

December 2020 eBird Summary
Very Unusual and Rare Sightings
by Carol VanOeveren

The following is an overview of the very unusual and rare eBird sightings for December 2020 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.

After just missing out on a huge snowstorm that hit the eastern half of the state, an uneventful near normal dry period with several sunny days continued through the first eleven days of the month. A messy system brought heavy rain and then a little snow to the Grand Rapids area late on the 11th through the 12th. Fairly seasonable temps followed through the 23rd with only minor precipitation, missing yet another huge storm that passed to our east on the 15th and 16th. Highs only in the 20s on the 24th and 25th produced lake effect snow showers for a white Christmas and finally our first official inch of snow (1.2 in. at Kent Co airport), which was the latest ever in the season. A round of heavy snow and mix followed late on the 29th through the 30th.

With the warmer conditions and open water continuing through the month, good numbers of waterfowl continued congregating at the Muskegon Wastewater including Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, Northern Shoveler (thousands; one leucistic individual late month), Gadwall, Mallard, Ring-necked Duck, scaup, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck (over a thousand) and others as well as up to three Long-tailed Ducks, one of which had been there since November.

The winter finch irruption continued with Common Redpolls (very abundant, some larger numbers reported below) along with a few Hoaries, Purple Finches and Pine Siskins reported throughout the month. Two White-winged Crossbills showed up at a residence in Rockford, one at a residence in Holland and one at Greenwood Cemetery in NW Grand Rapids. Evening Grosbeaks were at private residences in Allegan and Kent Co late month.

Notables for the month: A **Greater White-fronted Goose** (found by Kyle/Amy Werner) on Flat River along Riverside Dr near Lowell Dec 31. Six **Snow Geese** along Bingham St W of 120th Ave in Ottawa Co Dec 3-8, one continued at the Wastewater Dec 11, one at Grand River Open Space in Ottawa Co Dec 18. Up to five **Cackling Geese** at the Wastewater Dec 5-21, six at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Dec 27, one at Byron Lakes in Kent Co Dec 28-29, one at Versluis Park in Kent Co Dec 31. A good number of **Hooded Mergansers (48)** at Myers Lake in Kent Co Dec 4. A **Surf Scoter** continued since Nov 22 at Reeds Lake Dec 3 – unusual inland location, one at Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Dec 7. Up to 25 **Black Scoters** continued since Nov at Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Dec 31, one at Lake Macatawa west end and Grand Haven SP Dec 13, six at Kalamazoo River mouth Dec 22. **1,100 Long-tailed Ducks** at Pere Marquette Park in Muskegon Co Dec 5. Three **Red-throated Loons** at Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Dec 7. A **RED-NECKED GREBE** (found by Jeff Kunitzer) at Muskegon Lake channel Dec 18, one (found by John Hamel) on the Flat River in downtown Lowell Dec 21-22 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S77842228> to view Myles McNally's photo). Three **Great Egrets** at a pond on NE corner of Exchange and School St in Spring Lake Dec 5 returned to Mill Point Park (across

the street) Dec 6; these birds were previously reported at Mill Point Park in late Nov-Dec 4, one at a pond at Comstock St and 168th Ave in Grand Haven Dec 11 (new record late date for Ottawa Co). One **Turkey Vulture** at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center Dec 28 – very late. A leucistic **Red-tailed Hawk** at Grand River Open Space in Ottawa Co Dec 18 – likely same individual that was present in 2019. A **GOLDEN EAGLE** continued since Nov at the Wastewater Dec 26, one likely (found by Kyle/Amy Werner) along Flat River near Lowell Dec 31 (locals claim both Bald and Golden eagles have been seen in the area). A **Virginia Rail** continued since Nov at Allegan SGA 44th St wetland Dec 27 – two wintered at this location last year. A **PURPLE SANDPIPER** continued since Nov at Pere Marquette Park Dec 6-20 and three (found by the Lautenbachs) there Dec 12 and up to **five** (found by Tom Pavlik [4]/John Kippe [5]) there Dec 13-15 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S77534825> to view Jason Carlson's photos along with a beautiful male Long-tailed Duck in basic plumage) – this is likely a record high number for Muskegon Co, up to two (second bird found by the Mannings Dec 8) continued since Nov at Holland SP Dec 13. An **Iceland Gull** (kumlieni) at Gun Lake Park in Allegan Co Dec 9, one at the Wastewater Dec 12, up to two at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center Dec 23-31. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Bostwick Lake in Kent Co Dec 3, up to three continued at the Wastewater Dec 12, up to two at Byron Lakes in Kent Co Dec 11-29, one at Kalamazoo Lake and two at Oval Beach in Allegan Co Dec 21, up to three at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center Dec 23-31. A **Glaucous Gull** at Holland SP Dec 7 and 31, up to two at Byron Lakes in Kent Co Dec 18-30, one at Pere Marquette Park Dec 19, up to two at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center Dec 23-31. Two **EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES** (found by Stan Koster) at the Ravenna Feed Mill in Muskegon Co Dec 29. Up to two **Snowy Owls** continued since Nov at the Wastewater through the month, one at 128th Ave and Bingham St in Ottawa Co Dec 5 continued Dec 22, one continued since Nov 30 at Pere Marquette Park Dec 18, one at Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport Kraft Ave access Dec 7-8, one along Fruitvale Rd W of Ochs Rd in Muskegon Co Dec 7-15, one at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Dec 11, one along 58th St S of 136th Ave in Allegan Co Dec 16. A **LONG-EARED OWL** (found by Rick Brigham/Will Keller) at Allegan SGA Todd Farm in secluded area near the fields where SEOW hunt Dec 13-15. Up to four **Short-eared Owls** (two initially found by John VanOrman) at Allegan SGA Todd Farm in fields around 116th Ave/62nd St Dec 4-31 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S77069891> to view photos), up to two continued since Oct at the Wastewater Dec 21. A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (found by Jim Markham) at Ball Perkins Park in Kent Co Dec 9 through at least Dec 18 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S77350273> to view Michael Bowen's photos) – per request of the initial observer, this listing was removed from the GRAC website bird sightings page due to the species' sensitivity so as not to further disturb the roost site, one (found by Rick Brigham/Will Keller) at Allegan SGA 116th Ave/48th/46th St area Dec 13-27 and one (Rick Brigham) at Round Lake in Allegan Co Dec 27– both nocturnal; heard only. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at a residence along Buttrick Ave near Whitburn St SE in Kent Co Dec 14-17 – late. A **Northern Shrike** at Grand River Open Space in Ottawa Co Dec 4, one continued since Nov at the Wastewater Dec 6, one at Outdoor Discovery Center in Allegan Co Dec 14-31, one along 110th Ave btw 20th and 22nd St in Allegan Co Dec 26, one at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Dec 27. A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** at the Bend Area in Ottawa Co Dec 14 – late. A **Hermit Thrush** at Millennium Park Dec 31 – late. A **NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (found by Jeremy Overway) at a residence on S Hampton St in Holland Dec 12 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S77435824> to view Beth Miller's photos). Eight **Lapland Longspurs** at a residence along Barry St W of 88th Ave in Ottawa Co Dec 7, 20 at the Wastewater Dec 30, a few in

farm fields in Allegan Co. **Snow Buntings** continued in all four counties; high count of **200** at Kraft Ave access Kent Co Airport Dec 1. A **Common Yellowthroat** at Windmill Island Park in Holland Dec 19 – very late. A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at end of 52nd St E of Kraft Ave SE in Kent Co Dec 11 – late. **Late sparrows:** A **Lincoln's** at a residence on Union Ave in SE Grand Rapids Dec 7-11. Two **Swamp** at Windmill Island Park in Holland Dec 19. Up to six **White-crowned** at Outdoor Discovery Center in Allegan Co through the month (winter at this location). A **Rusty Blackbird** at Stu Visser Trails in Ottawa Co Dec 11 – late. Up to two male **WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS** (found by homeowner, reported by Caleb Putnam) at a residence on Cahill Dr in Rockford Dec 1-5 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S77022335> to view Tanya Smythe's photos), one (found by Caleb Putnam/Julie Pedreros) at Greenwood Cemetery NW Grand Rapids Dec 5 and Dec 22 (Scott Hutchings), one female (found by homeowner) at a residence on Bay Circle Dr in Holland Dec 11-12. **Common Redpolls** continued through the month in large numbers at the Wastewater with at least **300+** reported, 50 at Weber Farm in Muskegon Co Dec 2, at least 40 at Outdoor Discovery Center throughout the month, at least 76 (along with one **HOARY** found by Lonny Garris/Cindy Dobrez Dec 10) at residence along Barry St W of 88th Ave in Ottawa Co Dec 10-13, est **200** (total of several flocks) at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Dec 13, 70 at WayPoint Community Church on State St in Zeeland Dec 19, **220** along 120th Ave W of Patterson Rd in Allegan Co Dec 19, 84 along Ellis Rd E of Blackmer Rd in Muskegon Co Dec 31. Two **HOARY REDPOLLS** (found by Rob Keys) with a flock of 40 Common Redpolls at Wabasis Ave and Elkins St in Kent Co Dec 1, up to two continued since Nov at the Wastewater Dec 23. Six **EVENING GROSBEAKS** at a residence along 54th St S of 122nd Ave in Allegan Co Dec 24, one at a residence along Buttrick Ave near Whitburn SE in Kent Co Dec 26.