

January 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 January 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 relentless frigid weather continued through the first week of the month with actual high temperatures in the teens, bitter sub-zero wind chills at times and more lake effect and synoptic snow events. The temperature finally reached 28 degrees on the 7th after 12 days of high temps below 20 degrees. Thawing, rain showers and much snow cover loss followed with a new record high of 58 degrees on the 11th. After the passage of a very strong cold front, snow and cold returned on the 12th and into the following week, followed by another thaw with thunderstorms and heavy rain. Temperatures were near to above normal for the remainder of the month with little precipitation.

Large numbers of **Snowy Owls** continued to be seen in the area, especially in Ottawa Co, the 128th Ave/Bingham St area (roughly Bingham St S to Van Buren St and 128th Ave E to 120th Ave) being the most productive. Refer to the “bird sightings” page on the GRAC website for locations and the eBird county links for the latest sightings. **Yellow-rumped Warblers** are wintering at several locations in the area (Upper Macatawa Natural Area, Millennium Park, Donald Lamoreaux Park, Huff Park) and at some feeders enduring the harshest weather we have seen in several years. A **Swamp** and a **Fox sparrow** appear to be wintering at Huff Park in Grand Rapids. This appears to be an irruptive year for winter finches: a **Red Crossbill** was observed and heard at the Port Sheldon, Pigeon Lake/Pigeon River outlet area Jan 10-16; small numbers of **Common Redpolls** (including a **Hoary Redpoll** at Hoffmaster SP, Muskegon Co Jan 26 – visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S42254483> for photo) at Farview County Park in Allegan Co, a residence at Big Blue Lake in Muskegon Co, Hemlock Crossing Park in Ottawa Co and Hoffmaster and Muskegon SPs in Muskegon Co; **Pine Siskins** are abundant this year, seen at many locations especially feeders, with a high count of **300** at the Mannings’ property in western Ottawa Co Jan 23. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S42178183> for “Amaze”ing photos.

Up to nine **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Muskegon Wastewater Jan 19-30, up to **45** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Jan 25-28 and up to 13 at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Jan 25-31; a **Ross’s Goose** at 128th Ave/Bingham St area, Ottawa Co Jan 13; the **Harlequin Duck** observed last month continued at Holland SP through Jan 11 and one at Port Sheldon, Pigeon River outlet Jan 20-26 may be the same individual; a **Black Scoter** at Holland SP and at Port Sheldon, Pigeon Lake/Pigeon River outlet early month; a male **Barrow’s Goldeneye** was spotted among 500 Common Goldeneye by Carl and Judi Manning at Holland SP Jan 16; two **Red-necked Grebes** made a brief appearance at Otsego Municipal Park, Allegan Co Jan 20; two **Golden Eagles** were seen at the Wastewater on Jan 9 by Katie Bolt and Kathy Haase (at least one continued through Jan 27) and one at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Jan 27; a **Killdeer** in a field near Aberdeen Park, Grand Rapids Jan 21; the **Black-legged Kittiwake** first seen on Dec 19 at Holland SP has been very cooperative remaining in the same area through the month; up to four **Iceland Gulls** at the Lake Macatawa/Holland SP area; up to two **Glaucous Gulls** at same area and at the Wastewater; a **Short-eared Owl** continued at the Allegan SGA Todd Farm fields N of 116th Ave and W of 60th St Jan 15 and one at the Wastewater Jan 19-20; a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** near Kettle Lake Elementary School, Kent Co Jan 9; a rare **Varied Thrush** visited a feeder at the Wade Engers residence near the CRC Conference Grounds, Ottawa Co Jan 15-17. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S41973436> for photos; a **Gray Catbird** at Medbery Park (White Lake channel) Jan 6 and Black Lake Park Jan 27 both in Muskegon Co; a **Northern Mockingbird** showed up again this year in the same location at Hemlock Crossing Park, Ottawa Co Jan 3-7. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S41596773> for photo; and a **Bohemian Waxwing** spotted in a flock of 37 Cedar Waxwings by Ethan Kibbey at Huff Park Jan 21, continued Jan 24-25.