

## New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

This report from the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) contains the decisions for records voted on since the report published in the Spring 2006 (Part 1) and Summer 2006 (Part 2) issues of *New Hampshire Bird Records* (NHBR).

The NHRBC is an independent technical advisory committee to 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. Sightings are evaluated based on details submitted. The Committee requires a vote with not more than one dissent for acceptance of a record. A 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 NHBR. The Fall 1996 issue has an article on how to document rare sightings. Contact the Managing Editor of NHBR for a copy of these articles.

Voting members of the Committee during 2007 when these votes took place were Dennis Abbott, Ralph Andrews, Jim Berry, David Deifik, Davis Finch, George Gavutis, Jr., Tony Vazzano, and Rob Woodward (chairman). Terry Bronson served as the Committee Secretary.

### Spring 2006

#### Records accepted by the Committee

Greater White-fronted Goose in Charlestown on March 18. (Two reports)  
Least Bittern in Rye on May 29.  
Black Vulture in Hinsdale on March 28.  
Black Vulture in Portsmouth on May 24.  
Gyr Falcon in Gilford on March 12.  
American Oystercatcher in Rye on May 5.  
Red-necked Phalarope in Jefferson on May 12.  
Red-necked Phalarope in Jefferson on May 13.  
Red-necked Phalarope in Dorchester on May 14.  
Red-necked Phalarope in Whitefield on May 14.  
Red-necked Phalarope in Concord on May 15.  
Red-necked Phalarope in Exeter on May 16.  
Red Phalarope in Bow on May 14.  
Red Phalarope in Concord on May 14.  
Red Phalarope in Dorchester on May 14.  
Red Phalarope in Gilford on May 15.  
Lesser Black-backed Gull in Concord on May 16.  
Arctic Tern in Jefferson on May 14.  
Townsend's Solitaire in Nottingham on April 9.  
Blue Grosbeak in Hanover on May 8.  
Dickcissel in Derry on April 10.  
Dickcissel in Swanzey on May 25.  
American Tree Sparrow in Tamworth on May 17.  
Hoary Redpoll in Chatham on March 19.  
Hoary Redpoll in Sandwich on March 19.

### **Records not accepted by the Committee**

Red-necked Phalarope in Laconia on May 13. No documentation.  
Red-necked Phalarope in Gilford on May 15. No documentation.  
Red Phalarope in Gilford on May 15. No documentation.  
Long-eared Owl in Jefferson on May 24. Description of several hoots and calls not conclusive due to variation in owl calls.  
Acadian Flycatcher in Durham on May 19. Song inconclusive. Not seen.  
Cerulean Warbler in Strafford on May 17. No optics. Description not convincing.  
Cerulean Warbler in Strafford on May 28. No optics. Description not convincing.  
Cerulean Warbler in North Hampton on May 31. No optics. Description not convincing.  
American Tree Sparrow in Ossipee on May 17. No documentation.  
Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow in Concord on May 13. Unusual location. Insufficient details to eliminate other sparrow species.

## **Summer 2006**

### **Records accepted by the Committee**

Albatross species in Hampton on June 6. (Two reports.)  
Stereorarius species in Rye on July 19.  
Least Bittern in Durham on June 27.  
Least Bittern in Stratham on July 8.  
Black Vulture in Ossipee on June 29.  
American Oystercatcher in Seabrook on June 1.  
Common Murre in Rye on July 23.  
White-winged Dove in Dover on July 2. (Photos. First state record.)  
Selasphorus species in Loudon on July 22.  
Selasphorus species in Loudon on July 31.  
Clay-colored Sparrow in Concord on June 14.

### **Records not accepted by the Committee**

Mississippi Kite in Kensington on July 9. More detail needed for a rarity of this magnitude.  
American Oystercatcher in Hampton on July 15. Brief description does not eliminate other species.  
Arctic Tern in Jefferson on June 16. Insufficient details.  
Yellow-headed Blackbird in New London on July 1. Insufficient details.

## **Fall 2006**

### **Records accepted by the Committee**

Eared Grebe in Rye on November 30.  
American White Pelican in Portsmouth on October 21.  
Western Reef-Heron in Rye on August 9. (Photos. First state record.)  
Western Reef-Heron in Portsmouth on August 19.  
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Hampton on September 17.  
Royal Tern in Rye on August 16.  
Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Rye on November 18–19. (Three reports. Photos. First state record.)  
Northern Wheatear in Salem on September 14. (Two reports.)  
Northern Wheatear in Rye on September 16.

### **Records not accepted by the Committee**

Purple Gallinule in Fremont on October 9. Insufficient details.  
Barn Owl in Bedford on August 19. Insufficient, unconvincing details for a rare species.  
Great Gray Owl in Shelburne on October 4. Date improbable. Details lacking.

## **Winter 2006–2007**

### **Records accepted by the Committee**

Greater White-fronted Goose in Chatham on December 6.

Cackling Goose in Concord on December 7. (First state record for this species under this name, although records exist for Richardson's subspecies of Canada Goose, which is among the subspecies that were split to form Cackling Goose in 2004.)

American White Pelican in Newmarket on December 10.

Black Vulture in Amherst on December 4.

Gyr Falcon in Dover on February 13.

Slaty-backed Gull in Rochester on January 2. (Two reports.)

Slaty-backed Gull in Rochester on January 18. (Two reports.)

Eastern Phoebe in Merrimack on February 5.

Varied Thrush in Dublin on February 20.

Ovenbird in Westmoreland on January 26.

Yellow-headed Blackbird in East Kingston on January 21.

Yellow-headed Blackbird in Stratham on January 21.

Yellow-headed Blackbird in East Kingston on January 25.

#### **Records not accepted by the Committee**

Long-eared Owl in Pittsburg on December 19. Call of unseen bird insufficient to identify species.

Eastern Phoebe in Fitzwilliam on February 10. Improbable for date. Not likely to be singing.

### **Spring 2007**

#### **Records accepted by the Committee**

Greater White-fronted Goose in Hinsdale on March 18.

Greater White-fronted Goose in Charlestown on March 31.

Cackling Goose in Hinsdale on March 25.

Cackling Goose in Sandwich on April 22.

Barnacle Goose in Hinsdale on March 25 and 27. (Two reports.)

"Common" Green-winged Teal in East Kingston on March 14-15. (Two reports.)

"Common" Green-winged Teal in Charlestown on March 31.

"Common" Green-winged Teal in Keene on April 18.

Pacific Loon in Rye on May 15. (Two reports.)

Eared Grebe in Rye on May 14.

Leach's Storm-Petrel in Hampton on April 16. (Two reports.)

Black Vulture in Hinsdale on April 17.

Mississippi Kite in Kensington on April 24.

King/Clapper Rail in Hampton on May 19, 22, and 25. (Three reports. Bird heard only.)

American Oystercatcher in Seabrook on May 20.

Thick-billed Murre in Hampton on May 7-12.

Long-eared Owl in Deerfield on March 14. (Specimen)

Red-headed Woodpecker in Hillsborough on March 10.

White-eyed Vireo in Chester on May 23.

Prothonotary Warbler in Epping on May 26.

Summer Tanager in Hampton on May 28-29. (Three reports.)

Western Tanager in Goffstown on May 16.

Clay-colored Sparrow in Laconia on May 20.

"Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco in Epping on March 25.

#### **Records not accepted by the Committee**

American Oystercatcher in Hampton on May 20. No documentation received. Second-hand report.

Wood Thrush in New Boston on March 5. Observed without optics, while driving.

Blue Grosbeak in Bristol on May 8-9. Indigo Bunting cannot be ruled out.

Blue Grosbeak in Brookline on May 19. Indigo Bunting cannot be ruled out.

Lark Bunting in Fitzwilliam on March 15. Large flock inconceivable. Unsuitable habitat. Unlikely date.

Rustic Bunting in Whitefield on March 23. Purple Finch not eliminated. Insufficient documentation for first state record.

## Older Records

### Records accepted by the Committee

Rufous Hummingbird in Salem on August 23–24, 2005. (Additional photos received.)

Kentucky Warbler in Rye on September 6, 1998. (Photo. Banded.)

### Records not accepted by the Committee

Osprey in Nottingham on December 25, 2005. Bird not described. Unlikely date.

Hoary Redpoll in Loudon on February 8–9, 2004. Cannot rule out leucistic Common Redpoll.

Adult male Hoary would not have heavily streaked flanks.

### Records Pending

Least Bittern in Sandwich on May 24, 2007. Documentation not yet received.

## Photo Quiz – An Identification Clinic

by David Donsker. Photos by Scott Young, except for Figure 1.

*We have used a slightly different format for this issue's Photo Quiz to better present the identification features of the confusingly similar redpolls. Ed.*

To the delight of New Hampshire birders, the snowy winter of 2007–2008 was one that exploded with irruptive subarctic and high arctic species. Pine Grosbeaks, Bohemian Waxwings, and redpolls abounded in considerable numbers. As part of this huge influx of redpolls were a significant number of well-documented Hoary Redpoll sightings, including the individual photographed in Steve Mirick's montage of views (Figure 1) which introduces this season's "Photo Quiz."

The identification of Hoary Redpoll is one of the more difficult challenges we face as birders. There are several reasons why this is so.

First of all, in North America four taxa or phylogenetic groups of redpolls are involved. Two full species of redpoll are recognized by the American Ornithologists' Union—Common and Hoary—each with two subspecies. The "Southern" or "Mealy" Common Redpoll, *Carduelis flammea flammea*, breeds in the subarctic boreal forest of Canada and Alaska. It is the most abundant redpoll seen in New Hampshire in any winter. The rarer "Greater" Common Redpoll, *C. f. rostrata*, is a larger, darker form that breeds on Baffin Island and in Greenland. It is typically seen only in major irruptive years. Hoary Redpoll breeds on the arctic tundra. Its two subspecies include the more frequently encountered "Southern" Hoary Redpoll, *C. hornemanni exilipes*, which breeds in northern Canada and Alaska, and "Hornemann's" Hoary Redpoll, *C. h. hornemanni*, the rare, large pale form that breeds in the Canadian High Arctic and Greenland.

Secondly, there are plumage differences between males and females of all forms and between juvenile (first year) and adult birds of both sexes. Thus, any given redpoll flock could have as many as sixteen different plumage classes to contend with: adult males, adult females, juvenile males, and juvenile females of four different sub-