

February 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 February 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.

Near normal conditions prevailed the early part of the first week of the month. Winter finally arrived in full force with a very windy snowstorm late on the 4th into the 5th dumping five to eight inches or more over the area with blowing and drifting. An arctic blast arrived on its heels and stuck around through the 17th fueling heavy lake effect snow in favored areas along with some synoptic (areawide) snow events, temps in the teens and single digits and bitter windchills, at times below zero. Even sunny days remained frigid. By the 18th high temps recovered into the mid-20s. After a little wet snow on the 21st-22nd, temps rose into the 30s and 40s with some sunny days triggering snow melt, which finished the month.

Waterfowl continued to winter offshore on Lake Michigan and at Pigeon Lake at Port Sheldon. A Barrow's Goldeneye showed up for a day at Pigeon Lake at Port Sheldon and then moved offshore in Lake Michigan near the Pigeon River outlet. A Varied Thrush visited the Lowell area. Red Crossbills were observed near White River RV Park in Muskegon Co. Pine Siskins, Common Redpolls and a few Evening Grosbeaks continued. The frigid, snowy weather did not deter our intrepid area birders from making the rounds to their favorite haunts searching for the usual suspects and that possible rarity. West Michigan birders are a hardy bunch!

Notables for the month: Twenty-four **Snow Geese** in field along Meinert Park Rd W of Whitbeck Rd in Muskegon Co Feb 23; flock of up to 28 relocated along Butzer Rd Feb 24-25 just S of initial location. Twelve **Greater White-fronted Geese** (found by Jason Carlson) at same initial location as Snow Geese Feb 22-23 relocated along Butzer Rd just S of initial location late Feb 23 and up to five continued Feb 27. Up to three female **American Wigeons** (last seen Feb 25) and a male **Northern Pintail** (last seen Feb 20) continued to winter at Riverside Park south in Grand Rapids. A male **Blue-winged Teal** wintering at Riverside Park

south Feb 2-27 – perhaps same individual that was at Richmond Park in late Dec. An adult male **HARLEQUIN DUCK** continued since Jan at Pere Marquette Park Feb 11. Up to seven **Surf Scoters** continued since Jan at Muskegon Lake channel/Pere Marquette Park vicinity Feb 28, one continued since Jan at Holland SP Feb 21. **White-winged Scoters** continued at various locations along the lakeshore through the month with a high count of 85 at Muskegon Lake channel/Pere Marquette Park vicinity Feb 28 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S81657572> to view Tori Martel's photo of an adult male). Up to four **Black Scoters** continued since Jan at Muskegon Lake channel/Pere Marquette Park vicinity Feb 28, two continued since Jan at Holland SP Feb 23, one at Lake Macatawa Boardwalk West Feb 28. An adult male **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** (found by Ty Wagenmaker) at Port Sheldon Pigeon Lake Feb 8 was relocated Feb 13 by Curtis Dykstra on Lake MI near Pigeon River outlet and continued Feb 20 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S80651499> for digiscoped diagnostic photo). The **SMEW** at Lake Allegan continued Feb 2 (see Jan summary for discussion). A **Common Loon** continued wintering at Versluis Lake in Kent Co Feb 27. Up to three **Double-crested Cormorants** wintering at Port Sheldon Pigeon Lake. A **Turkey Vulture** along 120th Ave N of the Grand River in Ottawa Co Feb 25 – returning about expected time. Up to two **PURPLE SANDPIPERS** continued since Dec at Pere Marquette Park Feb 6, one (found by Joe Malott/Rebecca Young) at Pigeon Lake/Pigeon River outlet at Port Sheldon Feb 14-20. Three **Iceland Gulls** continued since Jan at the Muskegon Wastewater Feb 18. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at the Wastewater Feb 1 and 18, one at Pere Marquette Park Feb 7 and 23, one at Port Sheldon Pigeon Lake Feb 25, one at Grand Haven SP Feb 28. Two **Glaucous Gulls** continued since Jan at the Wastewater Feb 10, one continued since Dec at Holland SP Feb 25, one at Grand Haven SP Feb 10, one at Muskegon Lake channel/Pere Marquette Park vicinity Feb 22. At least one **Snowy Owl** continued since Nov at the Wastewater through the month, up to two continued since Dec at 128th Ave/Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Feb 14, one along I-96 near Coopersville Sewage Ponds Feb 10, one at Winans St/136th Ave in Ottawa Co Feb 19-22, one along Meinert Park Rd W of Whitbeck Rd in Muskegon Co Feb 20. At least two **Short-eared Owls** continued at the Allegan SGA Todd Farm 116th Ave/62nd/60th St area Feb 2, one continued at the Wastewater Feb 8. Several reports of **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** wintering in the area. A **Northern Shrike** continued since Dec along 110th Ave btw 22nd and 20th St Feb 8, one continued since Dec at Outdoor Discovery Center in Allegan Co Feb 11, one at 160th Ave/Pierce St in Ottawa Co Feb 15, one at Muskegon Lake

channel Feb 21. **Winter Wrens** wintering at various locations. Two **Hermit Thrushes** wintering at Stu Visser Trails in Ottawa Co, one along Gulliford Trl SE near Lowell Feb 10, one at Hemlock Crossing Park in Ottawa Co Feb 21. A female **VARIED THRUSH** (found by Dr Greg Forbes) visiting a feeder at a private residence (search by permission only) near Lowell Feb 15-27 – Dr Forbes mentioned this bird may be same individual that was present in early Feb (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S80653655> and <https://ebird.org/checklist/S82423588> to view photos taken Feb 4 {Forbes} and 27 {C Putnam} respectively). A **Gray Catbird** continued to winter since Jan along Black Lake Rd S of Pontaluna Rd in Muskegon Co. Feb 4. A **NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** continued since Dec at residence along S Hampton St in Holland Feb 14. Unprecedented numbers of **est 400 Lapland Longspurs** and **est 250 Snow Buntings** at 128th St/Bingham St area in Ottawa Co on Feb 20 on Ottawa Co Parks field trip; large numbers of both species along with Horned Larks also reported at various other locations, likely drawn to manured fields. A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at Millennium Park Feb 3 – wintering. A **Pine Warbler** at Kitchel-Lindquist Dunes Preserve in Ottawa Co Feb 2, one at a residence along Engman Rd in Muskegon Co Feb 7 – both presumed wintering. A **Swamp Sparrow** continued since Jan at Reeds Lake Feb 4, one at DeGraaf Nature Center in Ottawa Co Feb 4, up to two at Huff Park Feb 23-28 – all wintering. **White-crowned** and **White-throated sparrows** continued to winter in the area. A **Rusty Blackbird** continued since Jan at a residence S of Holland in Allegan Co Feb 24. Five **RED CROSSBILLS** (found by Terry Grabill) near White River RV Park and Campground off Fruitvale Rd E of Fogg Lake Rd in Muskegon Co Feb 24. Large flocks of **Common Redpolls** continued at the Wastewater, **200** in field at 128th Ave/Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Feb 6 – large flocks had been reported in this area several weeks prior, up to **100** (flock kept growing through the month) daily at feeders at a residence on Barry St W of 88th Ave in Ottawa Co, **est 100** at feeders at a residence in Allendale mid-month, up to 72 at a residence at Lakeview St/Niles Ave in Ottawa Co Feb 22-27. A **HOARY REDPOLL** continued since Dec at the Wastewater Feb 3, one continued since Jan at a residence at Lakeview St/Niles Ave in Ottawa Co Feb 15, at least one at same location as Varied Thrush Feb 27. Six **EVENING GROSBEAKS** at a residence along 126th Ave W of 36th St in Allegan Co Feb 13-16 – homeowner commented that a variable sized flock has frequented their yard and feeders since Nov.