

**April 2021 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 2021 for Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. This report does not include rare birds that are flyovers, unchaseable, on inaccessible private property and those with sketchy details.

April 1 really was April Fool's Day with temps only reaching the high 30s and a few snow showers. By Easter temps rebounded to near 70 along with dry, sunny days. Occasional showers and some thunderstorms moved in the 5th through the 11th, but temps remained mostly above to much above normal through the 10th. Near to much below normal (freeze warnings the nights of the 20th and 21st) and dry weather followed through the 26th, except for some rain on the 19th and snow showers on the 21st. A warming trend the 26th through 28th did not last. After rain and the passage of several cold fronts temps in the 50s ended the month.

The cold weather and unfavorable winds noticeably slowed neotropical, shorebird and other migrants even more so than the cold conditions last year. Seventeen warbler species were reported by April 30 (several not showing up until the last four days of the month, and that likely due to the brief warm up along with favorable southerly winds ahead of a strong cold front): Ovenbird (one), Northern and Louisiana Waterthrush, Blue-winged (one), Orange-crowned, Tennessee (one), Nashville, Black-and-white, Black-throated Green, Prothonotary (one at Stu Visser Trails, one along Paul Henry Trail at 108th St), Magnolia (two), Hooded (one), Common Yellowthroat, Palm (good increase in numbers late month), Yellow, Pine (numerous as expected – not a neotropical species) and Yellow-rumped (not abundant until late month). Shorebirds trickled through the area: Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer (common and have been in the area since Feb as expected), Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Upland, Solitary, Pectoral, Spotted and Least sandpipers and Dunlin were reported and none in higher numbers except for Lesser Yellowlegs and Pectoral. A Piping Plover, a Marbled Godwit and up to two Long-billed Dowitchers were the only unusual species. I cannot count the nine Willets seen at Medbery Park at White Lake channel for the summary as these were unchaseable, migrating flyovers.

A 3 1/2 hour hawk watch at Saugatuck Dunes State Park the afternoon of April 26 by Caleb Putnam and Julie Pedreros (joining Rick Brigham who had been counting there most of the morning) yielded 14 raptor species, Broad-winged Hawk being the most numerous (318), along with other migrants. Of special interest was the sighting of a

Swainson's Hawk, possibly the first record for Allegan County. Visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S86446205> to view their entire checklist. Later that day, other birders at Mt Pisgah Dune boardwalk in Holland, searching for the Swainson's Hawk, had similar findings with lower numbers during a shorter time period.

**Notables for the month:** A **ROSS'S GOOSE** continued since Mar at the Muskegon Wastewater Apr 5-18 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S85059103> to view Gordon Atkins' photos). A rare **CINNAMON TEAL** (found by Dave Herdegen) on the Grand River observed from his residence on Grand Point Dr in Ottawa Co Apr 20 and later relocated downstream at East Grand River Park area Apr 20-22 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S86000914> to view Carl Manning's photo). Est **220-273 Ring-necked Ducks** still at Pickerel Lake Nature Preserve in Kent Co Apr 3-17 – known hangout for this species during migration. Eleven **White-winged Scoters** at Port Sheldon Pigeon Lake Apr 1, 15 at Oval Beach in Saugatuck Apr 2, up to three at Ottawa Sands County Park in Ottawa Co Apr 8-28, ten at Holland SP Apr 10, 22 (along with two Black Scoters) viewed from High St S shore of Muskegon Lake Apr 11, four at Muskegon Lake channel Apr 17, three at Meinert Park in Muskegon Co Apr 24. Up to **88 Red-breasted Mergansers** still at Byron Lakes in Kent Co Apr 14 with number dropping off later in the month – known inland location for decent counts during migration. A **Red-throated Loon** continued since late Mar at Oval Beach Apr 2. Fourteen **Horned Grebes** at Oval Beach Apr 2. Two **Eared Grebes** at the Wastewater Apr 3 and at least one continued Apr 10-30. **Double-crested Cormorants** returned to their nesting/roosting island at Winnetaska Rd/Nugent Sand lagoons in Muskegon; 188 were counted on Mar 30. The cormorants have been nesting on this island for years. Ten **American White Pelicans** (found by Dave Herdegen) on Grand River observed from residence near Martinique Island in Ottawa Co Apr 10; likely same flock seen later same day flying north from Harbor Island and North Ottawa Dunes Park, seven (found by Robert Lawshe) at the Wastewater Apr 10 and one still there Apr 11, seven (found by Tim Cornish) at East Lake in Allegan Co Apr 10, up to twelve (nine originally found by David Smitley) at center west end of Muskegon Lake seen from Custer Park in North Muskegon Apr 17 and same flock seen later the same day at Veterans Park at the Causeway across the Muskegon River, three at East Grand River Park in Ottawa Co Apr 24, eight (found by Dave Herdegen/Scott Schmidt) at Martinique Island marshes Apr 29-30. Up to two **American Bitterns** at Upper Macatawa Natural Area 84th Ave access in Ottawa Co Apr 7-30 – first report, one at Wau-Ke-Na William Erby Smith Preserve south tract in Allegan Co Apr 26, one at Muskegon SGA Lane's Landing Apr 27-29. A **Least Bittern** at Muskegon SGA Lane's Landing Apr 27-30. Two **Great Egrets** at Covell Park in Whitehall Apr 2 – first report. A **LITTLE BLUE HERON** (found by Jim/Tracy Zervos) at Muskegon SP Snug Harbor marsh Apr 14-30

(visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S85557200> to view Jack and Oliver Kew's photos and <https://ebird.org/checklist/S85604338> to view Carl and Judi Manning's photos). A **Green Heron** along S shore of Muskegon Lake at Lakeshore Dr/High St Apr 17 – first report; early. A **Black-crowned Night-Heron** (found by Cary Okoro) at Reeds Lake Apr 11 – first report (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S85367510> to view Jill Henemyer's photos) and one there Apr 22-24 – unknown if same bird reported earlier in month. A **GOLDEN EAGLE** continued since Nov at the Wastewater Apr 11. A **Common Gallinule** at Grand Haven SGA Bruce Bayou 132nd Ave access Apr 27 – known location; first report. One **PIPING PLOVER** (found by Carl/Judi Manning) at Holland SP Apr 23 – first report (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S86162351> to view Carl's photos). Two **Upland Sandpipers** at the Wastewater Apr 17 – first report, three at West Michigan Regional Airport in Allegan Co Apr 27. A **MARbled GODWIT** (found by James Markham) at the flooded field 13 Mile Rd/Berrigan Ave NE in Kent Co Apr 28 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S86612615> to view photos). A **LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** at the Wastewater Apr 24-25 – initially observed by a group of 15 birders on field trip or survey, two there Apr 28 (unknown if one was continuing). An **Iceland Gull** at the Wastewater Apr 6 and 19 and one Thayer's Apr 19. Two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at Lake Macatawa south breakwall Apr 5, one continued since Mar at Byron Lakes Apr 9, up to three continued since Mar at the Wastewater Apr 27, four at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center Apr 15, two at Grand Haven north pier Apr 27-28, one at Holland SP Apr 29. A **Glaucous Gull** continued since Jan at the Wastewater Apr 1 and two Apr 19, one at Holland SP Apr 14. Up to seven **Forster's Terns** at Reeds Lake Apr 27-30. Three **EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES** (found by Ty Wagenmaker) at Farmers Cooperative Elevator Byron Rd/64th Ave in Ottawa Co Apr 9 and two continued through Apr 26; one observed carrying nesting material to top of grain elevator early in month. Up to two **Snowy Owls** (one with extensive barring and another with minimal barring) continued since Nov at the Wastewater Apr 6, one continued since Mar at Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport Kraft Ave access Apr 5 and one seen near airport entrance Apr 20. Up to two **Short-eared Owls** continued since late Mar at Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport Kraft Ave access Apr 24 and one seen from end of 52nd St E of Kraft SE Apr 29. An **Eastern Whip-poor-will** heard at a residence in Rockford and heard from a residence along Russell Rd S of E Lakewood Rd in Muskegon Co both Apr 27 – first reports. A **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** at a residence in Wayland Apr 28 – first report. A **Red-headed Woodpecker** at a residence near DePersia South Highlands Nature Preserve in Ottawa Co Apr 10 – first report, two at Ottawa Sands County Park – known location. An **Alder Flycatcher** at the Wastewater Apr 24 – early. An **Eastern Kingbird** at the Wastewater Apr 4 – early. A **WHITE-EYED VIREO** (found by Kevin Vande Vusse) at the Wastewater near the administration building Apr 28 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S86597317> to view photo), one (found by Beth Miller) at

Black Lake Park in Muskegon Co Apr 30 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S86746493> to view photo). Two **Purple Martins** at Stu Visser Trails in Ottawa Co Apr 4 and Grand Haven north pier Apr 5 – first male “scouts” arrival, at least 35 at the martin houses at Grand Haven north pier Apr 26-27 – known location for many years. A **House Wren** at Ottawa Sands County Park in Ottawa Co Apr 7 – early. A **Sedge Wren** at Huff Park Apr 29 – first report. A **Wood Thrush** at De Graaf Nature Center in Ottawa Co Apr 5 – first report. A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** at a residence near Calvin University in SE Grand Rapids Apr 12 – first report; very early. Fifteen **Lapland Longspurs** at 118th Ave/23rd St fields in Allegan Co Apr 16 – getting late. **Warblers of note:** A **Louisiana Waterthrush** at Mildred A Peterson Nature Preserve in Allegan Co Apr 4 – first report, one at Allegan SGA Swan Creek at 116th Ave Apr 26, three at Aman Park in Ottawa Co Apr 26-29 – known location for years, one at Rabbit River Preserve in Allegan Co Apr 29. A **Prothonotary** at Stu Visser Trails in Ottawa Co Apr 27 – first report; known location, one along Paul Henry Trail at 108th St in Kent Co Apr 28. A **Hooded** at a residence along 76th Ave S of Byron Rd in Ottawa Co Apr 28 – first report. 42 **Yellow-rumped** at Ottawa Sands County Park in Ottawa Co Apr 11 and 70 there Apr 28 – became more abundant throughout the area late month. Five **American Tree Sparrows** still coming to feeders at residence along 76th Ave S of Byron Rd in Ottawa Co Apr 28 – getting late. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** visiting a feeder at a residence along Riley St E of 160th Ave in Ottawa Co Apr 2-3 – unusual. A **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Muskegon Wastewater Apr 14 – first report. A **Henslow’s Sparrow** at 52nd St E of Kraft Ave SE Apr 28-29 – first report; known location. A first winter male or female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at Huff Park Apr 5 – early. An **Indigo Bunting** at Wau-Ke-Na William Erby Smith Preserve south tract in Allegan Co Apr 6 – early. A **Dickcissel** at Muskegon Lake channel Apr 17 – first report. A **Bobolink** at 52nd St E of Kraft Ave SE Apr 28 – first report. The **WESTERN MEADOWLARK** continued at Allegan SGA Todd Farm at usual location through the month. Large numbers of **Rusty Blackbirds** continued to be seen at Crockery Creek Natural Area in Ottawa Co with est 150 Apr 4; good counts at various locations in all four counties. Up to three **Brewer’s Blackbirds** at 84th St and Wilson SW (Celery Flats) in Kent Co Apr 8-18 and seven there Apr 19, one at Calvin University Ecosystem Preserve Apr 11, four at AAA Turf Farm in Ottawa Co Apr 16-21, up to two at the Wastewater Apr 17-29, one at Harbor Island Apr 23. An **Orchard Oriole** at 52nd St E of Kraft Ave SE Apr 28 – first report; early. A **Baltimore Oriole** at DeGraaf Nature Center in Ottawa Co Apr 5 – early. A flock of up to 27 **Common Redpolls** continued at feeders daily at a residence along Barry St W of 88th Ave in Ottawa Co Apr 5 – the large numbers at this residence diminished significantly since mid-Mar and only one seen Apr 9, seven still coming to feeders at a residence along Kreuter Rd E of Dix Dr NE in Kent Co Apr 7 with two continuing there through Apr 30 – late. A **HOARY REDPOLL** coming to a feeder at Lakewood Condos in Holland Apr 18-19. **Pine Siskins** still visited feeders in the area through the month.

**Note: Whooping Crane “Lily”** again returned to the area of the old DeMor Hills golf course at Ranger Highway and Lime Creek Road in Lenawee County on March 18 and will presumably be present at this location until fall migration. He frequents a pond on the east side of Ranger about a half-mile south of Lime Creek. It is unknown if he has mated with one of the Sandhill Cranes he associates with. “Lily” was first seen as a three-year old in Kent County in May of 2015. You can read more about “Lily” on the GRAC website at <http://graud.org/whooper.html>