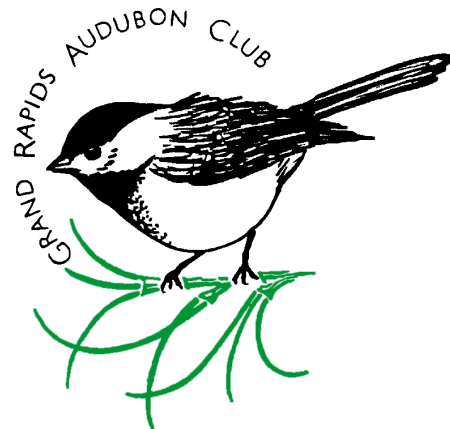


the Caller

January 2022, Volume 60, No. 5

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by GRAC, 6152 Georgeann Ct., Belmont, MI 49506-9783



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www.facebook.com/grandrapidsaudubonclub/

January Meeting Details

- Date:** Monday, Jan. 31
Time: 7:30 PM program
Location: John Donnelly Conference Center
Aquinas College (virtual option available)
Speaker: Ranger Steve Mueller, Ody Brook Nature
Sanctuary
Topic: Wilderness – Unique Treasure

Based on the writing of Aldo Leopold's Sand County Almanac, the importance and values for protecting wilderness remnants for recreation, science and wildlife will be illustrated with pictures of one of America's most unique and fragile ecosystems. The life and majesty of American Red Rock Wilderness of Southern Utah will be visited through prose and poetry by well-known authors and will include original poetry by Ranger Steve. The region supports California Condors, Peregrine Falcons, Lazuli Buntings and a rich biodiversity including the rare Nokomis Fritillary. The program weaves science, emotion and reason to support the American Red Rock Wilderness Act before Congress. The program will touch mind, body and soul.

We will offer in-person and virtual options to enjoy this presentation from Ranger Steve. Those who attend in person **must** follow COVID-19 guidelines (see bottom right). Given the prevalence of COVID-19 in our communities—particularly the highly contagious omicron variant—we ask for extra care to help protect one another from infection. Please do not attend the meeting if you have **any** symptoms, including those consistent with a mild cold or allergies. Thank you!

To join via Zoom:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85304380380?pwd=TEExbj1dSdFJGOXNIakRtcStnaXRtdz09>
Meeting ID: 853 0438 0380
Passcode: 962909

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

Send to: newsletter@graud.org

President's Corner

by Scott Hutchings

I can't take credit for this idea, I received several from the Barry County Bird Club: a personal top ten list from last year's bird list. It piqued my curiosity, so I did it myself. I've always surged ahead with the New Year's bird list without reflecting on last year. Turns out that's important too. Here's the list:

1. Smew
2. Varied Thrush
3. Cinnamon Teal
4. Black-Backed Woodpecker
5. Black-Bellied Whistling Duck
6. Kirtland's Warbler
7. Wood Stork
8. Wilson's Phalarope
9. Short-Eared Owl
10. Least Bittern

It was fun. My rough draft of the list had 21 species and I had to decide what to cut. The three lifers were a lock. I'd forgotten I had three lifers last year. So many other fun birds, I went with my heart rather than empirical analysis. Turns out I had a better year than I thought.

This year's list started with a Canada Goose honking in the dark at 6:20 AM. We didn't count the rooster from a few minutes before.

COVID-19 Guidelines for Attending Meetings in Person

All attendees—regardless of vaccination status—must follow these mandatory COVID-19 guidelines to attend the meeting in person:

- **You must properly wear a mask** that covers your nose and mouth at all times while indoors. Consistent with the latest health guidelines, we encourage the use of surgical masks, KN95 or N95s (if available), rather than cloth masks.
- You will be asked to provide your name and contact information in the event contact tracing is required.
- Social distancing is required. Please maintain a six-foot distance between yourself and anyone outside your household.



November & December 2021 eBird Summaries

Very Unusual and Rare Sightings by Carol VanOeveren

The following is an overview of the very unusual and rare eBird sightings for November and December 2021 for Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. These reports do not include rare birds that are flyovers, unchaseable, on inaccessible private property and those with sketchy details.

November: November began below normal in the 40s. We received our first snowflakes mixed with rain on the 2nd and a little accumulation on grassy surfaces overnight. By the 5th pleasant weather in the 50s returned and above normal 60s on the 7th and 8th. A wet period with several days of a rain/snow mix moved in with a strong, windy fall storm on the 11th-12th. High temperatures tumbled below normal into the low 40s by the 13th along with our first accumulating snow of around 2 inches. A clipper system brought areawide rain and snow showers on the 14th. The mostly below normal trend continued with dry days interspersed with rain and/or snow showers through the remainder of the month.

Waterfowl continued to congregate at the Muskegon Wastewater, and most likely the majority will remain until lagoon freeze-up. As usual, rafts of waterfowl including Long-tailed Duck, scaup, mergansers, scoters and others are wintering offshore in Lake Michigan. See below for those of interest at both locations.

Notables for the month: Up to seven **Snow Geese** at the Wastewater Nov 3-29, 15 at Schultz Park in Allegan Co Nov 27. Eight **ROSS'S GEESE** (found by Tim Cornish) at Gun River Aggregates gravel pit lake (restricted access) in Allegan Co Nov 20. **Cackling Geese** continued intermittently since Sep at the Wastewater with a high count of 19 Nov 15, up to four at Coopersville goose field Nov 5-6 and 22-23. Six **Tundra Swans** at the Wastewater Nov 9 – first report, **1,400** at the Wastewater Nov 17, 77 at Byron Lakes in Kent Co Nov 19; other good numbers reported in all four counties and many flyover groups. An est **400 Ring-necked Ducks** at Pickerel Lake NP in Kent Co Nov 7 – the lake is a magnet for this species during spring and fall migration, **350** at the Wastewater Nov 15. A **HARLEQUIN DUCK** (found by Tom/Tanya Smythe) at the Wastewater Nov 3-29 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S97479652> to view Caleb Putnam's photos). **White-winged Scoters** continued at Holland SP with a high count of 22 Nov 1, four at Muskegon Lake channel Nov 2, seven at Oval Beach in Saugatuck Nov 5, continued at Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Co with a high count of 35 Nov 13. **Black Scoters** continued since late Oct at Holland SP with a high count of 12 Nov 15, continued at Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Co with a high count of 18 Nov 20. Two **Long-tailed**

Ducks at the Wastewater Nov 3 and three Nov 13, large rafts present offshore along Lake MI through the month with a high count of 250 at Grand Haven south pier Nov 4. A **RED-NECKED GREBE** (found by Jack Pohler) at Grand Haven SP Nov 4. Up to five **Eared Grebes** continued at the Wastewater Nov 29 – known location. An **American Golden-Plover** at the Wastewater Nov 10 – late. Two **Sanderlings** at Pere Marquette Park in Muskegon Co Nov 19 – late. A **Least Sandpiper** at the Wastewater Nov 9 – very late. A **RED PHALAROPE** (found by Bailey Mitchell) at the Wastewater Nov 2-7 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S97091768> to view Amy Lyyski's photos). A juv **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** (found by Eric Gustafson/Carl and Judi Manning/Mark Parker) at Holland SP Nov 10 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S97393315> to view Mark Parker's photos) and one juv seen there by several observers flying north Nov 28, one juv was also found Nov 9 by Matt Bueby at Grand Haven SP. An **Iceland Gull** at the Wastewater Nov 4 (first report) continued Nov 29 and one Thayer's Nov 6 and 14 and two Nov 12 – one may be same bird as first report but not ID'd as Thayer's, one at Holland SP Nov 7, one at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center in Kent Co Nov 19 and 30 and two Nov 29. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center in Kent Co throughout the month with a high count of six Nov 19, up to six continued at the Wastewater Nov 12, one continued at Holland SP through the month, up to two at Gun Lake Park in Allegan Co Nov 10-21, one at Green Lake in Allegan Co Nov 19, three at Gun River Aggregates gravel pit lake (restricted access) in Allegan Co Nov 20. A **Glaucous Gull** at the Wastewater Nov 3-24 – first report, one at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center in Kent Co Nov 19 and 29, one at Holland SP Nov 22-28. A **Red-throated Loon** at Grand Haven south pier Nov 4, one at Oval Beach Nov 5, one at Holland SP Nov 7 and up to three 27-29, one at Port Sheldon Pigeon River outlet Nov 28. A **CATTLE EGRET** (found by Kevin Wistrom) at the Wastewater Nov 13 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S97519327> to view photos), one (found by Emily Tornga) along Hayes St E of 68th Ave in Ottawa Co Nov 15 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S97632957> to view photo). A very late juv **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at the Wastewater Oct 31 was still being seen Nov 7. Four **Turkey Vultures** along Cidermill Dr S of 76th St SE in Kent Co Nov 12 – late, one over Millennium Park Nov 26 – very late. A **Snowy Owl** at the Wastewater Nov 11 (first report) continued Nov 29 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S97432653> to view John VanOrman's photos) – known wintering location, one at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Nov 24 –

Continued on page 3



Continued from page 3

specific location not given, two along Van Buren St W of 120th Ave in Ottawa Co Nov 27. Five **Short-eared Owls** continued since Oct at the Wastewater through the month – known location (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S97848156> to view Craig Kingma's photos). An **Eastern Phoebe** at Rabbit River Preserve in Allegan Co Nov 24 – very late. A **Northern Shrike** continued since Oct at the Wastewater Nov 20, one continued since Oct at Muskegon SGA Lane's Landing Nov 6, one along Maple Island Rd N of Sternberg Rd in Muskegon Co Nov 7, one at Two Rivers Greenspace in Kent Co Nov 10-11, one at Roselle Park Nov 16-21. Impressive counts of **Eastern Bluebirds** (83) and **American Goldfinch** (70) at Roselle Park in Kent Co Nov 16. A **Brown Thrasher** at Calvin University Ecosystem Preserve Nov 16 – late. Good numbers of **American Pipits** still reported at the Wastewater through mid-month with high count of 150 Nov 4, one at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center in Kent Co Nov 29 – late. Ten **Common Redpolls** at Pickerel Lake NP in Kent Co Nov 27 – first report, one at a resident's feeder in Georgetown Twp in Ottawa Co Nov 27, two at Ball Perkins Park Nov 29. Four **Pine Siskins** at Ball Perkins Park Nov 1, two at a residence in Holland Nov 25. Two **Lapland Longspurs** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Nov 27. **Snow Buntings** reported in Allegan, Muskegon and Ottawa cos with a high count of est **360** at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Nov 12. A **Savannah Sparrow** at the Wastewater Nov 14 – late. A **Baltimore Oriole** at a residence in Holland Nov 10 – very late. Six **Rusty Blackbirds** at The Bend Area in Ottawa Co Nov 2, 75 at S Swanson Rd potholes in Muskegon Co Nov 7, 28 at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Nov 12, three at Hodenpyl Woods Nov 21. A **Blue-winged Warbler** at Reeds Lake Nov 13 – very late. A **Nashville Warbler** continued since late Oct at Holland SP Lake Macatawa Campground Nov 6, one at Stu Visser Trails in Ottawa Co Nov 15 – both very late. The **WESTERN TANAGER** found in late Oct at Mt Pisgah Dune Boardwalk/Lake Macatawa Campground continued to be seen near campsite #151 at the campground Nov 3. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a feeder in NE Grand Rapids Nov 13 – very late.

December: The first two days of the month were near 50 degrees, melting the snowcover we received at the end of November. On the 3rd below normal conditions and a little snow returned, but quickly melted. A sunny and pleasant 4th was the calm before a messy rain/snow system moved in on the 5th. Much colder temperatures followed, transitioning to lake effect snow and then rounds of snow/rain as it warmed through the week. By the 11th temps rose into the 50s along with a powerful

storm system with rain, very strong winds and widespread power outages. Several pleasant days in the 40s followed, warming to 62 degrees by the 15th breaking the record high of 61 (and 63 deg on the 16th broke another record high) along with another powerful, massive windstorm (which produced an unprecedented outbreak of severe weather in the Plains/upper Midwest including snow, high winds, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes and straight-line winds 80-85 mph along the cold front/squall line). It weakened somewhat before passing through our area, but the 50-60+ mph wind gusts behind the front produced areawide power outages on the 16th. This storm was finally classified by the National Weather Service as a serial derecho, driven by very strong winds in the atmosphere, the first ever in December. The temperature roller coaster continued, dipping back into the seasonable 30s by the 17th. A tranquil weather pattern settled in through the 26th (Christmas Eve/Day warm 50s/40s and a little rain) with occasional mixed precip and very little snow. Small systems brought occasional mixed rain/snow and snow through the remaining five days.

Large numbers of waterfowl will continue to congregate/winter until the lagoons freeze at the Muskegon Wastewater (Canada Goose and Northern Shoveler the most prevalent) and along the Lake Michigan shoreline (Long-tailed Ducks {thousands}, Red-breasted Mergansers {hundreds to thousands}, Common Goldeneye {thousands}, scoters and other divers). Loads of dabbling ducks wintering at Morrison Bayou on the Kalamazoo River were reported by Rick Brigham and Caleb Putnam December 6. Visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S98570530> to view Caleb's checklist.

Snowy Owls were observed at the following locations:

Allegan: One along 140th btw Lincoln Rd/52nd St Dec 19-24, one at Allegan SGA Todd Farm (116th Ave E of 60th St) Dec 26, one at Lakeshore Dr guardrail Dec 29.

Kent: One at Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport Kraft Ave access Dec 28-31. **Muskegon:** Up to three at the

Muskegon Wastewater since Nov – known wintering location, one at Maple Island Rd/Holton Rd Dec 15, one at Pere Marquette Park Dec 19-31, one along Hile Rd W of S Moorland Rd Dec 23. **Ottawa:** One at Holland SP Dec 5-29, one at 128th Ave/Port Sheldon St Dec 10, one at 120th Ave/Blair St Dec 11-12, one at 128th Ave/Bingham St area Dec 18-28, one along 68th Ave S of Garfield St Dec 21-26, two along N Shore Dr N of Grand Haven channel Dec 26, one along State Rd near New Holland Agriculture near Coopersville Dec 26, one at Port Sheldon Windsnest Park Dec 27.

Please note: This report does not include unusual or rare birds observed on area Christmas counts unless a specific location was given. *(Continued on page 4)*



Continued from page 3

Notables for the month: Up to twelve **Snow Geese** continued since Nov at the Wastewater Dec 31, up to ten at S Swanson Rd potholes in Muskegon Co Dec 15-19, one along N Fairview Rd S of Riley St in Zeeland Dec 18, one at the John Ball Zoo in field near the parking area Dec 20-25. A **ROSS'S GOOSE** (found by Stan Koster) at Kent City Wastewater (restricted access) in Kent Co Dec 28. Thirteen **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE** (found by Caden Klanderman) at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Dec 13, one (found by Steve Minard) at S Swanson Rd potholes in Muskegon Co Dec 15, **30** along Hallacy Dr S of Ransom St in Ottawa Co Dec 18 (on Hudsonville CBC; visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S99049794> to view Mark Parker's photos) continued Dec 19 (34 showed up briefly at Window on the Waterfront in Holland on Dec 21, likely same group, but flew off), 24 along Silverton Dr N of Quincy St Dec 22 and at Macatawa Legends West Dec 25, 21 at Window on the Waterfront Dec 26, 26 along 136th Ave N of Quincy St Dec 30 (all likely same group initially seen along Hallacy Dr moving about the area). Two **Cackling Geese** on the Kalamazoo River in downtown Allegan Dec 1-7, up to six continued since Sep at the Wastewater Dec 30. **Tundra Swans** still reported in area at various locations and also flyovers. Three **Ring-necked Ducks** on Lake MI at Port Sheldon Windsnest Park Dec 17 – odd location, usually prefers inland bodies of water. A **HARLEQUIN DUCK** continued since Nov at the Wastewater Dec 4, one (found by Edward Hicks) at Pere Marquette Park in Muskegon Dec 28. A **Surf Scoter** at Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Dec 25-30, three at Douglas Beach Park Dec 25-31, one (found by Caleb Putnam) at Reeds Lake Dec 28 – unusual inland location. **White-winged Scoters** continued at Holland SP since Oct with a high count of six Dec 1, eight at Casco NP in Allegan Co Dec 3, 30 on Lk MI seen from Kouw Park in Ottawa Co Dec 19. Up to nine **Black Scoters** at Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Dec 25-30, up to nine at Douglas Beach Park Dec 25-31. A **Long-tailed Duck** at Reeds Lake Dec 14 – odd location. An adult male **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** (found by Tim Cornish) at Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Dec 25 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S99408124> to view photos; Tim also found one near this location on Dec 28, 2019) continued Dec 29; was relocated at Douglas Beach Park Dec 31. Three **EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm 118th Ave/62nd St area Dec 8 – known location for several years, six (found by Adam Byrne) at Ravenna Feed and Grain in Muskegon Co Dec 28-31 (observed here previously Dec 29, 2020-early Jan 2021). A **Virginia Rail** again wintering at Allegan SGA 44th St wetland. A **PURPLE SANDPIPER**

(found by Matthew Iglesias) at Pere Marquette Park Dec 26 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S99459262> to view photo) continued Dec 31 (several observers saw two Dec 30-31; visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S99757743> to view Jonathan Lautenbach's photos). Up to two **Iceland Gulls** continued since Nov at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center in Kent Co Dec 30, one at Oval Beach in Saugatuck Dec 6, up to four continued since Nov at the Wastewater Dec 31, one along 122nd Ave btw 2nd St and Patterson in Allegan Co Dec 11, one at Gun Lake Park in Allegan Co Dec 16, one at Dunton Park in Holland Dec 28, five at Autumn Hills Landfill (56th Ave/Adams St) in Ottawa Co Dec 29. An **Iceland Gull (Thayer's)** continued since Nov at the Wastewater Dec 30, one continued since Nov at Holland SP Dec 28, two at Autumn Hills Landfill (56th Ave/Adams St) in Ottawa Co Dec 29. Up to four **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** continued since Nov at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center in Kent Co Dec 30, one continued since Oct at Holland SP Dec 31, up to six continued at the Wastewater Dec 28, up to two at Byron Lakes in Kent Co Dec 8-9, four at Green Lake in Allegan Co Dec 9, one at Eldean Shipyard Lake Macatawa Dec 14, five at Gun Lake Park in Allegan Co Dec 16, one at Pere Marquette Park Dec 26, one at Autumn Hills Landfill (56th Ave/Adams St) in Ottawa Co Dec 29. Up to four **Glaucous Gulls** continued since Nov at the Wastewater Dec 31, two at Oval Beach in Saugatuck Dec 6 and one Dec 18-19, up to two continued since Nov at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center Dec 23, one at Holland SP Dec 13-31, one at Autumn Hills Landfill (56th Ave/Adams St) in Ottawa Co Dec 29. A **Red-throated Loon** continued since Nov at Holland SP Dec 23, two at Casco NP in Allegan Co Dec 3, one at Oval Beach in Saugatuck Dec 6, three at Pere Marquette Park Dec 28. Up to five **Short-eared Owls** continued since Oct at the Wastewater Dec 31 – known location. A late **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** along Sandy Shores Ln in Saugatuck Dec 30-31. A **Northern Shrike** continued since Nov at Roselle Park Dec 2, one at Muskegon SGA Lane's Landing Dec 13 and 27, one at S Swanson Rd potholes in Muskegon Co Dec 15, one at a residence along Barry St W of 88th Ave in Ottawa Co Dec 18-24. Est **1,500 American Crows** observed from Shelby St SW/Division Ave by Josiah Willink streaming SW for at least 15 min around 4:30 PM Dec 23 – likely heading toward communal roosts. A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** at Grand River Park in Ottawa Co Dec 5 – late. A **Hermit Thrush** at Casco NP in Allegan Co Dec 3, one at Allegan SGA Swan Creek at 116th Ave Dec 6, one at Seidman Park in Kent Co Dec 7, two at Black Lake Park in Muskegon Co Dec 7, one at Causeway Marsh power line easement in Muskegon Dec 18 – all late, but known to linger/winter with adequate food supply.

Continued on page 5



Continued from page 4

A **VARIED THRUSH** seen briefly by Bailey Mitchell at Lost Lake Trail in Muskegon Co Dec 27 was not relocated (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S99547468> to view photos). Good numbers of **Common Redpolls** observed in all for counties with a high count of est 70 at Littlejohn Lake Co Park in Allegan Co Dec 27. Two **WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS** heard by Beth Miller at Lost Lake along Lost Lake Trl in Muskegon Co Dec 20 continued Dec 21 (at least 30 were seen flying overhead and calling in same area on City of Muskegon CBC Dec 18). Ten **Pine Siskins** at Black Lake Park in Muskegon Co Dec 12, five at Hemlock Crossing Park in Ottawa Co Dec 28, a few reported at a couple of residences. **Snow Buntings** present in all four counties with a high count of 100 at the Wastewater Dec 1. Two **Field Sparrows** at the Wastewater Dec 26 – very late. A **Fox Sparrow** at a residence on Fennessy Lake in Ottawa Co Dec 6 – late. A **White-crowned Sparrow** at Window on the Waterfront in Holland Dec 6, up to five at a residence S of Holland in Allegan Co Dec 7-31, one at a residence along 118th Ave W of 62nd St in Allegan Co Dec 21 – all late, but known to winter; Outdoor Discovery Center S of Holland in Allegan Co has been a known location in past years. An **Eastern Towhee** at Allegan SGA Swan Creek Marsh Dec 17, one at a residence along Cramton Ave N of Conservation St NE in Kent Co Dec 25 – both late, but known to winter with adequate food supply. Thirty **Yellow-rumped Warblers** at Allegan SGA M-89 Kalamazoo River Bridge and boat launch Dec 6 – known wintering location, three along Kalamazoo River in downtown Allegan Dec 7, twelve at Upper Macatawa Natural Area 84th Ave access Dec 9, one at The Bend Area in Ottawa Co Dec 13, **40** at Allegan SGA Swan Creek Marsh Dec 17 (at least **52** in this general area on Allegan SGA CBC Dec 27), up to two at Millennium Park Dec 24-25, one at Autumn Hills Landfill (56th Ave/Adamas St) in Ottawa Co Dec 29 (odd location) – all late, but will winter in right habitat (along rivers/wetlands) with adequate food supply. Late **Red-winged Blackbirds** observed at several locations. A **Rusty Blackbird** at Stu Visser Trails in Ottawa Co through the month – late. An imm **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a residence on Dunlin Ct in NE Grand Rapids Dec 24 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S99387160> to view photos) – very late.



Remembering Eileen Shedleski

by Mary Austin

Grand Rapids Audubon Club Life Member Eileen Shedleski, aged 100 years, passed away at her home on Nov. 12, 2021. She was a wonderful mother, wife, floral arranger, gardener and lover of the natural world.

In years gone by, GRAC participated in arts and crafts shows at the former North Kent Mall (on Plainfield Avenue NE) and Eastbrook Mall (subsequently remodeled and renamed as Centerpoint Mall on 28th Street SE). Because of her floral arranging skills, Eileen is fondly remembered for the beautiful floral arrangements she created for the craft shows.

Eileen’s obituary, published in the Grand Rapids Press and www.mlive.com, noted that she embraced “re-use, recycle and repurpose” long before the general public was aware of those concepts. Her thrifty ways enabled her to make significant donations to various non-profit organizations, including GRAC.

Eileen was born on April 9, 1921, above the Durand, Michigan ice cream and fruit store owned by her parents, Ralph and Edith Curreli. She worked as a floral designer in Durand, East Lansing, Dearborn and Grand Rapids and in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where she also attended Colorado College. She met her future husband, Martin Shedleski, at the Grand Rapids Paragon Bowling Lanes, located across the street from the flower shop where she worked. Eileen and Martin were married for almost 50 years, until Martin’s death in October 2001.

Eileen is survived by her children Lee Ann Shedleski-Holmden and Paul Shedleski and her son-in-law David Holmden. In accordance with Eileen’s wishes, cremation has taken place. A celebration of her life is planned for spring 2022.



Birdy Care Package

National Audubon Society has what it calls a “birdy care package” at audubon.org/joy-of-birds. You can “bird up” Zoom calls with bird and native plant photo backgrounds. Brighten your day with adorable baby bird photos. Watch funny bird antics, and learn backyard bird photography tips. Numerous topics abound. Give the website a try. You just might discover something new to enhance your birding experience.



Ranger Steve's Nature Niche

Canoeing and Herons by Ranger Steve (Mueller)

Taking to open water in a kayak or canoe can be a quiet pleasurable wildlife encounter. There are liveries in Rockford and Newaygo for easy floats on the Rogue or Muskegon rivers. For those with their own vessels the opportunities are greater for one can put in and take out at various locations. To the south of Grand Rapids one can kayak the Glass River from the Michigan Audubon Otis Sanctuary in Barry County near Hastings. Go north to canoe the Pine River for a challenge or Little Manistee with more moderate water in the Cadillac region. Canoeing the Les Cheneaux Islands in northern Lake Huron can provide a protected paddle on big water where the islands help calm waves. I am not after the thrill of white caps or white water but seek wildlife instead.

Karen and I enjoy quiet calm wildlife viewing on our trips. When I was a teenager, our church youth group goal was splashing, dumping and cooling on a hot summer's day but our family paddles were quiet and wildlife oriented. Boy Scout trips were longer and included overnight camping.

One of the most mysterious experiences in my life was while camping along the Rifle River on a Scout trip. That night we heard large bubbles emanating from deep within the earth. For several years I heard the unnerving sound with no clue to its origin, but it seemed extraterrestrial. The sound has become considerably less frequent but can be heard in scattered locations when one is near a sizable marsh. The maker is the American Bittern, a bird in the heron family. I have heard it described as a thunder bird because of its sound but more frequently it is described as sounding like a water pump. I prefer the bubble description.

Other herons are croakers and the last time Julianne, Charlie, Karen and I canoed together we heard and saw both Green and Great Blue herons. Many ducks paddled along near the shore at a distance. Belted Kingfishers made their rattle call as they flew ahead or back over us in route to favorite fishing locations on their family's river claim. Choice locations for kingfishers include sandy bluffs where they dig six-foot-deep nesting tunnels in the bank.

A bit harder to see without binoculars are warblers, flycatchers and sparrows that sing vibrant songs along shrubby or forested shores. They are present because mayflies, caddisflies, dragonflies and many other insects have found healthy nature niches. It is always a joy to watch the aerial excellence of common whitetails, darners and baskettail dragonflies capturing insects. We avoid disturbing fly-fishing anglers as we float past with our paddles held stationary. They cast special handmade flies in hopes of a good sparing with a fish before releasing it back so the fish can capture the real insect being imitated at the end of an angler's line. If the stream is not catch and release, the fish might become a great human meal.

I like to paddle near shore to see many butterfly species nectaring on a host of beautiful flowers. Joe Pye Weed,

Swamp Milkweed and other flowers abound in August. Bird-watching in May and June is best when bird song peaks and they are easier to see. We like August because it is warm, usually sunnier, and biting insects have subsided. A monthly, weekly or even daily canoe venture would be nice. If only I could live a thousand lives at once to explore a thousand outdoor adventures in a thousand different natures niches simultaneously.

Winter is wonderful and I like a UP trip annually for birding but not for canoeing. Enjoy outdoor experiences every month of the year. I've done winter overnight canoe trips and loved them but those are for memories now. Eagles and otters enriched those trips and still live in the recesses of my mind.

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.

The Story of GRAC's 2021 Christmas Bird Count

by Tom Leggett

For the second straight year, Commander Ranger Steve found himself needing to have a virtual/Internet-led count without in-person gathering. With mutual agreement he had Captain Tom organize the plan.

Jan. 1, 2022 the count day dawned as a 100% cloudy day, with the threat of heavy snow looming. Thirty-seven loyal troops with five at feeders, and 32 in the field spread out across the seven areas. They eagerly began searching the roads and byways for as many birds as they could find.

The counters were rewarded with four species of owls, six species of hawks, seven Bald Eagles and seven Kestrels that were very active hunting before the storm. A Northern Harrier in F, and a Long-eared Owl in E were good sightings. Other good finds were a Double-crested Cormorant in D, Northern Pintail in G and all three Mergansers seen within the circle, along with Snow Buntings and Common Redpolls.

Before the snow started in the mid-afternoon, they had counted 62 species and 13,524 individuals. The top five birds in numbers were Starlings at 3,277, House Sparrows at 2,327, Canada Goose at 2,224, Cedar Waxwings at 673 and Juncos at 577.

Captain Tom fought with the Internet as he gathered bird data over the next few days, before sending on to Ranger Steve for submitting. You will be able to look forward to Ranger Steve's wonderful detailed report on the Jan. 1, 2022 count day in the February *Caller*.





UPCOMING EVENTS (visit the GRAC website for details)

January

- 13 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hike
- 20 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hike
- 27 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hike
- 31 Membership Meeting and Nature Program

February

- 3 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hike
- 10 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hike
- 17 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hike
- 24 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hike
- 28 Membership Meeting and Nature Program

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:
Theresa Dykhuis
3100 Cooks Meadow Dr. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525-9401

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

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.

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 | Field Trips – open |
| President – Scott Hutchings | Finance – Keith Helmus |
| Vice President – open | Fund Development – open |
| Secretary – Shawn Taheri | Historian – Linda Damstra |
| Treasurer – Jeff Neumann | Hospitality – Henry Raad |
| Ass't Treasurer – Theresa Dykhuis | Junior Audubon – Hannah Safford |
| Board Member – Felix Perdue | Library – Kathleen Haase |
| Board Member – Ruth Fridsma | Maher Sanctuary – Chris Baer |
| Board Member – Mary Austin | Membership – Theresa Dykhuis |
| Board Member – Jeni Taheri | Nominating – Scott Hutchings |
| | Publicity – Tricia Boot |
| | Scholarship – Katie Bolt |
| | Special Events – open |
| | Website – Fred VanOveren |

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

(non-voting member)
Sheryl Helmus 2018-19, 2019-20

STANDING COMMITTEES

- Audio/Visual – Robert Riepma
- Bird Reports – Carol VanOveren
- Caller* Editor – Tricia Boot
- Caller* Publisher – Theresa Dykhuis/
Peggy Falk
- Christmas Count – Tom Leggett /
Steve Mueller
- Conservation – open

SPECIAL COMMITTEES / CHAIRPERSONS

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

RESIDENT AGENT

Larry Burke

DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE RUSH
*Nine Issues per year
Published monthly except May, July
and December*

Grand Rapids Audubon Club

OFFICERS

President:

Scott Hutchings

Email: president@graud.org

Vice President:

Open

Email: vice.president@graud.org

Secretary:

Shawn Taheri

Email: secretary@graud.org

Treasurer:

Jeff Neumann

Email: treasurer@graud.org

Assistant Treasurer:

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