

New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

Calendar Year: 2011—Part I

David B. Donsker, Chairman (2011-2012)

This report from the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) contains Part One of the decisions for records voted on by the Committee during the calendar year 2011.

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 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 *NHBR*. The Fall 1996 issue has an article on how to document rare sightings.

In 2011, the voting members of the Committee were: Eric Masterson, Ben Griffith, Tony Vazzano, Stephen Mirick, Dennis Abbott, Hector Galbraith, Iain MacLeod and David Donsker (Chair). Stephen Mirick continued to serve as acting Committee Secretary.

Mandatory Review List

The following species was removed from the mandatory review list:

Common Moorhen

Although this species is rare, it is easy to identify, annually reported, and is breeding in Massachusetts and Maine, and possibly in New Hampshire.

Criteria for inclusion of the following species were revised:

Greater White-fronted Goose

This species has been reported with greater frequency in New Hampshire and is now annually reported in the state. It is also regular in neighboring states of Massachusetts and Maine. One concern is the seemingly careless identification of subspecies given in too many reports. Particularly based on recent discussions by David Sibley regarding the difficulties of subspecies identification, it was agreed that all reports submitted with an identification given to subspecific level, should be reviewed by the NHRBC. If no subspecies is given, then the report does not need to go to the Committee.

Summer 2010

Records accepted by the Committee

American Oystercatcher	6/12/2010	Seabrook
Black Skimmer	6/12/2010	Seabrook
Atlantic Puffin	7/3/2010	Offshore waters
Cerulean Warbler	6/4/2010	West Chesterfield

Records not accepted by the Committee

White-eyed Vireo	7/16/2010	Pittsfield
------------------	-----------	------------

This heard only bird was a concern for members as this species is rare in summer, particularly from this area of the state. Bird was only heard for one minute on one day. Mimic-thrushes can often sound similar to a White-eyed Vireo, and in fact, a Gray Catbird was described by the observer as calling a very similar song 4 days later.

Cerulean Warbler	6/26/2010	Holderness
------------------	-----------	------------

This heard only bird was a concern for members as this species is rare in summer away from Pawtuckaway State Park. Observer failed to describe the song and also describes himself as a beginner. Observer also recognized it was not "confirmed" through sighting.

Worm-eating Warbler	6/9/2010	Nottingham
---------------------	----------	------------

This heard only bird, a rare species, was a concern for members. Details of song description were sufficiently vague so that other species with very similar songs such as Chipping Sparrow or Dark-eyed Junco could not safely be ruled out.

Fall 2010

Records accepted by the Committee

Gr. White-fronted Goose	10/27/2010	Litchfield
Eurasian Wigeon	11/19/2010	Hampton Falls
Golden Eagle	8/10/2010	Wentworth's Location
Purple Gallinule	10/7/2010	Seabrook
Common Moorhen	9/26/2010	Hinsdale
Red-necked Phalarope	8/10/2010	Rochester
Black-headed Gull	10/6/2010	Bristol
Sabine's Gull	10/6/2010	Bristol/Hebron
Royal Tern	9/12/2010	Seabrook
Black Skimmer	9/10/2010	Rye
Black Skimmer	9/12/2010	Rye
Black Skimmer	9/20/2010	Seabrook
Black Skimmer	9/26/2010	North Hampton
Black Skimmer	10/30/2010	Hampton
Western Kingbird	9/5/2010	Concord
Western Kingbird	9/29/2010	Farmington
Cave Swallow	11/25/2010	North Hampton & Rye
White-eyed Vireo	9/1/2010	Peterborough
White-eyed Vireo	10/10/2010	North Hampton
White-eyed Vireo	10/10/2010	Hampton
Townsend's Warbler	11/7/2010	Walpole (2 reports)
Hooded Warbler	9/19/2010	Bristol
Hooded Warbler	11/27/2010	Seabrook
Blue Grosbeak	10/10/2010	Stratham
Golden-crowned Sparrow	10/18/2010	Derry
Tundra Swan	11/20/2010	Hanover
Cackling Goose	10/13/2010	Rochester
Cave Swallow	11/24/2010	Various coastal
Red-necked Phalarope	9/10/2010	Derry
Red-necked Phalarope	8/20/2010	Exeter

Records not accepted by the Committee

Pacific Loon	11/20/2010	New Castle
Full details not provided. Insufficient details to eliminate small Common Loon.		
Anhinga	8/12/2010	Peterborough
Insufficient details to eliminate Double-crested Cormorant.		
Gyr Falcon	1/5/2010	Grantham
Insufficient details to eliminate leucistic/pale Red-tailed Hawk.		
Eastern Wood-Pewee	10/4/2010	Lincoln
Insufficient details to eliminate Eastern Phoebe.		
Swainson's Thrush	11/1/2010	Rye
Insufficient details to eliminate Hermit Thrush. No discussion of tail included and no discussion of differences with Hermit Thrush.		
Loggerhead Shrike	9/3/2010	Milford
The lack of binoculars and observation from a car were concerns that the views may have been less than optimal to provide a definitive ID for this rare species.		
Magnolia Warbler	9/27/2010	Strafford
The observer failed to respond in the documentation to the fundamental question, which was not the identity of Magnolia Warbler, but the total count of individual birds. Concern was expressed that the reported count of 24 Magnolias was a very high fall total for a 1.5 acre parcel and there are no recent counts like this away from breeding grounds. In addition, no Yellow-rumped Warblers were reported, a species that could cause confusion.		
MacGillivray's Warbler	9/23/2010	Tuftonboro
Not only is the species extremely rare in New Hampshire, but the date is also extremely early as compared to other New England records, therefore, an excellent description would be required. One identification mark that was inconsistent with MacGillivray's Warbler was the description of "slight faded gray feather area just at the base above the bill". This area fits the area of the lores, which should be black in a MacGillivray's Warbler. Another concern was that the report was written six months after the sighting. No indication was made as to whether the report was based on field notes or memory.		

Answer to the Photo Quiz

by David B. Donsker

The subject of this issue's Photo Quiz features a lovely black-and-white portrait of a small perching bird. While color and song are often critical features that are required to identify many songbirds, the careful analysis of structure and plumage pattern alone can often help us achieve that goal. That is the challenge of this particular Photo Quiz.

This is a small, proportionally large-headed perching bird with a stout, thick bill, short neck and relatively short

tail. On closer examination, the bill is slightly hooked at the tip. The head and back are similarly gray-toned in this photograph. This contrasts quite significantly with the seemingly uniform pale underparts including the throat, breast and lower belly. The underside of the tail is gray with some pale edging on the outer tail features. Its most notable features are two prominent wide wing bars and a prominent pale eye-ring which merges with two short, pale lines in front of the eye to form a distinct "spectacle".

Several groups of small birds share the combination of double wing bars and some sort of eye-ring. These include some of our flycatchers, kinglets, vireos and wood warblers.

Like this bird, the confusing *Empidonax* flycatchers (Least, Yellow-bellied, Alder, Willow and Acadian) also have largish heads and eye-rings. But any similarities largely stop there. These small flycatchers have smaller, thinner, more delicate bills. In each of these species, the bills are bicolored. That is, the upper mandible is dark and the lower mandible is pale. This bird has an all dark bill. The flycatchers usually assume a more vertical posture when perched. All have slightly dusky breasts, which contrast subtly with their paler throats and bellies. Their eye rings are either complete and bold, as in Least and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, or narrow or virtually non-existent, as in the other three. None has a spectacle.

The small, short-tailed Ruby-crowned Kinglet differs from the quiz bird in having a much smaller, diminutive bill. Its upperparts and underparts are more uniformly shaded and do not contrast to the degree shown in this bird. Most importantly, the eye-ring of Ruby-crowned Kinglet is completely different. It has a complete eye-ring which is wider in front of and behind the eye. So its eye-ring is actually bolder in the exact areas where it is slightly thinner in the eye-ring of this bird. Most importantly, the kinglet's eye-ring does not form a spectacle.

One of our species of wood warbler, the aberrant Yellow-breasted Chat, has a prominent spectacle, which is one of the most characteristic features of that species. But quite unlike our featured bird, the chat is a long-tailed species that lacks any wing bars.

Several warblers in the large genus *Setophaga* have bold wing bars: Chestnut-sided, Cerulean, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Yellow-throated and Pine. The adults of virtually all of these species, however, are either striped or otherwise boldly marked. The notable exception in this group is the duller Pine Warbler. Vaguely similar to this bird, it has an eye-ring and a pale line in front of the eye which produce a faint spectacle of sorts. Also, as in the bird in our photograph, its cheeks are darkish, and its throat and underparts are pale. Additionally, Pine Warbler has a stouter bill than many of its congeners. But unlike our featured bird, even the dullest of individuals have faint flank