

New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report — Part One

This report from the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) contains the decisions for records voted on by the Committee since the report published in the Winter 2004-2005 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*. Note that the NHRBC report published in the Winter 2005-06 issue contains records that were reviewed a number of years ago but never published. The decisions in the summary below reflect the recent, ongoing work of the Committee (December 2005 through October 2006).

The NHRBC is an independent technical advisory committee to *New Hampshire Bird Records* (NHBR). It reviews unusual sightings in an effort to maintain accuracy and scientific integrity of the database of bird records maintained by New Hampshire Audubon. All sightings are evaluated based on details submitted. The committee requires a vote with not more than one dissension for acceptance of a record. Any new state record requires a unanimous vote.

A rejection is not necessarily an indication that the identification was incorrect but that the information received was not sufficient to allow its inclusion in the state record. Adequate documentation is key to whether a report is accepted or not. For information on the Committee and its decision-making process see the articles in the Summer 1996 and Winter 2005-06 issues of *New Hampshire Bird Records*. The Fall 1996 issue has an article on how to document rare sightings. Contact the Managing Editor for a copy of any of these articles.

The voting members of the Committee during the period in which all these records were evaluated were David Deifik, David Donsker (chairman), Davis Finch, George Gavutis and Rob Woodward. Alan Delorey participated in the deliberation of most of the older records from 1988-1990. Dennis Abbott, Ralph Andrews and Tony Vazzano did not participate in most of the 1988-1990 record discussions but were committee members during all of the other deliberations. Terry Bronson served as the secretary of the Committee during 2006.

Spring 2005

Records accepted by the Committee

Greater White-fronted Goose in Laconia on May 17-19.
Black Vulture in Nashua on March 7.
Golden Eagle in Hart's Location on May 12.
Wilson's Plover in Seabrook on May 1 and May 8. (Photo)
American Oystercatcher in Rye on May 28.
Ruff in Stratham on April 26
Parasitic Jaeger in Rye on May 26. (Photo)
Common Murre in Rye on May 26.
Varied Thrush in Campton on March 22.
Summer Tanager in Bethlehem on May 3. (Photo)
Summer Tanager in Rye on May 15 (Photo)
Dickcissel in Somersworth on May 21.
Dickcissel in Somersworth on May 27.
Clay-colored Sparrow in Rochester on May 21.
Hoary Redpoll in Sandwich on March 20.

Records accepted as Hypothetical by the Committee

An Anhinga in Portsmouth on May 17 was well described by an observer quite familiar with the species. However, since at least three observers or a photograph is required for a first state record it was accepted in the "hypothetical" category.

A Mew Gull in the Rochester Wastewater Treatment Plant on April 18. Seen by an experienced observer. However, since at least three observers or a photograph is required for a first state record it was accepted in the "hypothetical" category.

Records not accepted by the Committee

Long-tailed Jaeger in Rye on May 25. It was felt the observer himself rightfully excluded Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers. Features reported were inconsistent for Long-tailed Jaeger of sub-adult stage, the only stage reasonably possible given the field marks submitted. Specifically the lack of a distinct cap and elongated central tail feathers were a difficulty. Sighting was relatively fleeting and under difficult viewing conditions. Other larid species could not be fully excluded. Brewer's Blackbird in Londonderry on April 14. Observer did not exclude Rusty Blackbird.

Summer 2005

Records accepted by the Committee

Clapper Rail in Hampton on June 25.

Clapper Rail in Hampton on June 25-26, July 4. (Photo)

King Rail in Hampton on June 12.

King Rail in Hampton on June 18. (Many subsequent sightings)

American Oystercatcher in Rye on the Isles of Shoals on June 15.

American Oystercatcher in Rye on the Isles of Shoals on June 23.

Common Murre in Rye from the Isles of Shoals on June 29.

White-crowned Sparrow in New Ipswich on June 18.

Scaup species in Brentwood on July 21. (Species determination was not conclusive).

Records not accepted by the Committee

American Oystercatcher in Rye on the Isles of Shoals. Insufficient data submitted.

Fall 2005

Records accepted by the Committee

Pacific Loon in North Hampton on October 31. (Two reports)

Leach's Storm Petrel in North Hampton on October 13.

Greater White-fronted Goose in Rye on November 25.

Jaeger species in Rye from Star Island on September 6. (Bird seen at considerable distance.

Although Parasitic Jaeger is favored by dates, distance from bird could not conclusively establish species).

Parasitic Jaeger in Rye on September 7.

Parasitic Jaeger in Rye on August 16.

Franklin's Gull in Rochester on November 8. (Photo, seen by many subsequent observers).

Selasphorus hummingbird species in Epsom on October 13 (Photo of a female plumage bird. Photo could not distinguish between Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds).

Trail's (Willow/Alder) Flycatcher in East Kingston on October 15. (Bird was not calling so specific assignment between Alder and Willow could not be established).

Ash-throated Flycatcher in Kensington on November 20.

Ash-throated Flycatcher in East Kingston on November 29. (Photo)

Northern Rough-winged Swallow in Exeter on October 16.

Cave Swallow in Rye on November 12. (Two reports).

Yellow-rumped Warbler, Audubon's subspecies, in Rye on November 30. (Photo)

Townsend's Warbler in Rye on November 20. (Photo)

Painted Bunting in Contoocook on September 25.

Dark-eyed Junco, Oregon subspecies, in Rye on November 12, 13. (Two separate reports. Photos).

Yellow-headed Blackbird in Greenland on October 25.

Records accepted as Hypothetical by the Committee

MacGillivray's Warbler in Gilford on October 1. Good description by two observers very familiar with the species. However, since at least three observers or a photograph is required for a first state record it was accepted in the "hypothetical" category.

Records not accepted by the Committee

Eared Grebe in Rye on September 7. Report did not exclude the over-summering Horned Grebe known from the very location of the report.

Yellow-headed Blackbird in Claremont on August 1. Insufficient details.

Records pending

Rufous Hummingbird in Salem on August 23, 24. Photo submitted clearly shows a male Selasphorus hummingbird. Record deferred for additional description and/or photographs to confirm species.

Winter 2005-2006

Records accepted by the Committee

Tundra Swan in Haverhill on December 3.

Gyr Falcon in Auburn on December 17.

Thayer's Gull in Rochester on December 28. (Photos. First state record. Strong support for this species from outside experts).

Thayer's Gull in Rochester on December 30. (Photos. The same individual as on December 28).

Great Gray Owl in Acworth on December 4.

Great Gray Owl in Lyman on January 22. (Photo)

Painted Bunting in Newmarket on January 22. (Two reports. Photo)

Yellow-headed Blackbird in Hillsboro on December 1. (Photo)

Yellow-headed Blackbird in Stratham on December 4. (Photo)

Yellow-headed Blackbird in Stratham on December 5. (Seen and photographed by many subsequent observers. Same individual as December 4 sighting but at a different location).

Hoary Redpoll in Sandwich on January 8.

Hoary Redpoll in Sandwich on January 11.

Hoary Redpoll in Hancock on February 9. (Photo)

Hoary Redpoll in Sandwich on February 2.

Historical and Deferred Records—See Part 2 in the Summer 2006 issue.

Answer to the Photo Quiz

by David B. Donsker

This small, streaked bird with a short, conical bill is clearly a sparrow. That's the easy part. Sparrows, especially those with streaked breasts, frequently present identification challenges to both beginning and experienced birders.

Why is this so? Sparrows by their very nature are cryptic. Many skulk in thick tangles, grasses or sedges, allowing only for tantalizing glimpses. But even if seen well, these "little brown jobs" with their confusing array of streaks, crown stripes and facial markings and their frequent lack of a single definitive "field mark" can make them look frustratingly similar to one another. Accurate identification generally requires the