

## April 2017 eBird Summary

by Carol VanOeveren

The following is an overview of the unusual or rare eBird sightings for April 2017 for Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. This report does not include rare birds that are flyovers, unchaseable and those with sketchy details or first returning dates of most migrants unless early. Only the more unusual sightings are included in this report. Unusual eBird sightings are updated daily on the GRAC website.

The first full week of April was unsettled. A windy rain/snow storm laid down several inches of heavy wet snow Wednesday night and Thursday southeast of Grand Rapids. The snow was short-lived as the temperatures warmed into the 60s by that weekend. Strong storms with heavy rain rolled through the evening of April 10 producing an EF-1 tornado near Freeport. The rest of the month was generally wet with temperatures ranging from near/above normal to much below at month's end with a huge rain event dumping two to three inches over the area.

Waterfowl migration continues into April. Some of the larger numbers of ducks reported: 155 Green-winged Teal at Allegan State Game Area, Todd Farm Apr 1, **2,000** Northern Shoveler at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 15, **580** Canvasback, **420** Redhead and **620** Lesser Scaup at Patterson Rd/Wildwood Rd gravel pits in Allegan Co Apr 2, **1,900** Long-tailed Duck at Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Beach Park Apr 9, **750** Bufflehead at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 15 and **2,500** Ruddy Duck at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 21.

Eighteen shorebird species were observed during the month, including a **Ruff** (see below). Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Dunlins and Pectoral Sandpipers dominated in good numbers throughout the month. Upland, Solitary and Spotted sandpipers showed up about mid-month. An early Least Sandpiper was present at the Muskegon Wastewater Apr 5. Up to three **Short-billed Dowitchers** Apr 26-30, a Semipalmated Plover Apr 27 and two **Wilson's Phalaropes** (4 there Apr 30), a **Willet**, two **Long-billed Dowitchers** (7 there Apr 30) and an **American Golden-Plover** were there Apr 28. The Wastewater was the usual hotspot.

Of the 18 warbler species observed in April, with many early arrivals, four were considered very early: a Nashville at Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve Apr 18, a Blackburnian at a residence along 21st St S of 116th Ave in Allegan Co Apr 15, a Palm at a residence along 152nd Ave S of Ransom St in Ottawa Co Apr 5 and a Black-throated Green at Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve Apr 11. Others of interest included Louisiana and Northern waterthrush, Orange-crowned, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll and a **Lawrence's hybrid** (see below).

Finds of the month: a very rare Eurasian vagrant **Ruff** was observed at Muskegon Wastewater in the grassy cells north of the dike and cement cells associating with Lesser Yellowlegs and Pectoral Sandpipers on Apr 3. It was first observed by Terry Grabill around noon and then seen about 1:45 PM by local birder Chip Francke and many, many others later that day through the morning of Apr 8. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S35672319> and <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S35677520> for photos of this beautiful male in breeding plumage. The last record of a Ruff at this location was June 5-7, 1982 by our own GRAC member Jim Ponshair. On Apr 13, the bird was relocated about five miles south of the Wastewater at the Swanson Rd/Musketawa Trail area potholes by Michael Boston and remained there through at least Apr 17. A rare coastal Asian vagrant **Slaty-backed Gull** was found among the thousands of gulls at the Muskegon Wastewater landfill area and dry cells by Michael Boston the evening of Apr 19. Other observers confirmed the ID Apr 21. The bird hung around until Apr 22. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S36184119> for photos. A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** visited a feeder at the Dave Herdegen residence on the Grand River near Lost Channel in Ottawa Co on Apr 4-5. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S35697777> for photos. A female **Harlequin Duck** was observed at Douglas Beach Park and a **Black Scoter** (three were seen Apr 11) was observed along the Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Beach Park Apr 9 by Rick Brigham. A female type **Surf Scoter** was seen at W end of Lake Macatawa Apr 15 by Carl and Judi Manning. A **Cattle Egret** was

found by Phil Vreeman at the Swanson Rd/Musketawa Trl area Apr 22. A **Lawrence's Warbler** (Golden/Blue-winged hybrid) was observed by Casey Irwin at his residence in Muskegon Co Apr 29-30. He believes this is the same bird he observed at his home last year. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S36388583> for photo. A **Harris's Sparrow** was observed at the Notman residence in Zeeland Twp Apr 30.

Other notables: 18 **Greater White-fronted Geese** continued since Feb at Allegan State Game Area, Todd Farm Apr 1, up to 15 continued since Mar at the Coopersville Goose Field (Conran Dr) Apr 12 and up to seven **Cackling Geese** continued since Mar at same location Apr 2; at least one Ruffed Grouse continued since Mar at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 5 and at three other locations in Muskegon Co during the month; two **Red-throated Loons** at Douglas Beach Park and one at Wade's Bayou Park in Allegan Co Apr 9, three at the Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Beach Park Apr 11 and one also at Holland State Park and Kalamazoo River mouth; up to 21 Horned Grebe at Reeds Lake throughout the month and up to 35 at Muskegon Wastewater throughout the month; up to two **Eared Grebe** at Muskegon Wastewater through the month and one at Reeds Lake Apr 13-15; five **American White Pelicans** on the Grand River near Lost Channel in Ottawa Co Apr 13 and two at Byron Lake in Kent Co Apr 20-21; **American Bitterns** at Pine Creek Park, Hofma Preserve and Upper Macatawa Natural Area all in Ottawa Co and at Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve and Muskegon State Game Area, Lane's Landing (also a **Least Bittern** Apr 26); two Great Egret at Covell Park in Muskegon Co Apr 1 – first report; Osprey nesting at various locations in the four-county area; a **Northern Goshawk** at Rosy Mound Natural Area in Ottawa Co Apr 13; up to two **Iceland Gulls** at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 21-22; up to four **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 2-23, one continued since Mar at 118th Ave between 23rd and 24th Sts in Allegan Co Apr 5 and one at Byron Lake in Kent Co Apr 20 and 30; a **Glaucous Gull** at Grand Haven Apr 2 and at Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Beach Park Apr 9; a Forster's Tern at Reeds Lake Apr 14; a **Snowy Owl** continued at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 7 and one at West Michigan Regional Airport in Allegan Co Apr 29; two **Short-eared Owls** continued since Mar at the model airplane field at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 7 and one was heard along 120th Ave W of 57th St in Allegan Co Apr 4; five Eastern Whip-poor-wills at Allegan State Game Area Apr 25; two early Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at Upper Macatawa Natural Area Apr 20; a Red-headed Woodpecker is a regular visitor at a residence on Big Blue Lake in Muskegon Co, four adults chasing each other around Big Blue Lake campground Apr 17 and one reported at several other locations in the area; Peregrine Falcon pair nesting on J B Sims Power Plant stack on Harbor Island, Grand Haven (incubation of four eggs seen on falcon cam Apr 7) and two nesting pairs have been confirmed in downtown Grand Rapids – one on the Courthouse and another on GVSU's Eberhard Center; one Common Raven at Swan Creek Marsh in Allegan Co Apr 3 – range expanding southward; an early **Sedge Wren** at Muskegon State Game Area, Lane's Landing Apr 26; an early Marsh Wren at Hofma Preserve in Ottawa Co Apr 17; very impressive migration of Golden and Ruby-crowned kinglets throughout the month, especially Muskegon and Ottawa cos; a **Northern Mockingbird** at 60th St S of S runway of Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport Apr 26 and at a residence along 152nd Ave S of Ransom St in Ottawa Co Apr 26-28; **60 Lapland Longspur** at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 5 and two in Allegan Co Apr 30; **sparrows**: a **Clay-colored** at a residence on Irwin Dr in Muskegon Co Apr 26-30; a Grasshopper at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 22 and up to four at Allegan State Game Area, Todd Farm Apr 25-28; up to two **Henslow's** along 60th St near S runway of Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport Apr 16-17,26, six seen in a restricted area (with permission for survey) near this same location and seven at Kraft Ave access Apr 25; 16 Fox at VanRaalte Farm in Ottawa Co Apr 1; a **Dark-eyed Junco Oregon race** continued since late Feb at a residence in Douglas Apr 6 and one continued since Mar 23 at a residence on Irwin Dr in Muskegon Co Apr 16; an early Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a residence in Muskegon Apr 11; a **Western Meadowlark** seen and heard at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 9-10; good migration of Rusty Blackbirds throughout the area; two **Brewer's Blackbirds** at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 5 (first report) and up to six there through Apr 30 and several at other locations in Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa cos; an **Orchard Oriole** at Roselle Park in Kent Co Apr 26; an early Baltimore Oriole at Black Lake Park in Muskegon Co Apr 4; good migration of Purple Finch throughout the area; three Common Redpoll continued since Mar 19 at a residence along 17-Mile Rd E of Division in Kent Co Apr 6; and three Pine Siskins at a residence in East Grand Rapids Apr 13 and one at several other locations.