

November 15-17, 2019 – Western Michigan

Leader: Don Burlett, Dave Frye

Venturing across the state after a significant snow storm is always interesting and 15 OAS birders took on the challenge of traveling to western Michigan for some “fall” birding. After meeting near Lansing on Friday morning, we first headed to Coopersville to visit the “goose field”. Unfortunately, the snow cover discouraged many geese from being there, only 6 Canada Geese remained. We then headed to the Coopersville Waste Water treatment facility. With the group split up, we did get a Great Egret and Great Blue Heron along with lots of Canada’s and a couple of woodpeckers.

Next, we headed to Muskegon to visit the waste water treatment facility (are you noting a trend for this trip?) where we found the water mostly frozen but with lots of Northern Shovelers and some gulls. We did, however, get looks at a Rough-legged Hawk and some Bald Eagles. After this, we headed to Muskegon State Park and the piers. It was old and breezy and



there were a few species here including Horned Grebe. We then headed south toward Grand Haven and first visited Ottawa Sands Park. Here, Red-headed Woodpeckers abounded, both adult and youngsters. Great fun! We also added some additional species of ducks, swan, etc. A final stop at Harbor Island netted a Wood Duck but not much else. We headed to the hotel and dinner where a few celebratory beers were had.



The next day, we started at Grand Haven State Park where some waterfowl was about. We got a White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Duck and other species. We headed inland to visit Hemlock Crossing and Upper Macatawa parks but land birding was a bit tough under these conditions. So we headed to the water.



At Holland State Park, we visited the north breakwall. Great Black-backed Gull and others were observed. However, the goal here was the Purple Sandpiper. It was found along the north breakwall and was very cooperative, posing for pictures. Before that, a Merlin made a quick pass over the pier on its way south.



Satisfied with that find, we headed to Window on the Waterfront park and were rewarded by spectacular views of a Short-eared Owl flying around and then perching in a tree. Finally, off to the hotel and dinner at a brewery (again).

The next morning, we headed out early and tried Fennville waste water treatment but the water was all frozen. Then we headed to the Fennville Farm Unit of Allegan SGA. There we discovered unharvested fields with snow. It appeared that all the geese were gone. However, we got to the stream at the west end of this tract and discovered >1000 geese in the stream along with Mallards, a Belted Kingfisher and, a remarkable find, a Greater Yellowlegs wading in the stream. Great Fun.

We then headed north to a spot where a Snowy Owl had been reported and he was found a little distance away, based on a report from someone else. We added Kestrel also at that area. We then headed to Grand Ravines near Lansing, just to see the park. We ended the trip at Reed's Lake in Lansing with a few new ducks that we hadn't seen earlier.

After three days, we totaled 66 species and life birds for many folks. A good trip, in spite of changing and wintery conditions. A complete list of species is provided below.

- Canada Goose
- Mute Swan
- Wood Duck
- Gadwall
- American Wigeon
- American Black Duck
- Mallard
- Northern Shoveler
- Green-winged Teal
- Redhead
- Greater Scaup
- White-winged Scoter
- Bufflehead
- Common Goldeneye

Hooded Merganser
Common Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Wild Turkey
Pied-billed Grebe
Horned Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Bald eagle
Northern Harrier
Cooper's Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Rough-legged Hawk
American Coot
Greater Yellowlegs
Purple Sandpiper
Bonaparte's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Snowy Owl
Short-eared Owl
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
American Kestrel
Merlin
Blue Jay
American Crow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
Golden-crowned Kinglet
American Robin
European Starling
American Tree Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Northern Cardinal

House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow