

New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report
Spring 2020 through Winter 2020/2021 Seasons
nhbirdrecords.org/NHRBC

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This report from the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) contains the decisions for records voted on by the Committee for four seasons – Spring 2020, Summer 2020, Fall 2020, and Winter 2020/2021. These 2020 seasons included two first NH state records that were accepted by the Committee –

- Anna’s Hummingbird – first appearing at a New London feeder on about 10/28/20, this bird was banded and identified on 11/6 by bander Scott Weidensaul. The bird remained at the feeder through 11/8.
- Sage Thrasher – discovered by Cory Ross on 12/19/20 as part of the Brattleboro Christmas Bird Count at the Hinsdale Setbacks. This most obliging bird was reported in the area at least through 2/6/21.

With these additions to the NH state list, as of February 2021, the official NH list totals 425 fully substantiated species, with an additional 5 species on the Hypothetical list.

Other exciting 2020 sightings accepted by the Committee included Loggerhead Shrike, Swallow-tailed Kite, Barnacle Goose, Sooty Tern, Black-headed Grosbeak, Chestnut-collared Longspur, and Townsend’s Warbler.

The members of the Committee voting on the 2020 records were: Will Broussard, Adam Burnett, Kurk Dorsey, Jason Lambert, Iain MacLeod, Jeanne-Marie Maher, Chris McPherson, and Mike Resch (Chair and Secretary).

NHRBC Background

The NHRBC reviews rare and unusual bird sightings in New Hampshire in an effort to maintain the accuracy and scientific integrity of rare bird records in the state. It is independent of New Hampshire Bird Records (NHBR) and New Hampshire Audubon. Per the NHRBC Bylaws, the purpose of the Committee includes the following:

- To review reports of unusual occurrences of birds within the state of New Hampshire and adjacent ocean waters.
- To accept or reject such reports based upon the adequacy of documentation.
- To establish and maintain an official state list of the birds of New Hampshire.
- To permanently maintain copies of evaluated records and their associated documentation and all Committee votes, comments, and pertinent outside expert information regarding those records.
- To respond to a request from the observer of the result of the evaluation of his/her records and to educate the birding community of the results of those deliberations.
- To work closely with the editors and staff of NHBR toward our common goals.
- To function as an independent technical advisory committee to NHBR.

One of the most important functions of the NHRBC is the evaluation of records of rarities found in NH. The typical process used to evaluate these records is as follows:

- Species to be reviewed are those listed in the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Review List, which can be found here: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/NHRBC/nh-rare-birds-committee-review-list/>
- Records of these Review List species come to the Committee either from eBird checklists, or information submitted directly to NHBR or the NHRBC such as through the use of the New Hampshire Bird Sighting Documentation form, available at: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/documentation-forms-for-rarities/>
- The NHRBC will request additional information on those records where key details are not provided or limited.
- Records are compiled once a year, generally in early Spring, by the Committee Secretary, to include four consecutive seasons – Spring (March-May), Summer (June-July), Fall (August-November), and Winter (December-February).
- The members of the Committee review each of the records and submit their votes to the Secretary, who then compiles all the votes.
- The Committee typically meets once per year usually in summer, often by phone, to discuss any vote that is not unanimous, and finalize the votes for all records.
- The Committee requires a vote with not more than one dissension for acceptance of a record, except for potential first state records which require a unanimous vote. A first state record also requires at least one of the following – photograph, specimen, video recording, audio recording, or separate documentation from 3 or more observers. If none of these criteria is met, though the record is still accepted by the Committee, the species is added to the Hypothetical State List.

Note that if the Committee does not accept a record it is not necessarily an indication that the identification was incorrect. More likely, the information received was not sufficient to allow its acceptance as a state record. One common issue is that there has not been enough research on how to separate some species in the field: for instance, currently Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes are reliably identified only by song, not by visual record or flight calls. But further research may address such challenges and then the committee may re-evaluate such records. In other words, adequate documentation is key to whether a report is accepted. A reminder that the best way to ensure your sighting is accepted by the NHRBC is to prepare and submit adequate documentation of the sighting using the New Hampshire Bird Sighting Documentation form. Even if you have a photo, a supplemental documentation form can be invaluable in gaining acceptance of the record, especially with photos of limited quality. But not to worry - if you don't have a photograph it doesn't mean the record can't be accepted by the Committee.

Additional details on the NHRBC can be found on the Committee website – nhbirdrecords.org/NHRBC

Spring 2020 Records

Records Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Loggerhead Shrike	5/24/20	Hillsborough
Cerulean Warbler	5/27/20	Durham
Hooded Warbler	5/14/20	Hinsdale Setbacks
Yellow-headed Blackbird	5/18/20	Manchester
Bullock's x Baltimore Oriole	5/4/20	Epsom

Records Not Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Gray-cheeked Thrush	5/25/20	Roxbury
Nocturnal calls could not eliminate Bicknell's Thrush. Accepted as Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush		
Summer Tanager	5/26/20	Newmarket
The photo and details were insufficient to eliminate Scarlet Tanager		
Lazuli x Indigo Bunting	5/21/20	Sandwich
Characteristics of this bird were not inconsistent with a pure Indigo Bunting		

Summer 2020 Records

Records Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Swallow-tailed Kite	7/24/20	Webster
Swallow-tailed Kite	7/29/20	Claremont
Cerulean Warbler	6/9/20	Sandwich
Yellow-headed Blackbird	6/4/20	Loudon

Records Not Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Forster's Tern	7/14/20	Hancock
Other <i>Sterna</i> species could not be eliminated for this distant sighting		
Summer Tanager	7/20/20	Hooksett
Description could not eliminate more common species.		

Fall 2020 Records

Records Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Barnacle Goose	11/27/20	Hudson
Sabine's Gull	8/29/20	Rye
Sooty Tern	8/7/20	Deerfield
White-winged Dove	11/7/20	Concord
Anna's Hummingbird – first NH state record	11/6/20	New London
Swallow-tailed Kite	8/9/20	Webster
Swallow-tailed Kite	8/9/20	Lebanon
Western Kingbird	10/19/20	Conway
Northern Wheatear	9/19/20	Concord
Townsend's Solitaire	10/28/20	Nottingham
Golden-winged Warbler	9/9/20	Amherst
Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco	11/14/20	Gilsum
Chestnut-collared Longspur	10/23/20	Hollis

Records Not Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Rufous Hummingbird	8/22/20	Rochester
The description could not eliminate Ruby-throated Hummingbird.		
Gray-cheeked Thrush	9/23/20	Hancock
Nocturnal calls could not eliminate Bicknell's Thrush. Accepted as Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush		
Gray-cheeked Thrush	10/1/20	Hancock
Nocturnal calls could not eliminate Bicknell's Thrush. Accepted as Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush		
Gray-cheeked Thrush	10/5/20	Hancock
Nocturnal calls could not eliminate Bicknell's Thrush. Accepted as Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush		

Winter 2020/2021 Records

Records Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Pacific Loon	1/1/21	Odiorne Point SP
Long-eared Owl	12/6/20	Canobie Lake, Salem
Sage Thrasher – first NH state record	12/19/20	Hinsdale Setbacks
Townsend's Warbler	12/30/20	Derry

Records Not Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Pacific Loon	12/13/20	Meredith
Red-throated Loon could not be eliminated for this distant sighting		