

New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

Committee Year: 2010

David B. Donsker, Chair (2011-2012)

This report from the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) contains the decisions for records voted on by the Committee during the calendar year 2010.

The NHRBC reviews unusual sightings in an effort to maintain accuracy and scientific integrity of the bird records in New Hampshire. It is independent of *New Hampshire Bird Records* (NHBR) and New Hampshire Audubon. All sightings are evaluated based on details submitted. The Committee requires a vote with not more than one dissent 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. Unfortunately, several birds during this time period were rejected for lack of documentation. 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.

In 2010, the voting members of the Committee were Dennis Abbott, Ralph Andrews, Eric Masterson, Hector Galbraith, David Donsker, Tony Vazzano, Rob Woodward (Chair) and Stephen Mirick. Steve Mirick continued in his capacity as the acting Committee Secretary.

New Hampshire State Bird List

In its April 20, 2010 meeting, the NHRBC approved an official New Hampshire State Bird List based on research of the state's historical records made by a subcommittee consisting of Dennis Abbott, Stephen Mirick and David Donsker. This list is inclusive of those species that the NHRBC believes have been reasonably documented to have occurred in the state based on published records. It includes historically extinct and extirpated species as well as a separate listing of hypothetical species. At the time of its acceptance, the list included 399 species + 11 on the hypothetical list. The list will be maintained and updated by the NHRBC to reflect new additions, taxonomic changes, or future challenges to the approved list.

A copy of the current New Hampshire State Bird List can be accessed through the NHBR web site, www.nhbirdrecords.org.

Summer 2009

Records accepted by the Committee

Red-billed Tropicbird	6/23/2009	Rye	First State Record
Red Phalarope	6/8/2009	Littleton	
Long-tailed Jaeger	7/4/2009	Offshore Waters	(two reports)
Sabine's Gull	6/26/2009	Rye	(three reports)
Sabine's Gull	7/3/2009	Seabrook	

Royal Tern	6/26/2009	Seabrook
Royal Tern	6/10/2009	Rye
Summer Tanager	6/6/2009	Hancock
Painted Bunting	6/2/2009	Portsmouth
American Tree Sparrow	6/23/2009	Enfield

Records not accepted by the Committee

Nelson's Sparrow	6/13/2009	Surry	Inland records of Nelson's Sparrow in the spring are extremely rare in New Hampshire and none could be recalled by committee members. The written description was lacking in details and it was felt that a detailed report was required for a sighting of this magnitude.
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Fall 2009

Records accepted by the Committee

Tundra Swan	11/9/2009	Chatham
Gr. White-fronted Goose	11/7/2009	Rye
Eurasian Wigeon	10/30/2009	Exeter
Eurasian Wigeon	11/9/2009	Exeter
Black Vulture	11/3/2009	Newmarket
Clapper Rail	10/2/2009	Seabrook (two reports)
Long-tailed Jaeger	8/15/2009	Offshore Waters
Long-tailed Jaeger	8/16/2009	Offshore Waters (two reports)
Long-tailed Jaeger	8/18/2009	Offshore Waters
Long-tailed Jaeger	9/8/2009	Offshore Waters (two reports)
Franklin's Gull	8/24/2009	Rochester (two reports)
Thayer's Gull	11/30/2009	Rochester
Royal Tern	8/9/2009	Hampton
Common Murre	10/31/2009	Rye
Rufous Hummingbird	10/22/2009	Hollis
Rufous Hummingbird	10/30/2009	Hollis
Red-headed Woodpecker	9/28/2009	Dublin
Western Kingbird	11/13/2009	Rochester
Western Kingbird	1/15/2009	Rochester
Bell's Vireo	10/1/2009	Rye (two reports)
Nelson's Sparrow	9/26/2009	Penacook
Yellow-headed Blackbird	10/30/2009	Greenland
Nelson's Sparrow	10/25/2009	Concord

Records not accepted by the Committee

Pacific Loon	10/3/2009	Rye (two reports)	The members who did not accept this record felt that details were not sufficient enough for acceptance. Loons in flight are difficult to identify and the details regarding neck pattern were not detailed enough. It was also felt that the underwing pattern, which can be difficult to ascertain, was given too much weight in the identification.
Long-tailed Jaeger	8/15/2009	Offshore Waters	The members who did not accept this record felt that the photographs were insufficient to ID the bird. In addition, one member added that the fact that the observers did not submit written documentation reflects a certain ambiguity of the observers' opinions of the ID.

Winter 2009-2010

Records accepted by the Committee

Ivory Gull	1/11/2010	Hampton	Although some of the descriptions were not ideal, the sum of all three and the individual documentation from one of the observers swayed the committee with consideration given to the influx of sightings of this species this winter.
"Sooty" Fox Sparrow	12/11/2009	Barrington	The detailed analysis of this individual originally published in the Winter 2009-2010 issue of NHBR was judged to be overly analytical. Details of what were concluded to be features of a probable <i>Pi. altivagans</i> - "Sooty" Fox Sparrow hybrid were contradicted by photos on the internet and by discussion with birders from Washington state which suggested that the features shown on the Barrington bird were quite consistent with the features thought to be diagnostic for Sooty Fox Sparrow.

Records not accepted by the Committee

Tundra Swan	2/17/2010	Merrimack	The photo provided clearly showed a swan; however, the specific identity could not be safely determined due to the very poor quality of the photo. Supporting description was not provided. While Tundra Swan is certainly a possibility, the photo alone could not support this conclusion.
Slaty-backed Gull	1/7/2010	Rochester	Some members of the committee thought the overall description and especially primary pattern was good enough to accept this species. Other members expressed concern regarding the apparent pale gray mantle coloration and lack of any dark gray mantle or scapular feathers. The written description, in fact, described the mantle feathers as being "whitish with pale grayish centers brown shaft streaks and chevrons." After reviewing many photos of second winter Slaty-backed Gulls from Japan, all of which showed dark gray mantle/scapular feathers (to varying degree), members came to the conclusion that this single conflicting field mark (which wasn't discussed in the submitted documentation) was enough to reject the sighting.

Spring 2010

Records accepted by the Committee

Leach's Storm Petrel	5/23/2010		
White-faced Ibis	4/25/2010	North Hampton	(two reports)
Gr. White-fronted Goose	3/6/2010	Hinsdale	
Gr. White-fronted Goose	3/18/2010	Charlestown	
Gr. White-fronted Goose	3/17/2010	Greenland	
Cackling Goose	3/7/2010	Hinsdale	
Cackling Goose	3/10/2010	Hinsdale	
Eurasian Green-winged Teal	4/8/2010	Hampton	
Mississippi Kite	5/6/2010	Kensington	
American Oystercatcher	5/21/2010	Seabrook Beach	
Mew Gull	3/2/2010	Exeter	First state record
Royal Tern	4/10/2010	Hampton	
Arctic Tern	5/19/2010	Charlestown	
Common Murre	3/10/2010	Rye	
Common Murre	4/7/2010	N. Hampton	
Acadian Flycatcher	5/23/2010	N. Hampton	
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	5/18/2010	N. Conway	
White-eyed Vireo	4/14/2010	Hampton	

White-eyed Vireo	4/18/2010	Rye
White-eyed Vireo	5/12/2010	Wentworth Location

Records not accepted by the Committee

Yellow-throated Warbler	5/1/2010	Tuftonboro	Although the description sounded somewhat convincing, the fact that the sighting occurred at 3,000' elevation and the fact that there were TWO birds together raised questions in most/all present. There was also some concern that the observer had limited experience and that some of the identification was made "after the fact".
Yellow-throated Warbler	5/21/2010	Conway	Some members of the committee voted to accept based on the reliability, experience and background of the reporter. Others were concerned with accepting this record solely based on vocalizations. Given the fact that an adequate visual was not obtained and the possibility of other species singing abnormal songs, the sighting was not accepted.

Earlier Records

Records accepted by the Committee

Red-headed Woodpecker	8/12/2004	New London
Red-headed Woodpecker	5/22/2007	Dalton

Records rejected by the Committee

Gr. White-fronted Goose	3/17/2009	Hinsdale	Although one of the committee members actually saw this bird, the description provided was lacking detail. No bill was seen and no details of leg color or size were provided. The description could just as easily fit for Pink-footed Goose.
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Answer to the Photo Quiz

by David B. Donsker

The subject of this issue's Photo Quiz is a swimming duck-like waterbird. Its body is uniformly dark gray. This contrasts slightly with its paler gray head and neck. The head itself sports a darker, slightly erect crest which is peaked at the back or posterior portion of the crown. A flash of white in the secondary flight feathers just peaks through the folded wings. Perhaps most striking of all in this uniformly gray-toned bird is its fairly thin, bluntly tipped, pale bill.

Swimming behavior is shared by a diverse range of unrelated waterbirds in our state including grebes, loons, shearwaters, cormorants, gannets, waterfowl (ducks, swans, and geese), gulls, jaegers, alcids and phalaropes. Most of these forms can be immediately eliminated because of their body shapes, bill structure, or plumage patterns, none of which conform to those of the species featured.

This bird lacks the massive, sabre-like bill of the gannet or the long, pointed sword-like bill of our loons. The bills of our shearwaters are strongly hooked and have tubular nostrils at the base of the bill. This bird is not dumpy like an alcid, long-necked like a cormorant, nor delicate and small-headed like a phalarope. Neither is it gull or jaeger-like. Most of our waterfowl have broad, flattened or short triangular bills.