

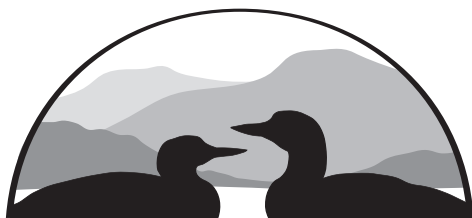
# New Hampshire Bird Records



**Spring 2007**

**Vol. 26, No. 1**

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# New Hampshire Bird Records

## Volume 26, Number 1

### Spring 2007

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**Cover:** Boston Globe staff photo by Mark Wilson.

*A Common Loon stretches on the calm waters of Squam Lake on a July morning. Photographer Mark Wilson was able to get into position for the photo because of expert boat handling by Joe Kabat, a loon volunteer who monitors the lake. Wilson used a 600mm lens on a digital camera for an effective focal length of 900mm, or the equivalent of 18X magnification.*

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**T**his issue of New Hampshire Bird Records, with its color cover, is sponsored by Sheila and Joseph Kabat in honor of their grandchildren: Delaney, Harrison and Jared who are learning to know and enjoy the birds of the Squam Lakes.



*Squam Lake Bald Eagle by Joe Kabat*

## In This Issue

Photo Quiz .....	2
2007 Goodhue-Elkins Award.....	3
Spring Season: March 1 through May 31, 2007 .....	4
<i>by Pamela Hunt</i>	
The 2007 Fox Sparrow Fallout .....	46
<i>by Terry Bronson</i>	
Backyard Birder – Wild Turkey Behavior .....	50
<i>by Peter Stettenheim</i>	
Spring Birding in Southwestern New Hampshire: Swanzey, Keene, and Surry . . . .	51
<i>by Lance Tanino</i>	
Photo Gallery – Spring on Squam Lake .....	54
<i>by Kathie Palfy, photos by Joe Kabat</i>	
Northern Goshawk Research in New Hampshire .....	55
<i>by Chris Costello and Mariko Yamasaki</i>	
Spring Arrival Dates Revisited .....	57
<i>by Pam Hunt</i>	
Answer to the Photo Quiz .....	62
<i>by David B. Donsker</i>	

Thanks to everyone who has renewed their subscription and welcome to new subscribers. We very much appreciate those who also made an additional contribution. Your support is critical to *New Hampshire Bird Records*.

If you have any goshawk encounters this spring or summer, we'd love to hear about it! We are also interested in receiving information on any sightings of banded goshawks as this could provide valuable information on longevity, adult nest site fidelity, seasonal movements, and juvenile dispersal.

Please contact either Christine Costello at 603-374-2494 (e-mail: ccostello@fs.fed.us) or Mariko Yamasaki at 603-868-7659 (e-mail: myamasaki@fs.fed.us) with any information that may help us better understand and protect this raptor in New Hampshire. Thank you for your help!

*Mariko Yamasaki and Christine Costello are wildlife biologists for the U.S. Forest Service, Northern Research Station. Their research focuses on the influences of silvicultural practices and land capability on species habitat relationships in northern forest ecosystems. Species of interest include songbirds, raptors, salamanders, small mammals and bats.*

## Spring Arrival Dates Revisited

by Pam Hunt

In the Spring 1998 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*, I presented a summary of arrival data for some of our common spring migrants. It has been almost a decade since that summary, and in the intervening years there have been several new early arrival dates recorded, including in the Spring 2007 season. In an era of increased awareness of global climate change, it seems appropriate to provide an update on how bird migration patterns have changed in New Hampshire in just the last nine years. A more comprehensive analysis of this data is being proposed that would also incorporate meteorological data, so this update will primarily focus on changes since the original listing and an overall summary.

The format in Table 1 is the same as in 1998. For each species I have sorted through over 40 years of spring data and extracted the first obvious reports of migrating birds. After gathering all the dates, I simply sorted them using a spreadsheet and had the software find the earliest date, the median date, and the first and third quartiles. The quartiles bracket the range of dates when 50% of arrivals occurred, and can thus be considered the normal arrival period for a given species. You will note that this range can vary from only a few days in the case of some warblers to much longer periods in many waterbirds. In the arrival table, the earliest record is presented first and underlined, while the median is boldfaced and located between the two quartiles. Let's use Pied-billed Grebe as an example. Half the time, this species should first appear in New Hampshire between March 19 and April 5, and the record early date is March 6. A first spring sighting on March 17 would thus be relatively early, and one on April 10 would be relatively late.

In most cases this is a straightforward process, but a handful of species are increasingly arriving in February or overwintering in the state, and are thus reported at otherwise "unusual" dates. Turkey Vulture and Common Grackle are among the better

examples. For these species the data are a little more difficult to interpret, and are also acknowledged as somewhat incomplete. For these reasons many such species were not included in the first summary of arrival dates, but I've included them this time to provide a baseline for future comparison.

The key thing to look at when studying arrival dates is the overall change with time, not individual years. One way to do this is to compare the dates between two similar lengths of time: 1) data compiled for almost 20 years in the 1960s and 1970s by Robert Smart and 2) *New Hampshire Bird Records* data from 1988 to the present. In Table 1, the final column represents the difference in the **median** between these two periods. A negative number means that a species is now arriving that many days *earlier* than it did 30–40 years ago. A positive number indicates a trend toward later arrivals. For a shorter-term comparison, I've also included a column that compares the more recent medians with those presented in the first arrival date article (1960s–1997).

Taken all together, 28 species are now arriving at least five days earlier than they did in the 1970s, while 10 are arriving at least five days later. Most of the latter are species that have shown declines in recent years, such as most grassland birds, and the later arrivals probably reflect this. With fewer birds around, fewer are likely to be detected by birders until later in the season. The earlier-arriving species are a mixed bag, and include many “short distance migrants.” These are birds that winter in the southeastern United States and thus don't have as far to fly each spring. They are probably also more adaptable in the face of climate change, because the weather in the south is a better predictor of the weather in New Hampshire. A warbler wintering down in South America, on the other hand, would have no clue whatsoever about the weather in New England until well after it headed north. These species are probably more cued in to factors such as day length to time their migrations. For an additional comparison, I also looked at how the new arrival means differ from those presented only nine years ago. Even in this much shorter time frame, seven species are arriving at least five days earlier, while three are arriving later. I'll leave it to you to look for patterns.

The key question of course is whether climate change is really the main factor behind the trend for early arrival in some species. The fact that most species are not arriving that much earlier suggests that there are several factors involved in addition to those mentioned above. Changes in land use, in the distribution and activity level of birders, and actual bird distributions may also contribute to any observed variation. We can explain earlier arrivals with warmer temperatures, but this doesn't mean it's the principal cause. And then there are the potential consequences of early arrival, such as potentially higher mortality as a result of late spring snow storms, but I'll have to save that for another day.

In addition to its scientific value, data on spring arrival is a valuable tool for birders. You can use the table below to help determine whether the bird you identify should really be here at the date you see it. Many misidentifications occur simply because observers are unfamiliar with the normal arrival schedule of common species. For instance, a brownish-gray flycatcher on March 30 is far more likely to be an Eastern Phoebe than an Eastern Wood-Pewee or *Empidonax* flycatcher. As a final note, keep in mind that some of these species occasionally winter in small numbers in the southern part of the state, in which case these dates represent the time when birds first appear away from these local wintering areas.

**Table 1.** Arrival periods for spring migrants in New Hampshire, 1960s-2007. The final two columns compare median arrival dates; negative numbers represent earlier arrivals; positive numbers represent later arrivals. NHBR 1-2 compares data from the Spring 1998 article in *New Hampshire Bird Records* (1960s-1997 data), and the data below. Smart-NHBR compares 1960s and 1970s data compiled by Robert Smart, and *New Hampshire Bird Records* data from 1988 to May 31, 2007.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Earliest date recorded</b>	<b>1st Quartile</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>3rd Quartile</b>	<b>NHBR 1-2 Change</b>	<b>Smart-NHBR Change</b>
Snow Goose	Mar-1	Mar-19	Mar-27	Apr-1	-3	-9
Wood Duck	Mar-1	Mar-5	Mar-16	Mar-23	-5	-17
American Wigeon	Mar-7	Mar-15	Mar-26	Apr-2	-10	-17
Blue-winged Teal	Mar-7	Apr-2	Apr-7	Apr-10	0	0
Green-winged Teal	Mar-3	Mar-14	Mar-25	Mar-31	-3	-15
Ring-necked Duck	Mar-1	Mar-6	Mar-10	Mar-13	-2	
Pied-billed Grebe	Mar-6	Mar-19	Mar-28	Apr-5	-1	-3
Double-crested Cormorant	Mar-2	Mar-29	Apr-5	Apr-14	0	-3
American Bittern	Mar-27	Apr-10	Apr-16	Apr-22	0	-2
Great Egret	Mar-11	Mar-31	Apr-20	May-3		-19
Snowy Egret	Mar-27	Apr-7	Apr-13	Apr-20	-5	-7
Green Heron	Apr-4	Apr-27	Apr-30	May-2	2	0
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Apr-2	Apr-14	Apr-22	May-2	3	12
Glossy Ibis	Mar-29	Apr-8	Apr-18	Apr-22	-2	-13
Turkey Vulture	Mar-1	Mar-3	Mar-9	Apr-17		-49
Osprey	Mar-10	Mar-29	Apr-4	Apr-8	-3.5	-10
Northern Harrier	Mar-2	Mar-17	Mar-25	Mar-28	0	-1
Red-shouldered Hawk	Mar-1	Mar-8	Mar-14	Mar-19	0.5	-6
Broad-winged Hawk	Mar-30	Apr-10	Apr-16	Apr-18	0	-2
American Kestrel	Mar-3	Mar-9	Mar-15	Mar-23	2	6
Merlin	Mar-6	Mar-22	Apr-11	Apr-19	-1	-17
Virginia Rail	Mar-31	Apr-23	Apr-27	May-11	-2	-3
Black-bellied Plover	Apr-17	May-11	May-14	May-17		-1
Semipalmated Plover	May-4	May-13	May-15	May-19	0	0
Killdeer	Mar-2	Mar-4	Mar-9	Mar-16	-2	-3
Greater Yellowlegs	Mar-21	Apr-2	Apr-9	Apr-18	-2	-2
Lesser Yellowlegs	Apr-8	Apr-26	May-4	May-12	0	1
Solitary Sandpiper	Apr-16	Apr-28	May-4	May-7	-1	0
Spotted Sandpiper	Apr-20	Apr-25	Apr-29	May-3	-2	-2
Semipalmated Sandpiper	May-4	May-12	May-17	May-20	3	6
Least Sandpiper	Apr-30	May-8	May-12	May-17	1	1
Short-billed Dowitcher	Apr-29	May-16	May-18	May-19	0	1
Wilson's Snipe	Mar-3	Mar-26	Apr-1	Apr-5	-3	-2
American Woodcock	Mar-1	Mar-8	Mar-14	Mar-20	-2	-10
Common Tern	Apr-26	May-5	May-9	May-14	-1.5	-3

<b>Species</b>	<b>Earliest date recorded</b>	<b>1st Quartile</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>3rd Quartile</b>	<b>NHBR 1-2 Change</b>	<b>Smart-NHBR Change</b>
Least Tern	May-7	May-20	May-21	May-23	1	1
Black Tern	May-1	May-8	May-16	May-21	-2	-3
Black-billed Cuckoo	Apr-25	May-14	May-17	May-21	0	1
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	May-6	May-14	May-18	May-27	-1.5	-1
Common Nighthawk	Apr-15	May-10	May-15	May-18	0	4
Whip-poor-will	Apr-17	Apr-25	Apr-30	May-2	2	4
Chimney Swift	Apr-9	Apr-23	Apr-28	Apr-29	1	3
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	Apr-10	May-2	May-5	May-9	-4	-6
Belted Kingfisher	Mar-4	Mar-15	Mar-22	Apr-1	-1	3
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Mar-25	Apr-2	Apr-8	Apr-10	-1	-7
Northern Flicker	Mar-1	Mar-12	Mar-20	Apr-1	-9.5	-19
Olive-sided Flycatcher	May-4	May-12	May-14	May-16	0	3
Eastern Wood-Pewee	May-1	May-9	May-13	May-19	2.5	6
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	May-9	May-17	May-20	May-22	0	-2
Traill's Flycatcher (Alder/Willow)	May-10	May-17	May-19	May-23		-2
Alder Flycatcher	May-11	May-15	May-20	May-23	0	
Willow Flycatcher	May-4	May-13	May-17	May-20	1	
Least Flycatcher	Apr-21	Apr-28	May-1	May-3	0	3
Eastern Phoebe	Mar-3	Mar-18	Mar-24	Mar-28	-2.5	-8
Great Crested Flycatcher	Apr-23	May-2	May-6	May-7	0	-1
Eastern Kingbird	Apr-13	Apr-26	May-1	May-3	0	-1
Yellow-throated Vireo	Apr-29	May-4	May-6	May-10	-2	-2
Blue-headed Vireo	Mar-31	Apr-19	Apr-22	Apr-25	-1	-3
Warbling Vireo	Apr-21	May-1	May-4	May-5	0	-2
Philadelphia Vireo	May-1	May-16	May-18	May-22	-0.5	2
Red-eyed Vireo	May-2	May-5	May-10	May-11	0	-4
Purple Martin	Apr-6	Apr-17	Apr-27	May-3	9	14
Tree Swallow	Mar-14	Mar-23	Mar-26	Mar-30	-2	-4
N. Rough-winged Swallow	Apr-3	Apr-12	Apr-19	Apr-21	0	-8
Bank Swallow	Apr-19	Apr-25	Apr-27	Apr-30	2	4
Cliff Swallow	Apr-8	Apr-22	Apr-27	May-2	4	8
Barn Swallow	Mar-28	Apr-11	Apr-16	Apr-20	0	1
House Wren	Apr-20	Apr-26	Apr-28	Apr-30	0	-1
Winter Wren	Mar-1	Mar-17	Mar-25	Mar-30	7	
Marsh Wren	Apr-25	May-4	May-13	May-18	0	-1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Mar-10	Mar-16	Apr-3	Apr-9	-2.5	-10
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Mar-30	Apr-8	Apr-13	Apr-17	0	-2
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Apr-13	Apr-21	Apr-27	May-5	-7	-17
Veery	Apr-21	Apr-28	May-5	May-7	0	-3
Bicknell's Thrush	Apr-28	May-14	May-19	May-21		2
Swainson's Thrush	Apr-21	May-7	May-11	May-15	1	2
Hermit Thrush	Mar-14	Apr-5	Apr-8	Apr-13	-3	-5
Wood Thrush	Apr-4	Apr-29	May-1	May-3	-1	-3



<b>Species</b>	<b>Earliest date recorded</b>	<b>1st Quartile</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>3rd Quartile</b>	<b>NHBR 1-2 Change</b>	<b>Smart-NHBR Change</b>
Gray Catbird	Apr-26	Apr-30	May-3	May-5	-1	-3
Brown Thrasher	Apr-5	Apr-20	Apr-24	Apr-27	0	0
American Pipit	Mar-17	Apr-2	Apr-11	Apr-29	-9	
Blue-winged Warbler	Apr-28	May-3	May-7	May-13	-5.5	-11
Golden-winged Warbler	May-5	May-10	May-12	May-17	1	6
Tennessee Warbler	May-1	May-9	May-12	May-14	0	1
Nashville Warbler	Apr-23	Apr-27	Apr-30	May-3	0	1
Northern Parula	Apr-19	Apr-30	May-3	May-5	-0.5	3
Yellow Warbler	Apr-22	Apr-30	May-2	May-4	0	-4
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Apr-29	May-2	May-4	May-6	0	0
Magnolia Warbler	Apr-25	May-4	May-6	May-9	0	-1
Cape May Warbler	May-4	May-6	May-9	May-12	2.5	5
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	Apr-23	Apr-30	May-2	May-6	-1	4
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Mar-2	Apr-7	Apr-13	Apr-18	-1	-7
Black-thr. Green Warbler	Apr-20	Apr-27	Apr-29	Apr-30	0	1
Blackburnian Warbler	Mar-30	May-3	May-5	May-6	0	1
Pine Warbler	Mar-27	Apr-3	Apr-10	Apr-15	-2	-11
Prairie Warbler	Apr-25	May-4	May-7	May-11	-2.5	-5
Palm Warbler	Mar-30	Apr-9	Apr-14	Apr-17	-2	-6
Bay-breasted Warbler	May-1	May-10	May-13	May-16	0	1
Blackpoll Warbler	May-8	May-12	May-15	May-17	1	1
Black-and-white Warbler	Apr-15	Apr-22	Apr-25	Apr-27	-1	-1
American Redstart	Apr-26	May-4	May-5	May-7	-1	-1
Ovenbird	Apr-27	Apr-30	May-2	May-4	-1	-1
Northern Waterthrush	Apr-12	Apr-22	Apr-27	Apr-30	0	2
Louisiana Waterthrush	Apr-5	Apr-16	Apr-20	Apr-22	1	3
Mourning Warbler	May-12	May-19	May-22	May-26	0	2
Common Yellowthroat	Apr-18	May-2	May-4	May-6	-1	-1
Wilson's Warbler	Apr-22	May-10	May-11	May-14	0	-1
Canada Warbler	Apr-29	May-9	May-11	May-14	1	4
Scarlet Tanager	Apr-27	May-4	May-7	May-10	-1	-2
Eastern Towhee	Apr-7	Apr-15	Apr-19	Apr-22	1	1
Chipping Sparrow	Mar-29	Apr-7	Apr-11	Apr-17	-3	-6
Field Sparrow	Mar-18	Mar-28	Apr-5	Apr-12	0	2
Vesper Sparrow	Mar-30	Apr-7	Apr-15	Apr-22	7	16
Savannah Sparrow	Mar-15	Mar-31	Apr-8	Apr-14	0	11
Saltmarsh Sharp-t. Sparrow	May-4	May-19	May-21	May-23	0	-2
Fox Sparrow	Mar-2	Mar-11	Mar-17	Mar-23	1	-7
Lincoln's Sparrow	Apr-26	May-6	May-10	May-13	-3	-7
Swamp Sparrow	Mar-23	Apr-7	Apr-14	Apr-19	1.5	4
White-crowned Sparrow	Apr-18	Apr-29	May-2	May-4	1.5	4
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Apr-15	Apr-27	Apr-30	May-3	-3	-6
Indigo Bunting	Apr-6	May-2	May-7	May-12	-3	-8



Species	Earliest date recorded	1st Quartile	Median	3rd Quartile	NHBR 1-2 Change	Smart NHBR Change
Bobolink	May-2	May-5	May-6	May-8	-1	-2
Red-winged Blackbird	Feb-23	Mar-1	Mar-2	Mar-6		-1
Eastern Meadowlark	Mar-2	Mar-11	Mar-17	Mar-25	2	9
Rusty Blackbird	Mar-1	Mar-14	Mar-22	Mar-27	1	2
Common Grackle	Feb-26	Mar-3	Mar-8	Mar-15		-4
Orchard Oriole	Apr-25	May-8	May-11	May-17	-4	-4
Baltimore Oriole	Apr-18	May-1	May-2	May-4	-2	-3
					# of species arriving at least 5 days early	7
					# of species arriving at least 5 days later	3
					# of species arriving 2 days early	34
					# of species arriving 2 days later	13

## Answer to the Photo Quiz

by David B. Donsker

One of the pleasures of birding in the spring is that the birds we are watching are in breeding plumage...the plumages that are most familiar to us from illustrations in our field guides. For many birds, these plumages are in vivid color and we use color as a substantial aid in making our identifications. Some beginner's bird guides even use color as an initial category for dividing birds into smaller identifiable groups. But even in springtime, color can elude us. Nothing can be more frustrating, for example, than trying to identify a small bird, backlit by the sun, high in the crown in a tall tree, or watching a bird in the dark undergrowth where colors are dimmed and muted. Under these circumstances, we must instead use other clues including behavior, song, structure, and plumage pattern. This black-and-white photograph requires the analysis of structure and plumage pattern to reach a proper identification of our Photo Quiz subject.

This is a small perching bird with a sharp, pointed bill, short neck, and proportionally short tail. On closer examination, we note that the bill is bicolored; that is, it has a dark upper half or mandible and a pale lower mandible. Like so many birds, it is rather uniformly dark above and pale below with the exception of a darker upper breast. Its most notable features are two prominent wide wing bars and a "broken" eye-ring that forms a short crescent above and below the eye—the only striking marking on its otherwise plain head and face.