

## January 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 January 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.

Snow and a little freezing rain greeted us on New Year's Day afternoon, giving way to an extended, mostly cloudy uneventful period through mid-month with temps in the 30s and no snowfall until the 15th. Snowfall up to this point was only 7.5 inches since November. Snow chances increased the next week, but little accumulation due to high temps remaining mostly in the mid-30s. By the 22nd temperatures dropped into the 20s/low 30s with a little lake effect followed by a system on the 24th dropping about an inch of snow. A stronger system on the 26th with heavier snow prompted advisories. A cold quiet period ended the month with about two inches of snow on the 31st giving us a paltry 15.2 inches of snow since November.

Thousands of waterfowl (the usual divers, scoters and Red-breasted Mergansers) wintering offshore in Lake Michigan. The lagoons at the Muskegon Wastewater are now frozen with waterfowl concentrated in the aeration cells. A male Harlequin Duck showed up at Pere Marquette Park. Purple Sandpipers were in abundance at the lakeshore. One is usually expected, but up to four have continued since November at Holland State Park and up to five have continued at Pere Marquette Park in Muskegon (the food and conditions must be to their liking for them to have remained for such an extended period). Both are likely record high counts for those counties. Pine Siskins, Common Redpolls (larger numbers below) and Purple Finches continued throughout the area. A White-winged Crossbill continued at Greenwood Cemetery and one showed up at a residence along Kreuter Rd NE in Kent County. Flyovers of Red Crossbills were observed, but none reported staying at any specific location. Many late/wintering/out of season species also in the area. A female Smew, a northern Eurasian rarity related to mergansers/goldeneyes, was spotted at Lake Allegan. The origin of this bird is unknown (see below). Who said January birding was boring?

**Notables for the month:** A **Snow Goose** was reported intermittently at the Wastewater. A **Cackling Goose** continued since Dec at Versluis Park in Kent Co Jan 3, one continued since Dec at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Jan 7, one at the Wastewater Jan 21-23. A huge number of **Trumpeter Swans (65)** at Lincoln Lake in Kent Co Jan 5. Three female **American Wigeons** and a male **Northern Pintail** (one also at Millennium Park and eight at Morrison Bayou Allegan Co) at south Riverside Park in Grand Rapids throughout the month – late/wintering. A male **Blue-winged Teal** at Richmond Park Jan 26-28 – late/wintering. An adult male **HARLEQUIN DUCK** in non-breeding plumage (found by Quinn Sommer/Jeff Sommer) at Pere Marquette Park Jan 24-30 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S79890789> to view Jim Markham's photos). Up to two **Surf Scoters** at Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Jan 1 and 23, one at W end of Lake Allegan in Allegan Co Jan 6, one at Grand Haven north pier Jan 7 and 30, one at Kalamazoo River mouth Jan 8, up to four at Muskegon Lake channel/Pere Marquette Park area Jan 18-30 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S79496568> to view Tori Martel's photos of an imm male Jan 18), one at Oval Beach Jan 19, one at Holland SP Jan 24-30. Several **White-winged Scoters** at various

locations along the lakeshore. One **Black Scoter** at west end of Lake Macatawa Jan 1 and 8, up to 22 continued since Nov at Lakeshore Dr guardrail in Allegan Co, three at Kalamazoo River mouth Jan 8, one at Lake Allegan Jan 10, one at Holland SP Jan 11 and 23, one at Grand Haven north pier Jan 17, up to four at Muskegon Lake channel Jan 29-30. Two **Long-tailed Ducks** (found by Jeff Kunitzer) at Reeds Lake Jan 2 – unusual inland location, **1,000** at Muskegon Lake channel Jan 3, **3,000** at Grand Haven SP and **2,000** at Pere Marquette Park Jan 30 – spectacular sight, but typical numbers along lakeshore in Jan. **3,500-4,500 Common Goldeneye** continuing at Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas – usual numbers at this location in winter, but still spectacular viewing. A female **SMEW** (found by Tim Cornish) at the E end of Lake Allegan viewed from Monroe Rd in Allegan Co Jan 6 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S78836131> to view Eric Wengert's photos taken Jan 7) continued Jan 25 – origin unknown, likely an escapee (must be determined if hallux {back toe} is clipped and as of this compilation there is no conclusive evidence only that a silver band is visible on the left leg) as this is a rare Eurasian species bred by aviculturists and bought by collectors. Several observers suggested the bird's behavior of freely socializing and feeding with other species and avoidance of humans indicates that wild origin should be considered for acceptance by eBird and MBRC; likely same bird first located at Sherman Lake in Kalamazoo Co by Ross Green and Michael Bowen Dec 22. Four **Red-throated Loons** at Saugatuck Dunes SP and two at Oval Beach Jan 14. A **Common Loon** wintering at Versluis Lake in Kent Co. A few **Double-crested Cormorants** wintering at various locations along the lakeshore. A **Turkey Vulture** continued since Dec at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center Jan 14 – very late/wintering. A leucistic **Red-tailed Hawk** continued at Grand River Open Space in Ottawa Co Jan 6. A **GOLDEN EAGLE** continued to be seen intermittently since Nov at the Wastewater. A **Virginia Rail** wintering at Allegan SGA 44th St wetland. A **Dunlin** at Pere Marquette Park Jan 13 – late. Up to four **PURPLE SANDPIPERS** continued since Nov at Holland SP through the month (one continuing plus three new birds found by Eric Gustafson Jan 2), up to five continued since Dec at Pere Marquette Park Jan 29. An **Iceland Gull** continued since Nov at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center Jan 14, two at the Wastewater Jan 10 and one Jan 21, one at Heritage Landing in Muskegon Jan 23-25, one (Thayer's) at Holland SP Jan 27. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** continued since Nov at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center, one at Holland SP, one at Byron Lakes in Kent Co, one at Kollen Park/Heinz Waterfront Walkway, two at Dunton Park and one at Window on the Waterfront all in Holland. A **Glaucous Gull** continued since Dec at Holland SP, one at Reeds Lake, one continued since Dec at Byron Lakes in Kent Co, one at Gun Lake Park in Allegan Co, up to three at Dunton Park in Holland, one continued since Dec at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center, two at the Wastewater, two at Lake Macatawa east end, one at Muskegon Lake channel. A **EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (found by Frank Schroyer/Meg Sanders) along 124th Ave N of Tyler St in Ottawa Co Jan 1, one (found by the Mannings) at 128th Ave/Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Jan 3 and 7 – at least two found at this location last year, two continued since Dec at Ravenna Feed Mill Jan 5. Up to three **Snowy Owls** continued at the Wastewater through the month, one at airstrip at Byron Rd/Air Park Dr near Zeeland Jan 2, one continued since Nov at Pere Marquette Park vicinity through the month, one at 139th Ave/47th St in Allegan Co Jan 8-15, one continued since Dec along 58th St S of 136th Ave in Allegan Co Jan 9, one continued since Dec at Gerald R Ford Int'l Airport Kraft Ave access Jan 16, one along Lincoln Rd (M-40) N of Fillmore Rd in Allegan Co Jan 16, one at 60th St/140th Ave in Allegan Co Jan 18. Three **Short-eared Owls** continued since Nov at Allegan SGA Todd Farm 116th Ave/62nd/60th St area through the month. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Hofma Park Ferris St entrance in Ottawa Co Jan 24, one continued since Dec at a residence along Buttrick Ave S of Whitburn Dr SE in Kent Co Jan 27, one at a

residence near Rockford Jan 31 – all late/wintering. A **Northern Shrike** continued since Dec at Outdoor Discovery Center in Allegan Co through the month, one continued since Dec along 110th Ave btw 22nd and 20th St in Allegan Co Jan 19, one continued since Nov at the Wastewater Jan 4, one continued at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Jan 7, one along 160th Ave N of Fillmore St in Ottawa Co Jan 10-12. A **Gray Catbird** wintering at a residence on Visser Pl SE in Grand Rapids, one along Black Lake Rd S of Pontaluna Rd in Muskegon Co Jan 27-30. A **NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** continued since Dec at residence on S Hampton St in Holland Jan 24. **Winter Wrens** wintering at various locations. **Fifty Eastern Bluebirds** at Huff Park Jan 14; one huge flock by the south marsh and others elsewhere in park. A **Hermit Thrush** at Ball Perkins Park in Kent Co, one at a residence along Flower Creek Rd in Muskegon Co (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S78401916> to view Jason Carlson's photos), one at Millennium Park, one along Cannon Twp Trail south section in Kent Co, one at Stu Visser Trails in Ottawa Co – all late/wintering. Migrant **American Robins** already passing through/returning mid- to late month. 23 **Lapland Longspurs** at 128th Ave/Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Jan 24. **Snow Buntings** observed at various locations in all four counties with a high count of 150 at the Wastewater Jan 4. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** at a suet feeder at a residence in NE Grand Rapids Jan 7-9, one at Canal Park in downtown Grand Rapids Jan 30 – both very late/wintering. A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** continued since Dec at E end of 52nd St E of Kraft Ave SE in Kent Co Jan 2 – late/wintering. A **Swamp Sparrow** at Stu Visser Trails in Ottawa Co Jan 1, one at the Bend Area in Ottawa Co Jan 2, two at Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve Jan 3, one at Reeds Lake Jan 16 – all late/wintering. Up to seven **White-crowned Sparrows** wintering at usual location at Outdoor Discovery Center in Allegan Co. A few **White-throated** and **White-crowned** also observed visiting feeders and other locations in the area. A **Rusty Blackbird** at a residence S of Holland in Allegan Co Jan 24-31 – late/wintering. A **WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL** continued since Dec at Greenwood Cemetery in NW Grand Rapids Jan 9, one at residence along Kreuter Rd NE in Kent Co Jan 25-26. **200 Common Redpoll** along Linkside Ln NE at Boulder Creek Golf Club in Kent Co Jan 1, huge flocks continued at the Wastewater throughout the month, 85 at the Bend Area in Ottawa Co Jan 2, at least 80 at 128th/Bingham St area in Ottawa Co Jan 4, 80 at Cascade Rd/Alden Nash Ave SE in Kent Co Jan 13. One **HOARY REDPOLL** continued at the Wastewater Jan 30, likely two at Millennium Park Jan 12 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S79139651> to view Nick Preville's photos), one at a residence along Buttrick Ave S of Whitburn Dr SE in Kent Co Jan 22, one at a residence in W Ottawa Co Jan 28 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S80082107> to view Judi Manning's photos).