

New Hampshire Bird Records





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MANAGING EDITOR

Rebecca Suomala
 603-224-9909 X309,
 rsuomala@nhaudubon.org

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Cover Photos: Mississippi Kites at the nest in Newmarket, NH. Adult by Len Medlock, 7/28/13, chick in the nest by Iain MacLeod, 7/23/13.

New Hampshire Bird Records is published quarterly by New Hampshire Audubon’s Conservation Department. Thank you to the many observers who submit their sightings to NH eBird (www.ebird.org/nh), the source of data for this publication. Records are selected for publication and not all species reported will appear in the issue. The published sightings typically represent the highlights of the season. All records are subject to review by the NH Rare Birds Committee and publication of reports here does not imply future acceptance by the Committee. Please contact the Managing Editor if you would like to report your sightings but are unable to use NH eBird.

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The Birds of New Hampshire

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*

The following is an excerpt of one species account from The Birds of New Hampshire by Allan R. Keith and Robert P. Fox, published in 2013 by the Nuttall Ornithological Club (see page 1). It is re-printed with permission of the author and publisher.

Status. Now a regular seasonal transient and occasional in summer. It was probably a regular migrant and possibly a summer resident in precolonial times (Wood 1634).

Early reports to 1950. Listed by Belknap (1792) as “Crane, *Ardea canadensis*,” the same name applied by Linnaeus. Allen (1876) believed that this species was regular and perhaps even common in most of New England in precolonial times on the basis of the report by Morton (1632): “Cranes, there are great store, that ever more came there at St. David’s day [March 1]...These sometimes eat our corne...and [are] a goodly bird in a dishe.” Palmer (1949) wrote that at “the time of the early voyagers, cranes appear to have been fairly common on the Atlantic slope. One species, at least, occurred northeast to Nova Scotia, and may have been a rare summer resident in ME.” One shot at Lovell’s Pond near Wakefield in either 1896 or 1897 was bought by N. Dearborn from J. S. Turner, a taxidermist, and was given to what is now UNH at Durham. Though unlabelled, what is almost certainly the same specimen is now #732 in the mounted collection there.

1950 to present. The first report since 1896–1897 was 1 at Dover 13–24 Oct 1970 (N. Bickford, A.C. Borror *et al.*). Records since then were sporadic to 1990 after which it has been found with greater regularity and it has occurred annually 1999–2009. This increase has probably been related to its more regular occurrence in ME (Melvin 2002) and VT which culminated in its breeding in both those states by 2006 and by 2007 in MA. Likely the same individual bird appeared at Monroe every year 1999–2009, extreme early arrival being 31 Mar in 2000 (S.B. Turner *et mult.*) and in 2006 and 2007 (both E.A. Emery) and latest in fall being 6 Dec in 2001 (J. Cate, E.A. Emery) and in 2003 (E.A. Emery, P. Powers); more typical arrival was by mid-April and departure was by mid-November.

Spring. Other than the Monroe bird, at least 17 records 1996–2009 between extreme dates of 1 at Concord 4 Mar 2009 (R.A. Woodward *et al.*) to 1 at Rochester 8 Jun 2004 (S.R. Mirick). Nine reports from the coastal region, 4 reports from the Connecticut River valley, and 4 from the Merrimack River valley. All records for 1–2 birds except high count of 4 at Warner 8 Apr 2008 (N. Neider).

Summer. Other than the returning Monroe bird, 1 at Boscawen 21 Jun to 25 Jul 2000 (M. Lahar *et mult.*) and

probably the same bird nearby at Bradford 28–29 Jul 2000 (R. Whittier *et al.*).

Fall. Other than the returning Monroe bird, surprisingly fewer reports at this season than in spring: 5 records 1970–2009, of which 3 were in October, between extreme dates of 2 at Hanover 7 Oct 1989 (J. Barrett) and 1 at Concord 12 Dec 1977 (K.E. Dymnt). Two reports from the coastal region, 2 from the Merrimack River valley, and 1 from the Connecticut River valley.

Birding in the White Mountains in June and July

by Mark Suomala



Black-backed Woodpecker by Mark Suomala

The dramatic landscape of the White Mountains is a wonderful place in which to go birding. Roadside birding is possible in some areas and there are some easy walks, but for those with the ability and interest, there are also some marvelous hikes that can be taken in conjunction with birding. The White Mountains are located mainly in New Hampshire and contain the five highest mountains in New England, including the highest, the well-known Mount Washington at 6,288 feet (a relatively small portion of the White Mountains extends into Maine).

The biggest birding draw has to be scarce boreal (northern) species that have limited breeding ranges in the Northeast, such as Spruce Grouse, Gray Jay, Black-backed Woodpecker, and Boreal Chickadee, and the Bicknell's Thrush, a difficult-to-see songbird that breeds only in northeastern North America. Many of these species are found only in small numbers and can be difficult to locate unless you conduct research ahead of time. There are many other species that occur in higher numbers and are sometimes easier to see, but are still of great interest to birders because they generally breed away from dense human populations. These include Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Mourning Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Rusty Blackbird, White-winged Crossbill, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak.

This article focuses on the roadside sites and easy walking sites. The main research sources I suggest for additional information are NH eBird (www.ebird.org/nh), *New Hampshire Bird Records*, the NH Birds e-mail list (an open Google Group), and New Hampshire Audubon's weekly Rare Bird Alert (available on the NH Audubon website, www.nh.audubon.org, on the NH Birds e-mail list, or by phone recording). These resources can help to determine the best dates to search for species, as well as providing ideas for sites to visit.

Cannon Mountain, Franconia Notch

This site is mainly known for Bicknell's Thrush and other more common species that favor spruce/fir forest habitat, such as Blackpoll Warbler and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. Note that Gray Jay, Spruce Grouse, and Black-backed Woodpecker are not normally seen on the mountaintop and Boreal Chickadee is rarely reported. The easy route is to take the tram from the base of Cannon Mountain to the summit and walk the loop trail. The trail is rough and uneven but has little change in elevation. Caution – if the rocks are wet, take extra care so as not to slip. For Bicknell's Thrush, stop and listen anywhere along the loop trail, but especially at the cliff overlooks. A spotting scope can sometimes be helpful. The thrush is often easy to hear but maddeningly difficult to see. It does not always "tee-up" on top of a tree, but often sings from within the foliage. Swainson's Thrush is also here and can be confused with Bicknell's Thrush, so be sure to look carefully at any thrush or be familiar with the songs or other vocalizations to confirm any Bicknell's Thrush sightings. Warning – the tram is safe, but not recommended if you are uncomfortable with heights. Also, the cliff walk part of the summit loop trail traverses numerous areas adjacent to sheer drop-offs. There are restrooms and a small sandwich shop located in the summit building. Be sure to scan the ski

trails from the road and from the tram for black bears that like to forage on the open slopes. The tram charges a fee and normally begins operation on Memorial Day weekend. The first daily tram-run usually starts just after 9:00 am. To get there, take Exit 34B off Route 93 and follow signs to the Cannon Mountain Tramway. For more details about the schedule of operations, please see the Cannon Mountain tram website: <http://www.cannonmt.com/>.

Trudeau Road, Bethlehem

This site is mainly known for its boggy woodland and wetland areas, which typically host at least one resident pair of Black-backed Woodpeckers. The woodpeckers can be seen year-round, but it is much easier to find them during the breeding season when they are vocalizing and drumming (they have sometimes nested in highly visible locations such as along Trudeau Road or nearby trails). Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is common, and Boreal Chickadee and Ruby-crowned Kinglet are sometimes reported, but, despite favorable habitat, Spruce Grouse and Gray Jay have rarely been seen here. White-winged Crossbills favor this site in irruption years. Other species of interest that are regularly reported during the breeding season include Canada, Magnolia, and Blackburnian Warblers, and Alder Flycatcher. The site is most easily reached by traveling north for about one-half mile on Trudeau Road from Route 3. There is a gated forest road on the west side of the road (park on the east side of Trudeau Road as there is more room and you won't block the gate). Walk past the gate for a short distance (about 800 feet) until you reach a four-way intersection. Turn right and walk slowly, looking and listening for bird vocalizations and drumming. When you reach an open water wetland (about 1,200 feet) on the west (left) side of the trail, you have reached the end of the main woodpecker area. The trails extend for many miles, and who knows what you might also turn up if you explore! The site is only about eight miles northeast of Cannon Mountain, so the two locations are easily combined to make a half-day trip (if you start at Trudeau Road at sunrise) or full-day trip. To get to Trudeau Road from the Cannon Mountain tramway parking area, travel north on Route 93 to Exit 35 and from there travel east on Route 3 until you see Trudeau Road on your left (north side of Route 3). There are no restrooms.

Mount Washington Auto Road, Pinkham Notch

This site is mainly known for breeding Bicknell's Thrush and American Pipit. The road is eight miles long and ascends to the summit of Mount Washington. To try for the thrush, drive the Auto Road to the four mile marker and park your car in the gravel area on the right (north) side of the road.

Look and listen for Bicknell's Thrush, Blackpoll Warbler, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher on either side of the road. Bicknell's Thrush can occur anywhere in the stunted spruce-fir habitat above this point. Swainson's Thrush is also found, so be sure to use songs or other vocalizations to confirm any Bicknell's Thrush. Unlike Cannon Mountain, Bicknell's Thrush at this site is more likely to "tee-up" on the top of a tree. If you drive farther up above tree line to the "Cow Pasture," you can look and listen for American Pipit, which nests in this area. The "Cow Pasture" is a relatively flat area near Mile 7 of the Auto Road and at an elevation of about 5,800 feet. Beware of traffic on the road that, besides creating a hazard, can make noise that interferes with your hearing! Wind can also be a factor and can make birding here very difficult.

Note: this road is very steep and there are no guardrails above tree line, which can be very disconcerting. There is a fee to drive the road in your own car and passengers cost extra. The Auto Road normally begins operation on Memorial Day weekend or earlier, and opens at 7:00 am. There are certain vehicle restrictions, so check with them beforehand: <http://mtwashingtonautoroad.com/> or (603) 466-3988. There are a few special days designated each year for earlier access to the road (be sure to make reservations for these opportunities). You can also have a van drop you off and pick you up; a good option if you don't want to drive. Fees apply for all of these options. From North Conway, take Route 16 north approximately 20 miles to reach the entrance to the Mount Washington Auto Road on the left.

Jefferson Notch Road



Caps Ridge Trailhead by Mark Suomala.

This site provides options for birding from the car, easy walking, or hiking. The road is nine miles long, unpaved, travels in a south/north direction and reaches an elevation of 3,009 feet at its highest point (the highest public road in New Hampshire). At the highest point is a parking lot where the Caps Ridge Trail (hiking) starts and this is where most birders go for boreal birds. Black-backed Woodpeckers are sometimes seen in the parking area and have even nested there. Bicknell's Thrush can occur in the parking area in late May or early June, but this is usually only temporary, as they

will move to higher elevation for nesting. Boreal Chickadees and Gray Jays usually occur higher up the trail and Spruce Grouse has occurred higher up in the past, but not for several years. Two singing Mourning Warblers were located on the Caps Ridge Trail in 2013. The trail is rough and steep (an 800 foot elevation gain over one mile) and is not recommended unless you have hiking gear and are in good shape. The road and the parking area are also good places to look for Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Blackpoll Warbler. Other species that have been found along the road at lower elevations include Bay-breasted and Cape May Warblers, and Philadelphia Vireo.

To reach Jefferson Notch Road, take Base Station Road off of Route 302 north of Crawford Notch (and south of the intersection of Routes 3 and 302), near Fabyan's Station Restaurant and proceed 4.4 miles to Jefferson Notch Road which is on the north (left) side. It is dirt, sometimes twisty, and can be very narrow. The road typically opens on Memorial Day weekend, but if there have been spring washouts, opening may be delayed. Check with the White Mountain National Forest office for status, (603) 536-6100. You can reach Route 302 from Route 93 or Route 16 – check your map or GPS unit for directions.

A Few Special Notes about White Mountain Birding

Season: June is an ideal time to visit – birds are on territory and singing vigorously. July can be a good time to encounter family groups of birds.

Time of day: Early morning is the best time for birding, but high elevation birds such as Bicknell's Thrush are often active well into the late morning.

Weather: Weather in the White Mountains can be very unpredictable, and electrical storms can be quite violent at times. Use common sense and terminate your outing if conditions look questionable.

Biting insects: mosquitos, black flies, no-see-ums, and deer flies can make your birding difficult or even unbearable. Be sure to bring repellent with you and wear protective clothing.

A few bird notes: Tennessee Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Cape May Warbler are all spruce-budworm specialists (they eat them) and are not common when spruce-budworms are not present. Spruce budworm pesticides are sometimes applied to commercial forests in the northeast. Evening Grosbeaks can occur throughout the area – get to know their flight call to find them. Crossbills are irruptive in nature and are not always present. Spruce Grouse is rarely seen when you are looking for one!

Mark Suomala has conducted bird surveys throughout the White Mountains and has guided many birders there to see the area specialties.

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Abbreviations Used

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

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Summer 2013 Highlights



Read about where to find boreal birds such as this Gray Jay in an article about birding in the White Mountains by the photographer, Mark Suomala.



Black-backed Woodpecker feeding young at a nest, 6/16/13, in Bethlehem, NH. See inside for more information and photos of this nest. Photo by Duane Cross.

Rails at Germonty Drive Wetland, Salem, NH

Both Sora and Virginia Rails were found at a marsh on Germonty Drive in Salem and photographed by Kyle Wilmarth.



Above: Sora 6/23/13.



Adult Virginia Rail (above right), 7/14/13 and juveniles (right), 7/20/13.

