

## February 2017 eBird Summary

by Carol VanOeveren

The following is an overview of the interesting, unusual or rare eBird sightings for February 2017 for Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. This report does not include rare birds that are flyovers, unchaseable and those with sketchy details. Unusual eBird sightings are updated daily on the GRAC website.

Topsy-turvy weather ruled the month from cold and snowy to warm and rainy. By mid-month we had very little snow on the ground again, and by the 17th we were experiencing temperatures well above normal with record highs in the 50s and 60s, which lasted through the following week resulting in early arrivals of short-distance migrants. Seasonal temperatures and a little snowfall returned after thunderstorms and the passage of a strong cold front on the 24th. More thunderstorms and warmth ended the month.

February is generally a transitional month for birding. Early spring migrants start to return and winter visitors and most waterfowl are still in their wintering areas. Migratory robins started returning in early February with many heard singing. One was singing in our NW Grand Rapids neighborhood February 5th and several visited our yard on the 8th. This was early, as I usually don't see migrant robins until mid-month or later. A huge flock of 103 was seen by Jill Henemyer in the Fairmount Square area in SE Grand Rapids on February 13. Short-distance migrants and some waterfowl were definitely early and on the move, likely in response to the warm temperatures and lack of snow cover throughout the Midwest and especially south of Michigan. A Turkey Vulture was seen west of Otsego, Allegan Co Feb 10, Sandhill Cranes were seen in fields and overhead by mid-month, a Killdeer was spotted flying around the Amway complex in Ada Feb 17, a Red-winged Blackbird was singing at a residence near Pine Creek Park, Ottawa Co Feb 6 and eleven (some singing) were seen at Upper Macatawa Natural Area Feb 17 (huge flocks were observed throughout the area later), five Eastern Meadowlarks (some singing) were at the Muskegon Wastewater Feb 5 with more mid-month, a Common Grackle was at Brookside Park, Allegan Co Feb 18 (large flocks were observed throughout the area later) and three Brown-headed Cowbirds were at a residence S of Holland in Allegan Co Feb 8 (the cowbirds reported last month in Allegan Co and at the Muskegon Wastewater were likely overwintering birds). Waterfowl migration was also underway. Jim Zervos reported 19 species at the Muskegon Wastewater Feb 27. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S34849550> for his checklist of 30 total species.

Finds of the month: Many sightings of **Ross's Geese**: one was found by Brad Heath at the Muskegon Wastewater Feb 1. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S34093479> for photos. Six were seen there by Lizzy Kibbey and others Feb 25. Three were seen in the 128th Ave and Bingham St area with a large flock of Snow Geese Feb 26 by Carl and Judi Manning. Six were seen by Rick Brigham at the Allegan State Game Area Todd Farm Feb 27. One was on a pond at the Wassink residence in Ottawa Co and one was seen by Carl and Judi Manning at Macatawa Legends Golf Course Feb 28. The **Golden Eagle** seen in Jan continued at the Muskegon Wastewater. It was seen by Kevin Vande Vusse on Feb 4 and again Feb 18-20 and 27 by other observers. Another was observed by Jess Sory along 104th Ave N of Quincy, Ottawa Co Feb 19. **Iceland Gulls** continued to be found at Lake Macatawa in Holland. One was observed at the Kollen Park/Heinz Waterfront Walkway Feb 4, a Kumlien's race continued since Jan at the Fire Dock (end of Lake Dr) on the south shore Feb 9, two continued at Chippewa Point Feb 11, one at Dunton Park Feb 11 and 17 and one at Anchorage Marina Feb 18. Darren Clark found two **Thayer's Gulls** perched on dock posts at Anchorage Marina at Lake Macatawa Feb 9. The **Northern Mockingbird** continued since Dec at Hemlock Crossing Park in Ottawa Co through at least Feb 12.

Other notables: up to two **Greater White-fronted Geese** continued since late Jan at Muskegon Wastewater Feb 18, up to 15 at Hopkins Wastewater Plant in Allegan Co Feb 25-26 and **140** at Allegan State Game Area, Todd Farm Feb 27; Snow Geese were on the move – larger counts: 79 at Muskegon Wastewater Feb 27, 73 at the 128th Ave and Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Feb 26, 30 at Gun Lake Casino area Feb 26, 29 at 116th Ave and 8th St wetland in Allegan Co Feb 27 and **312** at Allegan State Game Area, Todd Farm Feb 27; three **Cackling Geese** at Allegan State Game Area, Todd Farm Feb 27; nine Trumpeter Swans at Quincy Park in Ottawa Co Feb 6, up to eight continued since Dec at 128th Ave and Bingham in Ottawa Co throughout the month and **37** at Muskegon Wastewater Feb 20; 23 Tundra Swans at a farm w/acreage and pond W of 152nd Ave S of Ransom in Ottawa Co Feb 24; **150** Canvasback (cons est), **250** Redhead (cons est) and at least **400** Greater Scaup at Chippewa Point, Lake Macatawa Feb 25 – strong westerly winds following a strong cold front most likely pushed these birds in from Lake MI; **106** Ring-necked Ducks at Swan Creek Marsh in Allegan Co Feb 21; **165** at Muskegon Wastewater Feb 27; several White-winged Scoters observed along the lakeshore, channels and lakes connected to Lake MI throughout the month; 75 Long-tailed Ducks at Holland State Park Feb 11; **458** Common Goldeneye at Douglas Beach Park Feb 17; **425** Red-breasted Merganser at Holland State Park Feb 11; one Horned Grebe at Muskegon Wastewater Feb 27; an elusive Ruffed Grouse at a residence near Big Blue Lake in Muskegon Co Feb 8; early reports of Turkey Vultures: one W of Otsego in Allegan Co Feb 10 and one at NW Grand Rapids Feb 20; the dark morph Red-tailed Hawk continued through the month at the Allegan State Game Area, Todd Farm; a **Northern Goshawk** at Rogue River State Game Area in Kent Co Feb 25; two American Woodcock vocalizing at East Grand River Park in Ottawa Co Feb 20 – first report; a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** observed at six separate locations on Lake Macatawa during the month and one at Muskegon Wastewater throughout the month; a **Glaucous Gull** at five separate locations on Lake Macatawa during the month and one at Muskegon Wastewater Feb 4-8; one **Snowy Owl** continued since Jan at West Michigan Regional Airport in Allegan Co Feb 22, two (one adult male and one with barring) continued in the Bingham/VanBuren and 120th/128th Ave area in Ottawa Co Feb 11-13, one at 144th Ave and 40th St in Allegan Co Feb 16, one at Muskegon Wastewater Feb 18-27 and one along Patterson SE near the Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport Feb 24 and one there in a different location Feb 27 and 28 (same bird?); a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** calling at the John Ball Zoo Feb 1; Merlins observed at various locations in Allegan, Kent and Ottawa cos throughout the month; Peregrine Falcons were observed at the nest boxes on both the J H Campbell Plant stack, Port Sheldon and the J B Sims Plant stack, Harbor Island in Grand Haven, one continuing in downtown Grand Rapids through the month and one at the 128th Ave and Bingham St area Feb 26; a **Northern Shrike** continued since early Jan at Muskegon Wastewater Feb 18, along 22nd Ave between Begole and Fillmore in Ottawa Co Feb 9-26 and at M-89 Highbanks, Allegan State Game Area Feb 18; a Common Raven at Seidman Park in Kent Co Feb 10, along 132nd Ave W of M-40 in Allegan Co Feb 18, at Muskegon Wastewater Feb 18-25 and at Howard Christensen Nature Center Feb 20; a huge flock of **125** Horned Larks, **200** Snow Buntings and two **Lapland Longspurs** in a field freshly laid with manure along 48th Ave between Perry and Byron Rd in Ottawa Co Feb 3; Winter and Carolina wrens at various locations in Allegan, Kent and Ottawa cos throughout the month; probable overwintering Yellow-rumped Warblers at various locations: one at Hemlock Crossing Park in Ottawa Co Feb 11-16, nine at Upper Macatawa Natural Area Feb 14 and one at M-89 Highbanks, Allegan State Game Area Feb 18 (many are known to winter at this location); a Fox Sparrow at a residence in western Ottawa Co Feb 25 and two at Upper Macatawa Natural Area Feb 26; a few White-throated and White-crowned (18 at Outdoor Discovery Center, Allegan Co Feb 21 - possible early migrants?) sparrows overwintering in the area; one **Dark-eyed Junco Oregon race** at a residence in Douglas in Allegan Co Feb 25-26; two Rusty Blackbirds at Brookside Park in Allegan Co Feb 19 – first report; one Purple Finch at Huff Park Feb 5 and one continued since Jan at a residence near Huff Park in NE Grand Rapids (may be same bird); and six Pine Siskins at a residence near Dorr in Allegan Co Feb 19 – only report.