

April 2018 eBird Summary

Very Unusual and Rare Sightings

by Carol VanOeveren

The following is an overview of the very unusual and rare eBird sightings for April 2018 for Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. This report does 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.

The operative words for April were cold, windy, rainy and snowy – the coldest start to April since 1972 ending up 7.7 degrees below normal overall and the 4th coldest April on record. Only three days (11th, 12th and 13th) were near to above normal prior to a whopping windy, rain/freezing rain/snow storm that first dumped inches of rain and then ice, sleet and snow through that weekend with snow lingering into the following Tuesday. The result was numerous power outages and treacherous ice and sleet-covered roads. We finally entered a warming pattern by the 19th, with temperatures slowly warming to around 70 by month's end.

Although **Snowy Owl** sightings dwindled somewhat, they continued to be seen at several locations: **Allegan Co** - two along 58th St S of 136th Ave Apr 13, one at 64th St and 143rd Ave Apr 18, one along 50th St S of M-40 Apr 20, one at 48th St and 142nd Ave Apr 20, one at West Michigan Regional Airport in Allegan Co Apr 30. **Kent Co** - one at Hull Ln and Hart St Apr 21, one along M-6 near Thornapple Pointe Golf Course Apr 30. **Muskegon Co** - one at Muskegon Wastewater through the month (two seen Apr 22), one along Moorland Rd S of Cline Rd Apr 21. **Ottawa Co** - one at 128th Ave and Bingham St area Apr 9-28, one at Holland SP Apr 10-22, one at 64th Ave and Gordon St Apr 16, one along 116th Ave S of Van Buren St Apr 18, one along 68th Ave S of Garfield St Apr 18.

The mid-month ice storm had an impact on migrants. **Fox Sparrows** had an exceptional movement through the area this spring. Large numbers were downed, especially in Ottawa and Muskegon counties, where 20 plus per day were being reported at feeders during and after the storm. Undoubtedly, migrants perished in this event due to the inability to find natural food sources (or an alternative such as a feeder) because of the ice and snow cover. The cold weather also hampered migration overall. For example, only ten species of warblers were observed by month's end: Nashville, Orange-crowned, Black-and-White, Pine, Palm, Yellow, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green and Yellow-rumped. Last year 18 species had been seen.

The best finds: A first year (hatched 2017) **Whooping Crane** was found by Lisa Casler at Grand Haven SGA, Bruce Bayou, 129th Ave access Apr 11 and continued Apr 14. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44478375> and <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44479718> for photos and a video. You may remember that an adult male known as Lily (spotted here in Kent Co in 2015) was seen at the Schoonover WPA in Lenawee Co last summer and fall. Now six years old, Lily returned to this same area early this month likely migrating in with the Sandhill Cranes. Visit <http://graud.org/whooper.html> for a profile and history of this bird. A **Surf Scoter** was found at an unusual inland location, Reeds Lake, by Felix Perdue April 20. A **Franklin's Gull** was found by Ken Sapkowski at the Wastewater Apr 16. Two **Red Crossbills** (male and female) were observed by Dave Allen at a feeder at a private residence at 64th St and 143rd Ave in Allegan Co Apr 15-16 with the male continuing Apr 17-18. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44596906> to view Dave Allen and Eric Gustafson's photos along with a Pine and Yellow-rumped warbler eating suet (this was during the sleet/ice storm).

Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Apr 5, three there Apr 18-19 and three at the Coopersville Goose Field – most likely the same individuals that were frequenting the sewage ponds; a **Ross's Goose** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Apr 16; up to 17 **Cackling Geese** continued since Mar 2 at 116th Ave and 8th St wetland in Allegan Co Apr 9, five at the Wastewater Apr 7, three at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Apr 7-8 and six along Swanson Rd N of Hile Rd in Muskegon Co Apr 13; Rick Brigham and Caleb Putnam observed **764 Canvasback**, **356 Redhead** and a very unusual **Redhead x Ring-necked Duck** hybrid while birding the Gun River Aggregates gravel pit (restricted access site) in Allegan Co Apr 9; **2,100 Long-tailed Ducks** at Douglas Beach Park in Allegan Co Apr 8; est **1,000 Bufflehead** and **2,000 Ruddy Ducks** at the Wastewater Apr 29 – not unusual, but very high numbers; **23 Common Loons** at Reeds Lake Apr 21; a **Red-throated Loon** at Holland SP Apr 2, up to three at Grand Haven north pier Apr 14-18, one at Reeds Lake Apr 25; **45 Horned Grebes** at the Wastewater Apr 29; an **Eared Grebe** at the Wastewater Apr 5-8 and 27-30 and one at Grand Haven north pier Apr 18-22; three **American White Pelicans** near Dermo Bayou, Grand River seen from Boom Rd in Ottawa Co Apr 16 (visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44635471> for photos) and nine on the Grand River near Lost Channel in Ottawa Co Apr 21; an **American Bittern** at Blandford NC in Grand Rapids, one at Muskegon SGA Lane's Landing, one at Allegan SGA 44th St wetland, one at Hofma Preserve in Ottawa Co and one at Kalamazoo River Morrison Bayou in Allegan Co; a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Windmill Island entrance pond in Holland Apr 17, seven (six adults, one immature) at Van Bragt Park in Holland Apr 19 (two continued through Apr 21), one at Pine Creek Park in Ottawa Co Apr 19-20, one at Harbor Island Apr 21-24 and two at Window-on-the-Waterfront Apr 23; a **Golden Eagle** continued since Jan at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Apr 10; a **Common Gallinule** (which is no longer common) at Grand Haven SGA Bruce Bayou 129th Ave access, one at 11th St lake in Allegan Co, up to three at Window-on-the-Waterfront in Holland, one at Harbor Island in Grand Haven, two at Kalamazoo River 63rd St boat launch in Allegan Co and one at 116th Ave and 8th St wetland in Allegan Co; one **American Golden-Plover** at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Apr 24 – new Ottawa Co early spring arrival record; two **Piping Plovers** at Muskegon SP Apr 22-30 – most likely same pair that nested here last year; four early **Long-billed Dowitchers** at the Coopersville Goose Field off Conran Dr Apr 4 continued through Apr 19 (visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44286169> for photos); **350 Bonaparte's Gulls** in flooded fields at Upper Macatawa Natural Area in Ottawa Co Apr 20; an **Iceland Gull** at Holland SP Apr 10; a **Eurasian Collared-Dove** associating with a Mourning Dove at a residence along 118th Ave W of 62nd St in Allegan Co Apr 21; a **Short-eared Owl** at the Kraft Ave access at Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport Apr 4 (one also seen at the E end of 52nd St SE at the airport Apr 24 – possibly same bird) and one at the Wastewater Apr 22; two early **Eastern Kingbirds** at Donald Lamoreaux Park in Kent Co Apr 1; a **Common Raven** at Allegan SGA Swan Creek Marsh Apr 9 – expanding southerly range; an early **Magnolia Warbler** at Apple Trail in Holland Apr 13; an early **Savannah Sparrow** at the Rivertown Crossings Mall ponds Apr 4; **181 Dark-eyed Juncos** at a residence in Douglas Apr 17; a **Dark-eyed Junco Oregon race** at the feeders at Hemlock Crossing Park in Ottawa Co Apr 4 and one at a residence near Hoffmaster SP in Muskegon Co Apr 7; the **Western Meadowlark** continued since Mar 19 along 58th St between 116th and 117th Aves Allegan SGA Todd Farm Apr 29; **70 Rusty Blackbirds** at 120th Ave potholes in Allegan Co Apr 11; two **Brewer's Blackbirds** at a feeder at a residence near Hoffmaster SP in Muskegon Co Apr 15, two at the Coopersville/Garfield farmland E of 68th Ave in Ottawa Co Apr 18 (along with 14 Lapland Longspurs and eleven Snow Buntings – getting late for these), three at New Holland St and 48th Ave in Ottawa Co Apr 20-21, up to seven at 84th St and Wilson SW in Kent Co Apr 22-27, up to eleven at AAA Turf Farm in Ottawa Co Apr 26-27 and up to 20 at the Wastewater Apr 27-29; and **Pine Siskins** were still in widespread good numbers throughout the month.