

# Western Great Lakes



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November was mild, and many species lingered. Each state had its share of rarities—including a first regional record initially identified via television news-cast!

**Abbreviations:** Agassiz (Agassiz N.W.R., Marshall, MN); Big Stone (Big Stone N.W.R., Lac Qui Parle, MN); H.R.N.R. (Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, Duluth, MN); R.R.B.O. (Rouge River Bird Observatory, Wayne, MI); S.M.R.R. (Southeast Michigan Raptor Research, including Lake Erie Metropark and Pte. Mouillee HQ, Wayne, MI); U.P. (Upper Peninsula, MI); Wisc. Pt. (Wisconsin Point, Douglas, WI); W.P.B.O. (Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa, MI).

### LOONS THROUGH IBISES

Down from last fall was the total of 342 Red-throated Loons at W.P.B.O. 22 Aug–15 Nov.

Wisconsin had Red-throated Loons on the Great Lakes and one inland in *Dane* 19 Nov (AS); Minnesota's 4 were all on L. Superior. A Pacific/Arctic Loon passed W.P.B.O. 8 Oct (p. a., KJB). Two Pacific Loons visited *LaCrosse*, WI 1 Nov (MP); Minnesota had only 3 on L. Superior, fewer than recent fall seasons. W.P.B.O. tallied 3114 Common Loons 14 Aug–15 Nov (peak 320, 14 Oct). A possible Yellow-billed Loon could not be refound at Madison, WI 16 Nov (CM). Record-high at W.P.B.O. were 21,454 Red-necked Grebes 15 Aug–15 Nov (peak 6789, 22 Aug). Intermittently seen was a Western Grebe in *Alger*, MI 18 Oct+ (SH, ph. ZG). Four Clark's Grebes at L. Osakis 19–21 Aug (BWF), one at Big Stone 24 Sep (BJU), and one at Thielke L. until 2 Oct (m. ob.) were more than usual for Minnesota.

Providing only the 2nd Minnesota record were 2 ad. Neotropical Cormorants at Big Stone 12 Aug–6 Oct (KJB, m. ob.); Bardon also found Minnesota's first in Jul 1992! Up to 14 Snowy Egrets hunted at Pte. Mouillee (m. ob.). Snowy Egrets were in four Wisconsin locations, and one lingered in *Otter Tail*, MN 5–11 Oct (KRE, CRM et al.). One or 2 Little Blue Herons in *Dane*, one in *Dodge* 7 Aug (JF), and 3 in *Kenosha* was above average for Wisconsin; in Minnesota, 3 lingered

in *Douglas*, and one visited *Ramsey* 31 Aug. Michigan had more Cattle Egrets than usual (one to 4 birds in each of six locations), up to 100 were near Pelican L., MN in Aug (*vide* CRM), and one was late in *Rock*, WI 2 Nov (AP). Wisconsin had the Region's only Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in *LaCrosse*, *Portage*, and *Sheboygan*. The only *Plegadis* ibis were singles in s. Minnesota 15 Sep (CFi) and 18 Oct (PME). A Black Vulture flew by Pte. Mouillee headquarters 2 Oct (p. a., CB, DF).

### WATERFOWL THROUGH RAILS

Possibly summering were Greater White-fronted Geese in *Otter Tail*, MN 18–22 Aug (E&JE et al.) and 2 in *Dane*, WI 10 Sep (NR). Casual in Michigan, *Berrien's* first Ross's Goose was in *Benton Twp.* 7–13 Nov (ph. TBa, ph. KM, LL, m. ob.); another was reported at *Muskegon* 29 Oct (p. a., JGG, CF). The female Common Eider at Pte. Mouillee since spring disappeared after 9 Nov (AMB); an unidentified eider showed up in *St. Clair*, MI 29 Nov (p. a., PCC). For the 2nd consecutive fall, as many as 6 Harlequin Ducks flocked together in *Cook*, MN 26–28 Oct (MSS, m. ob.). One to 4 Harlequins in four locations was more than usual for Michigan.

Even more extensive than last fall's was this season's swath of Surf Scoters in 15 "inland" Minnesota locations, though Michigan and Wisconsin each had only two reports away from the Great Lakes. More than triple last fall's total were the 1170 Surf Scoters at W.P.B.O. 14 Sep–11 Nov (peak 556, 29 Sep). Wisconsin had early White-winged Scoters in *Brown* 2 Aug (T&IB) and *Oneida* 8 Aug (B&KF), plus inland White-wingeds in *Portage* and *Sauk*, and inland Black Scoters in *Portage* and *Forest*. W.P.B.O. counted 3447 White-winged and 253 Black Scoters for the season, both up significantly from last fall, plus 12,492 Long-tailed Ducks (peak 1985, 5 Nov). Wisconsin reported Barrow's Goldeneye in *Marathon* 1–5 Nov (DB) and *Ozaukee* 16 Nov (JF); a drake was in *Houston*, MN 11–15 Nov (PEJ).

More than double the previous one-day record at H.R.N.R. was a total of 102,329 raptors (101,698 Broad-winged Hawks) 23 Sep (TSM, DSC, FJN et al.). Unusual for Wisconsin was a Swainson's Hawk in *Ozaukee* 23 Sep (SC, BC, MBo); also see Table 1. Ferruginous Hawks were documented in three w. Minnesota counties in Oct. Michigan had Golden Eagles at eight locations away from hawkwatches, including 6 birds in *Washtenaw* 10 Nov (JSc). Wisconsin had only three reports, while Minnesota had Golden Eagles at 21 locations away from H.R.N.R. Gyrfalcons in *Cook*, MN 1 Nov (AXH) and at H.R.N.R. 8 Nov (DSC) may

Table 1. Raptor count totals at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve and Southeast Michigan Raptor Research, Fall 2003.

Species	H.R.N.R.	S.M.R.R.
Turkey Vulture	2243	73,886
Osprey	318	246
Bald Eagle	3356	199
Northern Harrier	928	1372
Sharp-shinned Hawk	21,091	12,080
Cooper's Hawk	158	882
Northern Goshawk	866	50
Red-shouldered Hawk	5	874
Broad-winged Hawk	160,776	87,359
Swainson's Hawk	7	14
Red-tailed Hawk	12,897	12,161
Rough-legged Hawk	580	100
Golden Eagle	161	124
American Kestrel	1484	2380
Merlin	178	83
Peregrine Falcon	38	87
Gyr Falcon	1	0

have been the same individual. Prairie Falcons in three nw. Minnesota locations included a juv. in *Kittson* 31 Aug (KRE et al., ph. JJS). Rarely detected after mid-Aug, each state ticked Yellow Rail: one in *Dane*, WI 8 Sep (MZ), 2 in *Alpena*, MI 21–23 Sep (KFS, BA), and one in *Jackson*, MN 3 Oct (BRB). A Black Rail was seen in Milwaukee 13 Sep (p. a., JD); Wisconsin also garnered a King Rail in *Ozaukee* 5 Oct (TCW).

## SHOREBIRDS

Shorebird surveys peaked at 4076 individuals (22 species) in *Big Stone/Lac Qui Parle*, MN 15 Aug (PCC). Black-bellied Plovers peaked at 165 in *Huron*, MI 8 Oct (TBe). Michigan reported 6 Piping Plovers in three locations in Aug, plus singles in *Berrien* 13 Sep (ph. TBa) and *Iosco* 20 Sep (REr); the only other report was of 2 in *Dodge*, WI 16 Sep (DT). Eleven of the summer's 12 Black-necked Stilts were at Pte. Mouillee 22 Aug, and several lingered until the 30th (m. ob.). Michigan's total of 15+ American Avocets in six locations included 6 at W.P.B.O. 12 Oct (ph. AMB, m. ob.); as many as 12 avocets were at Milwaukee, WI (m. ob.), while 36 at Agassiz 11 Oct (PHS et al.) established Minnesota's 2nd highest count.

Agassiz attracted 170 Greater Yellowlegs 17 Aug (PHS et al.). Single Whimbrels transited *Iosco*, MI 2 Aug (REr), *Door*, WI 27 Aug (BSt), Duluth, MN 9 & 21 Sep (MH et al.), and W.P.B.O. 25 Aug & 16 Sep. Normally rare in fall, 20 Hudsonian Godwits visited Salt L., *Lac Qui Parle*, MN 24 Aug (BJU). Single Red Knots were at Agassiz (KRE et al.)

and *Big Stone* (PCC) 30 Aug and *Brown*, WI 10 Sep (DVD). Michigan had one or 2 knots at Pte. Mouillee 20 Aug–13 Sep (m. ob.) and 3 at W.P.B.O. 29 Aug (KJB). Semipalmated Sandpipers peaked at 1239 at Pte. Mouillee 16 Aug (TSM). Michigan had single Western Sandpipers at Pte. Mouillee in Aug (AMB et al.) and *Manistee* 10 Oct (BA). Wisconsin reported Westerns (all p. a.) in three locations 28 Aug, plus one in *Racine* 30 Sep–2 Oct (p. a., DG et al.). A flock of 32 White-rumped Sandpipers at W.P.B.O. 2 Nov (KJB, KM Jr.) was an unusual number there; singles tarried in *Outagamie*, WI 6 Nov (DT) and *St. Clair*, MI 14 Nov (LHa). All three states reported increased numbers of Baird's Sandpipers, including 90 in *Marathon*, WI 23 Aug (DT) and 103 at Agassiz 6 Sep (PHS, JMj). Noteworthy was the count of 1354 Pectoral Sandpipers in *Big Stone*, MN 12 Aug (KJB). Michigan welcomed Purple Sandpipers in *Berrien*, *Iosco*, and *Muskegon* in late Nov. Stilt Sandpipers peaked at 691 at Agassiz 6 Sep (PHS et al.).

Buff-breasted Sandpipers were scarce in Michigan (only 12 birds) and down in Minnesota (fewer than 200 statewide), but Wisconsin had multiple reports from eight counties. The Ruff in *Benzie*, MI 20–23 Sep (p. a., ph. CJF, KAW, BA et al.) was a county first. Dowitcher counts included 81 Short-billeds at Pte. Mouillee 30 Aug (AMB) and a record-high 312 Long-billeds at Agassiz 11 Oct (PHS, JMj). Wilson's Phalaropes peaked at 250 in *Polk*, MN 13 Aug (EEF). Red-necked Phalaropes were scarce in Michigan (three locations) and Wisconsin (four locations), but 263+ were scattered across 18 Minnesota counties. Single Red Phalaropes (all p. a.) were in *Door*, WI 18 Oct (WH), *Macomb*, MI 3–8 Nov (ph. ST, ph. ATC, m. ob.), and *Monroe*, MI 25–29 Nov (TP et al., ph. BM, ph. AMB).

## JAEGERS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

Minnesota reported 2 Parasitic Jaegers and 4 unidentified jaegers at Duluth. Wisconsin's only Parasitics were at Wisc. Pt. 19–28 Sep. In Michigan, Grigg identified 4 Parasitics at the

Presque Isle lighthouse in Sep; W.P.B.O. had 6 Parasitics and 24 unidentified jaegers for the season. Away from L. Michigan, a Parasitic was at Three Oaks W.T.P., *Berrien*, MI 4 Oct (KM). Pomarine Jaegers were reported at Wisc. Pt. 19 (RJ, DT) & 28 Sep (DT). Two ad. Laughing Gulls visited *Sheboygan*, WI 4 Aug (CSO); Michigan had singles in *Berrien* 4 Aug (WEJ) and *Monroe* 29



This female Common Eider, only the third for Michigan, arrived at Pointe Mouillee, Monroe County on 17 May 2003 and remained through 9 November (here 2 June). The bird was initially elusive but became more cooperative during summer and fall. Photograph by Allen Chartier.



This female Black-necked Stilt was one of four (two pairs) that arrived at Pointe Mouillee, Monroe County, Michigan in early May 2003, providing only the third state record (here 2 June). Both pairs remained through the summer to nest, a state first, producing a total of eight young. Photograph by Allen Chartier.



Currently a species considered casual in Michigan, this Red Phalarope was found on Lake Erie offshore of the Whiting Power Plant, Monroe County 25 through (here) 29 November 2003. Photograph by Brad Murphy.

**SA** Providing a first Regional record was a **Costa's Hummingbird** near Delano, *Wright, MN* (tDM, ph. CFa); the bird was identified in late Nov but may have visited a feeder there since mid-Sep. On 6 Nov, it was lured indoors by the homeowners when the weather turned cold. The bird would have gone unnoticed by the ornithological community had it not been the subject of story that aired during Thanksgiving week on a local Twin Cities television newscast. Donald Mitchell, a hummingbird bander from nearby Hudson, WI, happened to be watching the newscast and noticed that the bird was not a Ruby-throated Hummingbird as presumed by the news crew and homeowners. He visited the home to verify that the bird was indeed an imm. male Costa's that had almost completed molt into ad. plumage. The bird was removed from the home on 5 Dec and taken to a local wildlife rehabilitation clinic, where it died a few days after arrival. It is now in the collection (\*) of the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum. This is the easternmost documented occurrence of Costa's Hummingbird, which amazingly has yet to show up in the se. United States, the hot-spot for wintering hummingbirds from the West.

Nov (m. ob.). Little Gulls visited *Berrien, Ottawa, and Van Buren* in Michigan. A Mew Gull appeared in *Milwaukee*, WI 26 & 29 Nov (p. a., DG, JF). Six juv. Sabine's Gulls in Michigan were evenly split between Port Huron, *St. Clair* and W.P.B.O. Up to 4 Sabine's at Wisc. Pt. were sandwiched between one in *Sauk* 5 Sep (AHO) and another in *Kenosha* 22 Nov (JH); most noteworthy for Minnesota were an early juv. in *Red Lake* 30 Aug (PHS, JMJ) and a first for L. Winnibigoshish 20 Sep (PHS). W.P.B.O. tallied 3395 Common Terns 16 Aug–15 Oct (peak 2814, 13 Sep).

New locations for Eurasian Collared-Doves included *Cedar Grove*, WI 14 Aug (HM) and *Chippewa* and *Dakota*, MN. Late cuckoos included a Black-billed in *Van Buren*, MI 20 Oct (SW) and a Yellow-billed

in *Ozaukee*, WI 27 Oct (SC, BC). Short-eared Owls increased in Michigan (~29 birds in nine counties). Rufous Hummingbirds in Michigan (all banded) were in *Calhoun* 15 Aug+, *Ingham* 14 Sep–8 Nov, and *Berrien* 20 Oct+ (m. ob.); Tessen identified one in *Outagamie*, WI 28 Aug. *Selasphorus* hummingbirds not identified to species visited *Calhoun*, MI 15–25 Aug (p. a., DP) and *Menominee*, WI 2 Sep (DT).

#### WOODPECKERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Providing only the 2nd Wisconsin record was a **Lewis's Woodpecker** in *Ozaukee* 21 Oct (p. a., SC, BC). Say's Phoebe strayed to W.P.B.O. 31 Aug (p. a., KJB, JFo) and 23 Sep (ph. JEB, m. ob.). Single Western Kingbirds wandered as far e. as *Presque Isle*, MI 9 Sep (WNG) and W.P.B.O. 18 Sep (LJD, KJB, JFo).

A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in *Dakota*, MN 18–19 Oct (JPS et al., ph. TPB) was a county first; record late was one in *Oconto*, WI 22 Oct–3 Nov (DE, m. ob.). Wisconsin's 4th Fork-tailed Flycatcher alighted in *Oconto* 24 Oct (p. a., TE). Late and unusually far n. was the Loggerhead Shrike in *Alpena*, MI 29 Oct (WNG). Late and

unusual for the U.P. any time was the White-eyed Vireo at W.P.B.O. 19–29 Oct (KM Jr., KJB et al.); another visited *Dane*, WI 18 Aug (PA). Possibly record late was a Warbling Vireo in *St. Joseph*, MI 25 Oct (SS).

Providing the 5th Michigan record was a **Rock Wren** in *Bay* 20 Oct (ph. MW). Carolina Wren appeared as far n. as *Bay, Benzie, and Isabella* in Michigan, and in six Wisconsin locations; in n. Minnesota, a juv. netted at Bigfork, *Itasca* 30 Aug lingered into early Dec (ph. DRM). Blue-gray Gnatcatchers strayed as far n. as *Marshall* (D&BM) and *Polk* (EEF) in Minnesota; one at W.P.B.O. 1 Nov was late for the U.P. Minnesota reported Mountain Bluebirds in *Cook* 31 Oct–2 Nov (DRB et al.), *Lac Qui Parle* 10 Nov (BJU), and *Swift* 14–15 Nov (RAE et al.). Townsend's Solitaires were in three Wisconsin and seven Minnesota locations, including a first county record 20 Nov in *Swift* (RBJ). Record late for Minnesota was a well-described Veery at Two Harbors, *Lake* 23–25 Oct (JWL, KRE et al.). A Varied Thrush in *Marquette*, MI 9 Oct (BJ) and another at Neenah, WI 27 Nov (DK) were the only reports from those states, but 5 visited Minnesota. Northern Mockingbird numbers increased in Michigan (~17 birds in 10 counties). Minnesota's 9th Sage Thrasher lingered at Grand Marais, *Cook* 17 Oct–11 Nov (JWL, KRE et al.). Bohemian Waxwings arrived earlier than usual, with Sep reports from all three states, including 11 Sep at W.P.B.O. (JFo).

#### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Warblers lingered in all three states (see Table 2). Still casual in Minnesota, a Yellow-throated Warbler loitered in *Otter Tail* 25–30 Oct (ph. G&SW, S&DM, m. ob.); later still was one in *Macomb*, MI 25 Nov+ (*vide* KO). Four Prairie Warblers in Michigan included one at W.P.B.O. late Aug (JFo); Wisconsin's only Prairie was in *Shawano* 7 Sep (LR). A



Providing a first record for the Western Great Lakes region was this immature male Costa's Hummingbird near Delano, Wright County, Minnesota, possibly present there since mid-September 2003 but not identified until November. The species is essentially unknown as a vagrant to the Southeast and East, unlike most other western hummingbirds. Photograph by Chris Fagyal.



This Rock Wren, Michigan's fifth, was a one-day wonder at Nyanqing Point, Bay County 20 October 2003. Photograph by Myles Willard.

**Table 2. Late warblers in Western Great Lakes Region, Fall 2003.**

Species	Location	Date/Observers
Orange-crowned Warbler	R.R.B.O., MI	21 Nov (JAC)
Nashville Warbler	St. Louis, MN	4–5 Nov (JWL)
Nashville Warbler	Wayne, MI	9 Nov (JAC)
Northern Parula	Lake, MN	25 Oct (KRE)
Yellow Warbler	W.P.B.O., MI	11 Oct (PCC)
Yellow Warbler	Duluth, MN	14 Oct (MJL)
Magnolia Warbler	Milwaukee, WI	18 Oct (MBo)
Cape May Warbler	Sauk, WI	31 Oct (AHO)
Cape May Warbler	St. Louis, MN	31 Oct (SLF)
Pine Warbler	Steele, MN	9–14 Nov (NFT)
Pine Warbler	Duluth, MN	18–20 Nov (LE)
Bay-breasted Warbler	Dane, WI	25 Oct (PA)
Blackpoll Warbler	Lake, MN	25 Oct (KRE)
Cerulean Warbler	Wayne, MI	20 Sep (WGP)
American Redstart	Washtenaw, MI	1 Nov (MKH)
Prothonotary Warbler	Hennepin, MN	26 Sep (CBr)
Ovenbird	Wayne, MI	16 Nov (KO)
Northern Waterthrush	Wayne, MI	30 Oct (m. ob.)
Common Yellowthroat	Dane, WI	18 Nov (PA)
Yellow-breasted Chat	Rock, WI	25 Sep (NS)

Yellow Palm Warbler was banded at R.R.B.O. 1 Nov (JAC, DO, AD).

Wisconsin had Summer Tanagers in *Oconto* 25 Oct–15 Nov (m. ob.) and *Milwaukee* 28 Nov (TCW). Late and unusually far n. in Michigan were Summer Tanagers in *Manistee* 13–30 Nov (PZ, KAW et al.) and *Presque Isle* 25–30 Nov (WNG). Providing the 7th and 8th Michigan records were single *Green-tailed Towhees* at W.P.B.O. 24–29 Sep (TRW, ph. AMB, m. ob.) and *Wayne* 29 Nov+ (p. a., m. ob., ph. ATC). Wisconsin's 11th Spotted Towhee showed well in *Waukesha* 12 Nov+ (DG, m. ob.). Minnesota had male Spotted Towhees in two *Lac Qui Parle* locations, plus a *St. Louis* first at Duluth 25 Oct–5 Nov (ED). Unexpected were the Lark Sparrow in *Wayne, MI* 26 Nov (p. a., ph. PC, CB, m. ob.) and Lark Bunting at W.P.B.O. 13 Oct (p. a., KM Jr., KJB). For the 2nd consecutive fall, Lark Bunting made an appearance in Wisconsin, this time in *Racine* 25–28 Aug (p. a., DG et al.). Wisconsin's 3rd-latest Grasshopper Sparrow tarried in *Washington* 18 Oct (p. a., RCD). Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows transited nine Minnesota locations, plus *Dane, Milwaukee, and Racine* in Wisconsin.

Casual in Michigan, single *Smith's Longspurs* visited W.P.B.O. 26 Sep (p. a., KJB) and 9–12 Oct (KJB, ph. AMB, ph. BM, m. ob.). Smith's were in nine Minnesota locations, including an early appearance at Duluth 13–17 Sep (DWT et al.) and up to 75 at *Red Rock Prairie, Cottonwood* (m. ob.).

Late and unusually far n. was a female *Lazuli Bunting* in *Cook, MN* 26 Oct (p. a., KRE et al.). Tying Minnesota's earliest date was a Common Redpoll in *Lake of the Woods* 4 Oct (J&AP). The apparent decline in Evening Grosbeaks was not demonstrated by local peak counts of 215 at W.P.B.O. 29 Oct and 110 in *Oneida, WI* 29 Nov (B&KF).

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**This very cooperative Smith's Longspur, representing Michigan's 12th accepted record, stayed 9 (here) through 12 October 2003 at Whitefish Point, Chippewa County, where it was remarkably the 7th local record.**  
Photograph by Jeffrey J. McCoy.



**A cooperative Green-tailed Towhee in a backyard in Livonia, Wayne County, Michigan—first noted 29 November 2003 (here 13 December)—overwintered here, providing an eighth state record. Another Green-tailed Towhee, the state's seventh, frequented Whitefish Point on the Upper Peninsula on 24–29 September this season.** Photograph by Allen Chartier.