

October 2017 eBird Summary by Carol VanOeveren

The following is an overview of the unusual or rare eBird sightings for October 2017 for Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. This report does not include rare birds that are flyovers, unchaseable and those with sketchy details. First and last fall dates (unless early or late) of most common migrants are also not included in this report. Rare and unusual eBird sightings are updated daily on the GRAC website.

The warm weather continued into the first two weeks of October with some much-needed rain finally moving into the area on the 6th. Heavy, soaking rains arrived on the 11th and over the following weekend breaking the droughty conditions. Dry and mostly above normal temperatures prevailed through the 22nd followed by very wet (wettest Oct on record in Grand Rapids) and cold conditions through the end of the month (wet snow on Halloween). As last year, no hard freeze in the Grand Rapids area.

Large numbers and rafts of waterfowl were delayed, perhaps influenced by the warm weather, although 1,400 Northern Shoveler were observed at Muskegon Wastewater Oct 7 along with 2,250 Ruddy Ducks, which built to an estimated 10,000 on Oct 13.

A hawk movement was observed at the east end of the Muskegon channel by Ric Pedler on October 10. In one and a half hours, he observed 47 Turkey Vultures, 29 Sharp-shinned Hawks, a Cooper's Hawk, eight Red-tailed Hawks and an American Kestrel, plus 220 Blue Jays.

Seventeen warbler species (not as many as last year [22] and no rarities) were seen in the area during the month. Among the more interesting: a rather late Ovenbird (Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve Oct 10), Northern Waterthrush (one at Upper Macatawa Natural Area Oct 11), Orange-crowned (observed in all four counties), Nashville (one at Pine Creek Park in Ottawa Co and Plaster Creek Park, Grand Rapids Oct 29), Common Yellowthroat (one at Lake Macatawa W end Oct 28), Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian (one at Chief Hazy Cloud Park, Kent Co Oct 7), Blackpoll, Black-throated Blue (one at Huff Park Oct 12-13, a residence in western Ottawa Co Oct 16 and a male still in breeding plumage at Hoffmaster SP in Muskegon Co Oct 26), large numbers of Yellow-rumped reported throughout the area, a late Black-throated Green (one at Hoffmaster SP Oct 18) and Wilson's (one at Harbor Island, Grand Haven Oct 6).

Finds of the month: a female **Harlequin Duck** was observed inside the north break wall at Holland SP Oct 28 by Kevin Vande Vusse. It remained there through the 31st. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S40168982> for photo. **Surf Scoters** were seen at two inland locations and two along the lakeshore. Two observed at Reeds Lake in East Grand Rapids by James Markham Oct 13 were joined by two more on Oct 16 with up to three still present through the 25th. Allison Kulka and Chandler Mancuso found three at Muskegon Wastewater Oct 14. Six were observed at Holland SP Oct 16 by Carl and Judi Manning and Elizabeth Notman. Seven were observed at Douglas Beach Park on Oct 22 by Rick Brigham. Nine **Black Scoters** were found by Rick Brigham at Holland SP Oct 27. A very rare **Pomarine Jaeger** was harassing and being harassed by gulls at Holland SP on Oct 26. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S40135466> for Carl and Judi Manning's photos. A **Short-eared Owl** at Tyler Farm in Muskegon Co made Doug Wassink's day Oct 2, and five were seen by Rick Brigham and Chace Scholten at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Oct 29 with three continuing Oct 31. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S40200194> for photo. On Oct 26, a very observant Brad Heath again discovered a **LeConte's Sparrow** at Hoffmaster SP in Muskegon Co. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S40134030> for seven beautiful photos, plus photos of other species including a male Black-throated Blue Warbler still in breeding plumage. Brad also found a LeConte's at this location on Oct 13 last year.

Other notables: twelve Snow Geese along Moorland Rd S of Heights Ravenna Rd in Muskegon Co Oct 28 – first of season and 77 at Allegan State Game Area Todd Farm Oct 31; up to twelve **Cackling Geese** at East Paris Nature Park in Kent Co, four at Coopersville Sewage Ponds, three at Muskegon Wastewater and up to nine at the Coopersville Goose Field; two Tundra Swans along 24th St S of 116th Ave in Allegan Co Oct 17 – first of season; White-winged Scoters at Reeds Lake, Medbery Park (White Lake channel) in Muskegon Co, Holland SP and Douglas Beach Park; a few Long-tailed Ducks at Hoffmaster SP in Muskegon Co and Holland and Grand Haven SP late month; a **Red-throated Loon** on a Lake MI pelagic trip 5 mi W of Kalamazoo River mouth Oct 1; Horned Grebes at Reeds Lake, Holland SP, Lake Macatawa and Douglas Beach Park (16); a **Red-necked Grebe** at Grand Haven SP Oct 29; up to six **Eared Grebes** at the Wastewater mid- through late month; large numbers of Double-crested Cormorants migrating along the lakeshore – 520 observed on a Lake MI pelagic trip W of Kalamazoo River mouth Oct 1 and 900 at the nest/roost site on Winnetaska Rd in Muskegon Oct 2; a late **American White Pelican** at the W end of Lake Macatawa, sitting on a homeowner’s dock, Oct 27-30 drew many observers (same bird may have been seen Oct 26 at Hoffmaster SP); a late Osprey at Millennium Park Oct 20; a Rough-legged Hawk observed on a boat trip on Grand River from East End Park to Pottawattomie Bayou in Ottawa Co Oct 20 – first of season; a late **Common Gallinule** at Grand Haven SGA, Bruce Bayou, Cypress St access Oct 3; up to 16 **Black-bellied Plovers** at the Wastewater throughout the month, one at AAA Turf Farm in Ottawa Co Oct 5 and up to two at 120th Ave potholes in Allegan Co Oct 17-29; two **American Golden-Plovers** at the Wastewater Oct 2, one continuing since late Sept at Caledonia Sewage Ponds Oct 5, three at AAA Turf Farm Oct 5, up to 27 along 23rd St S of 118th Ave in Allegan Co Oct 10-28 and up to twelve at 120th Ave potholes in Allegan Co Oct 21-23; two **Short-billed Dowitchers** at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Oct 22; one **Long-billed Dowitcher** at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Oct 21-22; **225** Bonaparte’s Gulls at Holland SP Oct 12 and **390** at W end of Lake Macatawa Oct 27; up to two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** continuing at Holland SP Oct 5-12 and one at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Oct 3; many sightings of Peregrine Falcons – the Wastewater, Harbor Island in Grand Haven, downtown Grand Rapids, Caledonia Sewage Ponds, Winstrom Preserve in Ottawa Co, the Muskegon Lake channel, Mt Pisgah Dune Boardwalk in Ottawa Co and the Coopersville Sewage Ponds; a late Eastern Wood-Pewee at Big Blue Lake in Muskegon Co Oct 3; a late Eastern Phoebe at Huff Park and Reeds Lake Oct 29; a **Northern Shrike** along 122nd Ave E of 6th St in Allegan Co Oct 30 – first of season; a late Philadelphia Vireo at Hoffmaster SP in Muskegon Co Oct 22; two massive flocks of Horned Larks totaling **550** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Oct 29; a late House Wren at Huff Park Oct 18; Winter Wrens present at many locations in all four counties; a late Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher at Millennium Park Oct 9; excellent migration of Golden- and Ruby-crowned kinglets through the area; a Gray-cheeked Thrush at Huff Park Oct 9; a late Brown Thrasher at Reeds Lake Oct 16; **107** American Pipits at the Wastewater Oct 2 and at least **170** at 120th Ave potholes in Allegan Co Oct 27; **50** **Lapland Longspurs** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Oct 29 – first of season and one at 128th Ave and Bingham in Ottawa Co Oct 30; three Snow Buntings along 23rd St S of 118th Ave in Allegan Co Oct 25 – first of season and up to 24 at the Wastewater late month; an American Tree Sparrow at Huff Park Oct 10 – first of season; Fox Sparrows at several locations in the four county area; excellent migration of White-throated (high count of at least 122 downed by heavy rain at a residence in Douglas Oct 11) and White-crowned (high count of 52 at same residence Oct 13) sparrows during the month; a late Indigo Bunting at Reeds Lake Oct 15; nine Bobolinks still at Upper Macatawa Natural Area, 84th Ave access in Ottawa Co Oct 7; two late Eastern Meadowlarks at Haworth Wetland Restoration in Allegan Co Oct 22; Rusty Blackbirds present in all four counties throughout the month with a high count of 40 at the Kalamazoo River channel in Allegan Co Oct 1; Purple Finch at a residence in western Ottawa Co, a residence in Georgetown Twp in Ottawa Co, Millennium Park and a residence near Hoffmaster SP; **225** American Goldfinch eating weed seeds at Grand Ravines Park in Ottawa Co Oct 11; and a few Pine Siskins in the area – Huff Park, a residence near Hoffmaster SP, south Reeds Lake and Hoffmaster SP.

Note: Whooping Crane “Lily” was still being observed associating with Sandhill Cranes at Schoonover WPA in Lenawee Co Oct 27. Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S40145897> for photos.