month: a **Harlequin Duck** was found at

Holland SP Dec 20 by the Mannings and continued Dec 31. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S50824053> for photos. One also was found at the Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Co Dec 23 by Rick Brigham and continued Dec 25 (one observed Dec 27 at Douglas Beach Park may be same individual). Tim Cornish discovered a female-type **Common Eider** amongst a variety of waterfowl at Douglas Beach Park Dec 19 – unfortunately, not relocated. A **Barrow’s Goldeneye** was discovered by Rick Brigham amongst thousands of Common Goldeneye along the Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Dec 24. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S50932141> for photos. A **Golden Eagle** was seen by Larry Burke at the Muskegon Wastewater Dec 19. A **Eurasian Collared-Dove** was found by Steve Minard Dec 19 at Moorland and Heights-Ravenna Rd in Muskegon Co. Curtis Dykstra observed a **Long-eared Owl** at the Campbell Plant ash fields at Port Sheldon in Ottawa Co on Dec 15 (Hudsonville CBC) – there is no access to this area without special permission and escort by power plant staff. On Dec 16 an **Evening Grosbeak** was seen briefly by Bob Tarte while on a walk on his property near Lowell, but it flew away and was never relocated.

Other notables: **50 Cackling Geese** at the Wastewater Dec 6; a **Ross’s Goose** at the Wastewater Dec 13; a **Surf Scoter** at Grand Haven SP Dec 11, one at Holland SP Dec 18, up to two at Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Co Dec 20-25, one at Douglas Beach Park and Oval Beach Dec 20, one at Kalamazoo River mouth Dec 25; two **Black Scoters** at the Kalamazoo River mouth in Allegan Co Dec 3, up to eight along Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Co Dec 13-26, one at Reeds Lake Dec 16, four at Douglas Beach Park Dec 19-22; **2,000 Long-tailed Ducks** at Windsnest Park at Port Sheldon in Ottawa Co Dec 15, **4,800** at Pere Marquette Park Dec 26; **4,000+ Common Goldeneye** (high numbers here not unusual this time of year, but spectacular sight!) along Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Co throughout Dec; **Red-throated Loons** continued since Nov at Holland SP Dec 26 with a high count of eleven there Dec 13, one continued at the Kalamazoo River mouth in Allegan Co Dec 25, one at Pere Marquette Park Dec 26; one **Eared Grebe** at Pere Marquette Park Dec 26; ten **Bald Eagles** at the Wastewater Dec 5 – not unusual, but interesting to see; the **Purple Sandpiper** found at Holland SP Nov 29 continued Dec 2; an **Iceland Gull** at the Kalamazoo River mouth Dec 3, two at the South Kent Landfill in Kent Co Dec 7, one at the Wastewater Dec 12-13, one at Dunton Park in Holland Dec 18; one **Glaucous Gull** observed at the Wastewater, the South Kent Landfill, Pere Marquette Park, Holland SP, Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Co, two at Oval Beach in Saugatuck;

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a **Northern Shrike** at Upper Macatawa Natural Area in Ottawa Co Dec 1, one along 110th Ave between 20th and 21st Sts in Allegan Co Dec 5-11, one along Winans St W of 128th Ave in Ottawa Co Dec 23, one at Millennium Park Dec 26, one at a farm 152nd Ave and Ransom St in Ottawa Co Dec 29-31; several **Hermit Thrushes** observed lingering late in the area; a late **Gray Catbird** at a residence on Fennessy Lake in Ottawa Co Dec 21-31; a very late **Brown Thrasher** at Reeds Lake Dec 18; an extremely late **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Plaster Creek Park in Kent Co Dec 16; a late **Common Yellowthroat** at Reeds Lake Hodenpyl Woods Dec 26; two **Yellow-rumped Warblers** at Upper Macatawa Natural Area 84th Ave access Dec 23, one at East Paris Nature Park in Kent Co Dec 27; a late **Chipping Sparrow** at a residence on Fennessy Lake in Ottawa Co Dec 3; up to four late **Field Sparrows** at Hemlock Crossing Park in Ottawa Co continued Dec 22; up to three late **Swamp Sparrows** at Upper Macatawa Natural Area Dec 14, one continued at Hemlock Crossing Park in Ottawa Co Dec 19, one at a residence in Allegan Co S of Holland Dec 31; a very late **Lincoln's Sparrow** at 128th Ave and Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Dec 13; **White-throated** and **White-crowned sparrows** hung around through late month; a late **Eastern Meadowlark** at the Wastewater Dec 1.

December Finance Report

prepared by Jeff Neumann, Treasurer

Checking Account Balance:	\$ 9,615.12
Edward Jones Account:	\$38,435.98
Total Assets as of 12/31/18:	\$48,051.10
Restricted Funds (included in the total assets)	
Maher Sanctuary Fund:	\$3,733.53
Junior Audubon Fund:	\$4,144.12
Audubon Adventures:	- \$ 343.30

The balances in the Maher Sanctuary, Junior Audubon and Audubon Adventures Funds are restricted to expenditures for items related to the respective funds.

Michigan Audubon 2019 Seminar Series

Michigan Audubon has announced its Seminar Series for 2019. Seminars are free and open to the public. Sessions take place on the second Monday of each month from 7:00 to 8:00 PM at the Michigan Audubon office located at 2310 Science Parkway, Suite 200, Okemos, MI 48864.

Here is the current lineup of the sessions.

- Jan. 14** – Reducing Avian Collisions with Communications Towers: a Community Effort with Joelle Gehring
- Feb. 11** – Kirtland’s Warblers with Dave Ewert
- March 11** – Piping Plovers with Vince Cavaliere
- April 8** – Birding 101 with Kristy Taylor
- May 13** – Intermediate Birding with Linnea Rowse
- June 10** – Pollinators with Fenner Nature Center Staff
- July 8** – Bird Window Collisions with Linnea Rowse
- Aug. 12** – Plants for Hummingbirds with Rosann Kovalcik
- Sept. 9** – Chimney Swifts with Linnea Rowse
- Oct. 14** – Winter Bird Feeding
- Nov. 11 and Dec. 9** – TBD

To learn more about the Michigan Audubon Seminar Series, visit michiganaudubon.org/learn/seminar-series/.

Birding Resources: eBird Essentials Course

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology offers online courses (for a cost) through its Bird Academy. Recently, Bird Academy began offering a free course called “eBird Essentials.”

The course is a self-paced program that shows a birder how to use eBird.org and eBird Mobile to the birder’s best advantage. eBird is an online checklist program for recording bird sightings. It also can be used to access real-time data about bird distribution and abundance from checklists submitted by other birders.

For more information, visit <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/product/ebird-essentials/>.



GRAC CALENDAR

January

- 10 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hikes (recurring 17, 24, 31)
- 19 Field Trip: Winter Field Birding w/ Steve Minard
- 28 GRAC Board Meeting
- 28 Membership Meeting and Nature Program

February

- 7 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hikes (recurring 7, 14, 21, 28)
- 9 Field Trip: Allegan State Game Area w/ Steve Minard
- 25 GRAC Board Meeting
- 25 Membership Meeting and Nature Program

Mission Statement:

The Grand Rapids Audubon Club brings together people who enjoy nature, especially wild birds. We seek to protect and improve our natural environment and to advance nature education throughout West Michigan.

Grand Rapids Audubon Club Membership Application

Name _____
 Street _____
 City _____
 State / ZIP+4 _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____

(Providing your E-mail address ensures that you will receive E-mail notification when the latest edition of the *Caller* newsletter is posted on the GRAC website.)

Individual	\$ 20.00	_____
Family	25.00	_____
Senior (65+)	12.00	_____
Student (14+w/ID)	12.00	_____
Sustaining	30.00	_____
Patron	60.00	_____
Individual Life Membership	400.00	_____
Donation <i>(General Fund, Jr. Audubon, Sanctuary, Scholarship and/or Audubon Adventure)</i>		_____
Total Amount Enclosed		_____

Make checks payable to:
Grand Rapids Audubon Club, Inc.
 Send application and check to:
Cynthia Davidek, Assistant Treasurer
832 Fairmount St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506-1506

Membership dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

GRAC Board Meetings are held at 6:00 PM prior to each month's general membership meeting.

Junior Audubon Meetings are held Saturdays at various locations.

General Membership Meetings are held the last Monday of the month (Sept. – May) at 7:30 PM at the John F. Donnelly Center of Aquinas College located at 157 Woodward Lane SE. December (Christmas Bird Count) and May (Annual Banquet) meetings are held at different locations and times. Upcoming field trip information is published in each newsletter. See the GRAC website for the complete field trip list. Any additions or deletions to the above calendar will be noted in future issues of the newsletter.

Serving You

GRAC Board and Committee Chairpersons are listed below for

Grand Rapids Audubon Club Board of Directors and Special Committees

The Board of Directors consists of the Executive Council, the Immediate Past President and Chairpersons of the Standing Committees. In addition to the Board Of Directors, "Special Committees" and "Resident Agent" are also listed below.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

- 5 officers + 4 elected board members
- President – Sheryl Helmus
- Vice President – Scott Hutchings
- Secretary – Tom Leggett
- Treasurer – Jeff Neumann
- Ass't Treasurer – Cynthia Davidek
- Board Member – Landon Bell
- Board Member – Keith Helmus
- Board Member – Becky Kuhn
- Board Member – Jan Lewis
- Field Trips – Becky Kuhn
- Finance – Keith Helmus
- Fund Development – open
- Historian – Linda Damstra
- Hospitality – Bea VerBurg, Henry Raad and Rosemary Radius
- Insurance – Jill Goodell
- Junior Audubon – open
- Library – Norine and Jim Shea / Fidencio Paradez
- Maher Sanctuary – Chris Baer
- Membership – Theresa Dykhuis
- Nominating – Scott Hutchings
- Publicity – Tricia Boot
- Scholarship – inactive
- Special Events – open
- Website – Fred VanOeveren

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT (non-voting member)

John Chronowski 2016-17, 2017-18

STANDING COMMITTEES

- Aud. Adventures – Mary Austin
- Audio/Visual – Robert Riepma
- Bird Reports – Carol VanOeveren
- Caller Editor – Tricia Boot
- Caller Publisher – Peggy Falk
- Christmas Count – Tom Leggett / Steve Mueller

SPECIAL COMMITTEES / CHAIRPERSONS

(non-members of Board of directors in this capacity)
 Aud. Adventures – Mary Austin
 Insurance – Jill Goodell

RESIDENT AGENT

Larry Burke

Grand Rapids Audubon Club
3426 13 Mile Rd. NE
Rockford, MI 49341

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PLEASE RUSH
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Grand Rapids Audubon Club

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