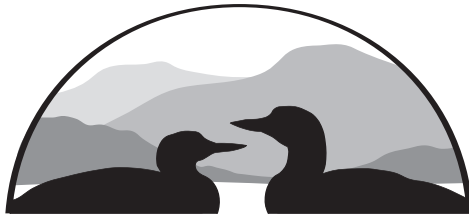


New Hampshire Bird Records



Fall 2008

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Cover Photo: *Snowy Owl at Rye Harbor State Park, NH, on 11/2/08 by Peter Manship.*

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IN MEMORY OF
Julie Chapin

This issue of New Hampshire Bird Records with its color cover is sponsored by John and Julie Bassi in memory of her mother, Julie Chapin. Julie took great pleasure in her volunteer work at NH Audubon. She loved birding, most often during walks in the woods or peering out her kitchen window at her abundant bird feeders. She shared her passion for birds with her children and grandchildren.



Julie with grand-daughter Claire Bassi.

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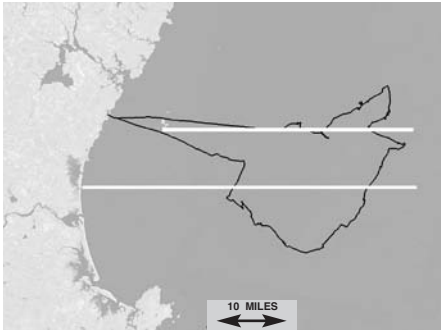
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Tri-State Pelagic Birding Trip

by Jon Woolf

On September 11, 2008, New Hampshire Audubon and Granite State Whale Watch cooperated to produce a pelagic birding trip into New Hampshire waters. Forty birders boarded the MV *Granite State* out of Rye, NH, for an eight-hour expedition that covered portions of the area called Jeffreys Ledge from just north of Cape Ann, Massachusetts, through New Hampshire and into Maine waters, then returned to harbor by way of the Isles of Shoals (Figure 1). The trip took place in near-perfect weather: no clouds, bright sun, and flat calm seas. The only real problem was the wind: there wasn't any, which meant that birds had to work to get into the air, and many didn't bother. Although birds didn't exactly fill the sky, we got a steady stream of good sightings throughout the day, highlighted by a number of pelagic species.

Figure 1. Chart of the course taken by Granite State. The white horizontal lines indicate the Maine-NH and NH-Massachusetts borders. Produced by Steve Mirick.



onto Jeffreys Ledge in record-high numbers. The tri-state trip recorded a total of 78 Cory's and only seven Greater Shearwaters. Fourteen of the Cory's Shearwaters were seen in New Hampshire waters; this is one of the highest totals on record for the state. Thirty-seven of the Cory's were in Maine waters, and this total likely represents the highest number ever reported for Maine.

Red-necked Phalaropes and Red Phalaropes are shorebirds that spend their winters at sea. They start to appear

Pelagic trips are always unpredictable; sometimes you see more than expected, sometimes less. On this day, we indeed saw some things we didn't expect, and saw fewer than expected of others.

Greater Shearwaters are common in the cooler water of the Gulf of Maine, while Cory's Shearwaters usually prefer the warmer water to the south of Cape Cod, rarely wandering as far north as Jeffreys Ledge. A normal year in the Gulf of Maine offers large numbers of Greater Shearwaters and few, if any, Cory's Shearwaters. This year, however, the numbers were reversed: Cory's Shearwaters swarmed



Two Cory's Shearwaters by Leonard Medlock.

in the Gulf of Maine in July, and peak in numbers around late August and September. Red-necked Phalaropes are usually much more common in the Gulf of Maine than Red Phalaropes. So they were on our trip: we saw more than a hundred Red-necked Phalaropes, with a handful of Red Phalaropes mixed in.



A single Red Phalarope (far left) with a flock of Red-necked Phalaropes, by Jon Woolf.

Northern Gannets are usually common sights offshore in September. We saw many of them throughout the trip, including one large group of over 100 in a floating roost. A gannet's plumage changes throughout its first four years in much the same way as a large gull's does, developing stage by stage from all-brown in a hatch-year bird to the full adult plumage of white with black wingtips and yellow head. Most of the gannets we saw were mixed brown and white, or mostly white, indicating young birds from one to three years old.



Two Northern Gannets in different plumage stages, by Jon Woolf. The amount of white indicates age: the bird on the left is almost mature, while the browner bird on the right is younger.

Other pelagic birds included two Manx Shearwaters, a few Wilson's Storm-Petrels, two juvenile Laughing Gulls, four juvenile Common Terns, an unidentified jaeger, an unidentified murre, and an Atlantic Puffin. To top it all off, we had a small, steady stream of migrant landbirds: two Merlins, a Brown-headed Cowbird, and six species of warblers including a Cape May Warbler.

We were looking for birds, but when whales cross your path it's still exciting to check them out. We had several species of marine mammals pay us a visit: 3–4 pods of White-sided Dolphins and several Fin Whales. One of the whales provided a silent reminder of the hazards these huge creatures face: its back was heavily scarred from

an encounter with a boat propeller. Finally, we saw several groups of Harbor Porpoises—not a rare animal, but a rare sighting. Harbor Porpoises are so small that any kind of wave action makes them nearly invisible.



Two Atlantic White-sided Dolphins swim close alongside the boat, by Jon Woolf.

A large Fin Whale scarred by an encounter with a boat's propellers, by Jon Woolf.



The good weather, calm sea conditions, some very good birds, and the usual professional job of the Granite State crew made it an enjoyable trip for all. Group leader and master-birder Steve Mirick did an equally good job calling out and identifying the birds we saw, while tracking the boat's course by GPS and keeping a running count of birds seen. NH Audubon will be running a similar pelagic trip in Fall 2009; contact the Massabesic Audubon Center for details, 668-5605.



The Tri-state Pelagic Birding Trip participants, dockside in Rye Harbor upon return, by Jon Woolf.

Abbreviations Used

BBC	Brookline Bird Club	R.	River
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey	Rd.	Road
CA	Conservation Area	Rt.	Route
CC	Country Club	SF	State Forest
CFT	NH Audubon Chapter Field Trip	St. Pk.	State Park
FT	Field Trip	SPNHF	Society for the Protection of NH Forests, Concord
L.	Lake	T&M	Thompson & Meserves (Purchase)
LPC	Loon Preservation Committee	TNC	The Nature Conservancy
NA	Natural Area	WMA	Wildlife Management Area
NHA	New Hampshire Audubon	WMNF	White Mountain National Forest
NHBR	New Hampshire Bird Records	WS	NHA Wildlife Sanctuary
NHRBC	NH Rare Birds Committee	~	approximately
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge		
PO	Post Office		

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