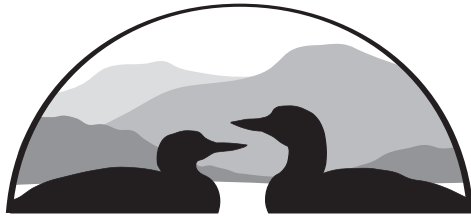


New Hampshire Bird Records



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Cover Photo: *Rufous Hummingbird by Julie Waters, 10/25/07, coming to a feeder on Thompson Road, Westmoreland, NH.*

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IN MEMORY OF

Bill Ayer Jr.

This issue of New Hampshire Bird Records, with its color cover, is sponsored by Jeannine Ayer in memory of her husband. Bill was a long time member of New Hampshire Audubon. He loved the birds and kept the feeders stocked every day no matter what the weather. He is greatly missed by all.



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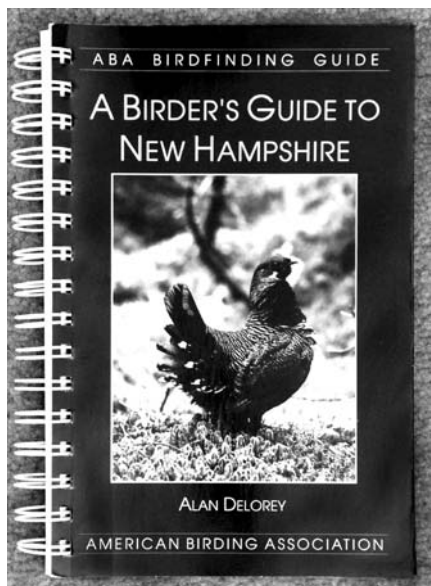
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Brenda Sens is a Volunteer Naturalist at New Hampshire Audubon. She enjoys watching birds, insects, and other wildlife at her home in Gilmanton.

Twenty-Five Years of New Hampshire Birding

by Alan Delorey

Graduating from the University of New Hampshire in 1982, I embarked on an adventure in New Hampshire birding. Why did I begin birding at that point in my life? Marriage will do that to you. At first I viewed birding with a polite indifference out of respect for my wife's interest. But it wasn't long until my own genuine enthusiasm for birding was sparked.



Alan Delorey's book *A Birder's Guide to New Hampshire*, photo by Jon Woolf.

During the 1980s I did a lot of birding at Plum Island (Massachusetts) with a few New Hampshire trips thrown in here and there. Starting in 1991 I began to focus much more on New Hampshire birding. My first task was to figure out where to bird in New Hampshire. I began to explore my native state with the goal of finding the best, most accessible birding sites. As I discovered many great birding sites in the state, I decided that it would be beneficial to share this knowledge with others through *A Birder's Guide to New Hampshire*, which was published by the American Birding Association in 1996 (currently out of print).

By my reckoning, the closer to home a bird occurs, the better it is, especially if you can add a new species to your yard list. We were fortunate enough to live on several acres in a rural area, with a nice diversity of habitat. This enabled us to accumulate a yard list of 179 species. On a good day during spring or fall migration we were able to tally up to 18 species of warblers in a single day. These included such gems as Wilson's, Tennessee, Bay-breasted, Cape May, and Orange-crowned Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, and even Connecticut Warbler. During summer there is nothing quite like the ebullient song of the Bobolink to start the day and the pensive notes of the Eastern Meadowlark at sunset.

It is difficult to select a single favorite bird from our yard, so let me share several notables with you. An Upland Sandpiper visited our field on two separate occasions. Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos summered with us. A White-eyed Vireo sang

for us one spring. Several Dickcissels visited our feeder in the late 1980s. A few Hoary Redpolls ate thistle alongside hundreds of Common Redpolls during winter invasions. A couple of White-winged Crossbills also came to our feeder in winter. We once had a flight of several hundred Common Nighthawks during fall migration, as they paused to feed on the abundant dragonflies over our field. Twice during spring migration I was delighted to hear the distinctive “quick-three-cheers” of the Olive-sided Flycatcher. An annual ritual has been the American Woodcock mating displays each spring. In recent years Red-bellied Woodpeckers moved in as year-round residents.

One of my favorite spots for morning bird walks has been Ballard Marsh in Derry, a reliable place for Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and both cuckoos. In fall I could always locate Rusty Blackbirds here. Spring was a good time to look for waterfowl before the summer growth of Pickerel Weed obscured the view.

Beaver Lake in Derry has been my favorite local waterfowl haunt. During fall migration an amazing variety of ducks visit this small lake. Some of the more interesting include Canvasback, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, American Coot, and large flocks of Ruddy Ducks.

Another local spot special to me is Pawtuckaway State Park. This largely undeveloped park in southeastern New Hampshire attracts a wonderful variety of uncommon species. I have regularly found Acadian Flycatchers nesting there. Cerulean Warbler is another southern species I’ve found nesting in the park. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers have been easy to find, too. The most special animal I ever saw at Pawtuckaway was a bobcat.

I tried offshore pelagic birding from small whalewatch sightseeing boats. I rate the experience right up there with having a root canal done! But the root canal may be preferred, as it comes with Novocaine.

So I switched tactics and perfected the art of “Storm Birding” (see the article in the Fall 1997 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*). Setting up a spotting scope at Rye Harbor State Park on Ragged Neck at the coast during storms with strong east winds, I could observe the pelagic birds coming to me on “terra firma.” Using this technique I have been able to tally four species of shearwater, two jaegers, two storm-petrels, and Northern Fulmar, all without “mal de mare.”

There are many other excellent birding sites throughout New Hampshire, but space constrains me. Let me close with a few thoughts about the North Country. Perhaps my favorite area to bird is Pittsburg, the state’s northern-most township. This special area is still a remote wilderness replete with coveted boreal species. When driving a vehicle equipped with four-wheel drive and high ground clear-



Black-backed Woodpecker, by Mark Suomala, 09/30/07, Trudeau Rd., Bethlehem, NH.

ance, the logging roads of the Connecticut Lakes Region unfold numerous birding adventures. The distinctive “chup-chup” call of the Black-backed Woodpecker has led me to many of their nest sites. I even caught a quick glimpse of the elusive Three-toed Woodpecker at East Inlet. I will always remember the male Spruce Grouse taking a dust bath in the middle of a logging road. The soft wheezy notes of the Boreal Chickadee never escaped notice, and the raucous Gray Jays vied for attention. I think that part of my heart will always remain in Pittsburg, New Hampshire.

After fifty years as a life-long New Hampshire resident, and twenty-five years of birding the state, I say farewell. Due to health issues, I have been forced into early retirement and must seek out a milder, gentler climate. I will be doing most of my future birding at our new Florida retirement community.

Alan Delorey is a former seasonal editor of New Hampshire Bird Records, field trip leader, and member of the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee. He is the author of numerous articles about birds and of the American Birding Association Guide, A Birder’s Guide to New Hampshire.

Birding the Old-Fashioned Way!

This photo recently came to *New Hampshire Bird Records* from a former New Hampshire Birder, Dr. Jim Cavanagh, now living in Tallahassee, Florida. He tells the story of how he spotted a Northern Wheatear while birding in Rye on the morning of September 9, 1972. The bird was on the rocks just east of Odiorne Point on the ocean side of Route 1A. Dr. Cavanagh knew that there was a New Hampshire Audubon bus trip to the coast that day and that they planned to pass the location where he saw the bird. It was early morning and Dr. Cavanagh could not stay until the birding trip arrived. In the days before technology brought us the NH.Birds list serve, Blackberries and cell

