

New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

Calendar Year: 2011—Part II

David B. Donsker, Chairman (2011-2012)

This report from the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) contains Part Two 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 dissention 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.

Winter 2010-2011

Records accepted by the Committee

Townsend's Solitaire	01/01/11	Bow
Townsend's Solitaire	02/11/11	Strafford
Spotted Towhee	02/03/11	Peterborough
Spotted Towhee	02/06/11	Peterborough
Hoary Redpoll	01/01/11	Sandwich
Hoary Redpoll	01/10/11	Dublin
Hoary Redpoll	01/16/11	Wamer
Hoary Redpoll	02/12/11	Sandwich
Hoary Redpoll	02/19/11	Errol

Records not accepted by the Committee

Northern Hawk Owl 12/11/10 Meredith
 Insufficient details were submitted. Also, concern was expressed that the sighting was recorded without optics and while driving.

Spring 2011

Records accepted by the Committee

Leach's Storm-Petrel	5/21/2011	Offshore Waters
Greater White-fronted Goose	3/20/2011	Penacook

Pink-footed Goose	4/2/2011	Walpole (2 reports)
The committee approved this record of Pink-footed Goose, with photographic documentation. This species qualifies to be added to the official state list as a first state record.		
Cackling Goose	3/20/2011	Walpole/Charlestown
Cackling Goose	4/2/2011	Walpole
Eurasian Green-winged Teal	4/5/2011	N. Hampton
Eurasian Green-winged Teal	4/10/2011	Hampton
Swallow-tailed Kite	4/26/2011	Hinsdale
Clapper Rail	5/21/2011	Hampton
American Golden Plover	4/9/2011	N. Hampton
American Oystercatcher	5/21/2011	Seabrook
American Oystercatcher	5/22/2011	Rye
Ruff	4/21-22/2011	Stratham (2 reports)
Ruff	5/20/2011	Charlestown
Red-necked Phalarope	5/20/2011	Derry
Forster's Tern	4/26/2011	Concord
White-winged Dove	5/28/2011	Offshore Waters
Gray-cheeked Thrush	7/1/2011	Hubbard Brook
Bicknell's Thrush	5/29/2011	Rye
Varied Thrush	4/1/2011	Antrim
White-eyed Vireo	5/25/2011	Great Bay NWR
White-eyed Vireo	5/25/2011	Great Bay NWR
Orange-crowned Warbler	4/25/2011	Salem
Orange-crowned Warbler	5/8/2011	N. Hampton
Western Palm Warbler	4/27/2011	Hampton
Western Palm Warbler	5/5/2011	Hinsdale
Western Palm Warbler	5/16/2011	Lee
Cerulean Warbler	5/9/2011	Hinsdale
Summer Tanager	5/9/2011	Windham
Painted Bunting	3/11/2011	Derry
Yellow-headed Blackbird	5/9/2011	Danville
Hoary Redpoll	3/2/2011	Hollis
Hoary Redpoll	3/13/2011	Rochester
Hoary Redpoll	3/20/2011	Sandwich
Hoary Redpoll	4/8/2011	Sandwich

Records not accepted by the Committee

Greater White-fronted Goose		
(Greenland)	3/16/2011	Durham
No details submitted to support Greenland race.		
Greater White-fronted Goose		
(Greenland)	3/20/2011	Dover
Insufficient details to support Greenland race.		
Greater White-fronted Goose		
(Greenland)	3/20/2011	Penacook
No details submitted to support Greenland race.		
Western Wood-Pewee	5/29/2011	Rye
Despite the expertise of the observer, most committee members expressed concern regarding a "heard only" record for a sighting of this magnitude. The bird was not seen, and no audio recordings were obtained. One member who searched for bird, expressed concern regarding odd vocalizations given by Alder Flycatchers in the area, which might lead to some confusion.		
American Tree Sparrow	5/20/2011	Hampton
Potential confusion with a Swamp Sparrow since no wing bars were mentioned by the observer. Because of the rarity of the late record, it was felt that a better description was necessary to eliminate other species.		

Earlier Records

Records accepted by the Committee

Common Murre	2/13/2010	Rye
Common Moorhen	10/4/2009	Rye
Black Skimmer	9/18/2010	Rye
Yellow-headed Blackbird	3/25/2010	Greenland

Records not accepted by the Committee

Blue Grosbeak	10/10/2009	Conway
It was felt by some that the description of the wings was insufficient and fit better for Brown-headed Cowbird. The date of the report vs. the date of the observation was questioned and not clearly identified for this late report.		
Brewer's Blackbird	1/12/1972	Concord
Excellent summary of this sighting compiled by Davis Finch which discredited this previously accepted report.		

The Next New Hampshire Breeders

by Pam Hunt

Birds are among the most mobile organisms on the planet and as a result, their distributions are constantly changing, sometimes making the range maps in field guides obsolete within a few years. For example, the Second Edition of the National Geographic *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (1987) barely shows Red-bellied Woodpecker in Massachusetts, while the Sixth Edition (2011) accurately portrays the species occupying the entire southern third of New Hampshire. If there had been a National Geographic guide in the 1950s, it wouldn't have shown Northern Cardinals or Tufted Titmice in New Hampshire at all. It is in this context of change that I thought it would be a neat exercise to attempt to predict the future: what new breeding species will colonize the Granite State in the next decade or two?

First, here is a little history. The baseline for comprehensive surveys of breeding distribution is the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in New Hampshire*, conducted in 1981-86. Certainly, we knew a lot about where species occurred prior to this, but the *Atlas* was the first time the whole state had been surveyed at the same time and using the same methods. This exceptional effort yielded confirmed breeding for 176 species. Another 17 species that had previously been known to breed were not confirmed during the *Atlas* survey period. Many of these have long since been extirpated in New Hampshire (Northern Bobwhite, Loggerhead Shrike, Henslow's Sparrow), while others are now relatively widespread in appropriate habitat (Bald Eagle, Palm Warbler).

Fast forwarding to 2009, I identified 182 breeding species for *The State of New Hampshire's Birds*. Again there have been

losses (Blue-winged Teal, Common Gallinule, Red-headed Woodpecker, Golden-winged Warbler) and gains (Red-bellied Woodpecker, Cerulean Warbler, Fox Sparrow, and the famous Mississippi Kites), but the overall number of breeders is amazingly similar to what it was 30 years ago. A quick perusal of the list suggests that many of the lost species were always somewhat rare, or at least of irregular occurrence and patchy distribution, while the new ones are typically on the advancing front of regional range expansions (usually from the south, although Merlin and Fox Sparrow came from the north). It's that regional perspective that allows one to make predictions, so let's launch into my top six new breeders for New Hampshire!



Sandhill Cranes dancing, by Lev Medlock, 3/25/12, Durham, NH.

Sandhill Crane

Readers of *New Hampshire Bird Records* will be well aware that a single Sandhill Crane has been frequenting Monroe for over a decade and was joined by a presumed mate in 2013. Not considering a regional context, this would simply be another oddball bird report, but Sandhill Cranes have been gradually moving east from the Great Lakes for 20 years. Nesting was first confirmed in New England in central Maine in 2000 and that state now hosts 5-7 pairs annually, while Vermont and Massachusetts confirmed breeding in 2005 and 2007, respectively. With cranes also now breeding to our north in Quebec, it's only a matter of time before they do so here. Perhaps the summer of 2014 will find us discussing the appearance of one or two young cranes (or "colts") in the fields of Monroe!

Clay-colored Sparrow

Although visually quite the opposite from the large conspicuous Sandhill Crane, the Clay-colored Sparrow is