

# New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

Winter 2011-12 through Fall 2012

*Hector Galbraith, Chair*

*Michael Resch, Secretary*

This report from the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) contains the decisions for records voted on by the Committee for four seasons – Winter 2011/2012, Spring 2012, Summer 2012, and Fall 2012, voted on in 2016.

The NHRBC reviews unusual sightings in an effort to maintain accuracy and scientific integrity of rare 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 by the observer(s). The Committee requires a vote with not more than one dissension for acceptance of a record. Any first 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 acceptance as a 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.

The members of the Committee voting on the records in these four seasons were: David Donsker, Kurk Dorsey, Iain MacLeod, Eric Masterson, Mike Resch, Rob Woodward, and Hector Galbraith (Chair). Mike Resch served as the Committee Secretary.

## Winter 2011-12

### Records accepted by the Committee

Pacific Loon	1/14/2012	Hampton/Seabrook
Barnacle Goose	12/14/2011	Rollinsford
Thayer's Gull	2/17/2012	East Kingston
Common Murre	1/11/2012	Jeffrey's Ledge
Varied Thrush	1/14,16/2012	Dover
Varied Thrush	2/28/2012	Ossipee
Western Tanager	12/14/2011	Campton
Painted Bunting	12/28/2011	Harvest Dr., Dover
Painted Bunting	1/2/2012	Fairway Dr., Dover
White-crowned Sparrow (Gambel's)	1/22/2012	Seabrook
Yellow-headed Blackbird	1/9/2012	East Kingston

### Records not accepted by the Committee

Long-eared Owl	12/24/2011	Stratham
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This bird was seen briefly while the observers were driving; no optics were used. The committee felt that

Short-eared Owl could not be eliminated and as a result accepted the record as *Asio*, sp..

Long-eared Owl	1/1/2012	Walpole
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This was a heard-only bird. Although multiple calls were heard, the committee felt it is very difficult to identify Long-eared Owls solely based on calls.

## Spring 2012

### Records accepted by the Committee

Barnacle Goose	3/5/2012	Hinsdale
Red-necked Phalarope	5/19/2012	Exeter
Acadian Flycatcher	5/23/2012	Concord
Acadian Flycatcher	5/30/2012	Merrimack
Varied Thrush	3/4/2012	Ossipee
Cerulean Warbler	5/13/2012	Chesterfield/Hinsdale
Summer Tanager	5/1/2012	Franklin
Summer Tanager	5/5/2012	Rye
Blue Grosbeak	5/3/2012	New London
Blue Grosbeak	5/30/2012	Nashua

### Records not accepted by the Committee

Williamson's Sapsucker	3/7/2012	Washington
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Given that this species is not generally prone to vagrancy, a more detailed description would be required to accept this as a first NH state record.

## Summer 2012

### Records accepted by the Committee

Leach's Storm-Petrel	7/28/2012	Rye
Wilson's Phalarope	6/7/2012	Derry
Sedge Wren	7/16/2012	Sandwich

### Records not accepted by the Committee - none

## Fall 2012

### Records accepted by the Committee

Leach's Storm Petrel	10/28/2012	Rye
Leach's Storm Petrel	10/29/2012	Rye
American White Pelican	11/3/2012	Rye
Wilson's Plover	9/5/2012	Rye
Red-headed Woodpecker	8/14/2012	Atkinson
Say's Phoebe	11/17/2012	Concord
Cave Swallow	11/25/2012	Hampton
Cave Swallow	11/24 & 11/25/12	Rye & Hampton
Cave Swallow	11/25/2012	Rye
Bicknell's Thrush	9/3/2012	Center Harbor
Yellow-throated Warbler	approx. 11/22-30/2012	Ossipee
Summer Tanager	9/5/2012	Gilsum
Blue Grosbeak	10/13/2012	Concord
Yellow-headed Blackbird	11/8/2012	East Kingston

### Records not accepted by the Committee

Leach's Storm-Petrel	8/24/2012	Jeffrey's Ledge
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In order to accept this somewhat out-of-season sighting the Committee felt that a more detailed description eliminating Wilson's Storm-Petrel would be needed.

Tricolored Heron	10/31/2012	Grafton
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The bird was spotted in a habitat which would be most unusual for Tricolored (found in a stream in a mixed

deciduous forest) and at a very late date. Plus, the Committee agreed that the description was not sufficient to eliminate other large waders.

Tundra Swan	11/20/2012	Durham
The Committee felt that the submitted description could not eliminate Mute Swans.		
Broad-winged Hawk	11/30/2012	Etna
Photographs submitted were insufficient to eliminate Red-shouldered Hawk.		
Swainson's Hawk	9/10/2012	Peterborough
Although the description was compelling, the Committee felt that the description was not sufficiently detailed to accept this sighting as a first state record.		
Northern Lapwing	11/3/2012	Rochester
The identification of this bird is not in doubt; however, it is not clear that the bird was actually seen in NH. The observer was standing in Maine and watched the bird fly toward NH but it apparently disappeared from sight before it reached NH airspace.		
Gray-cheeked Thrush	10/3/2012	East Kingston
This observation was of two birds heard calling overhead nocturnally. It is not clear that Gray-cheeked can conclusively be separated from Bicknell's solely based on call notes, therefore, the Committee accepted the sighting as Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush.		
Cassin's Vireo	9/15/2012	Pittsfield
Despite a very detailed description, a pale Blue-headed Vireo could not be eliminated.		

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## Answer to the Photo Quiz

by David B. Donsker

With its very short, almost invisible legs, tiny bill, and proportionally very long wings, the subject of this Photo Quiz can only be a member of one of two unrelated families, the swifts or the swallows. Although swallows are members of the Passerines, or perching birds, and swifts are more closely related to hummingbirds than any other family, these two groups show a considerable number of structural similarities. These similarities, an example of convergent evolution, are due largely to the fact that both groups have a nearly identical feeding strategy, which is to snatch flying insects while the birds themselves are airborne. Both groups are master aerialists, spending much of their active time in flight. As such, they have short legs that are needed only for perching and long wings that provide them with excellent aerial maneuverability. In addition, the members of both families have very small bills, but proportionally very large gapes (a feature that they also share with nightjars, a group with similar feeding habits) that allow them to literally scoop insects out of the air.

In addition to the features mentioned above, let's look more carefully at the plumage and structure of the featured

bird. It is strongly bicolored. It has a dark crown, nape, auriculars ("ear" patch) and underwings. These contrast sharply with the bright white underparts. The white throat is separated from the remainder of the white underparts by a sharply defined, dark upper breast band from which extends a short, dark stripe that extends to the mid-breast. The tail is proportionally quite long and tapered, and terminates in a short notch.

Although the swifts (*Apodidae*) comprise a large family with many species worldwide, only one species, Chimney Swift, is encountered in New Hampshire. Chimney Swift is a uniformly grayish-brown species with a short, bluntly tapered tail. The gleaming white underparts of this bird are quite unlike grayish underparts of the swift, as is the notched, rather than bluntly tipped, tail.

In contrast, swallows (*Hirundinidae*), an equally large family, is well represented in our state with six breeding species: the larger Purple Martin and five smaller swallows, Tree, Bank, Northern Rough-winged, Cliff and Barn. Within the last several years, one additional species has been added to the state list: the vagrant Cave Swallow.

Purple Martin is unique amongst our swallows, not only in its large size, but that it is our only species that shows sexual dimorphism. That is, the adult males and females have distinctly different plumages. The male Purple Martin is uniformly dark bluish black, so it is quite unlike this bicolored bird. Female (and juvenile) Purple Martins are dull bluish-purple above but have contrasting grayish underparts (darker on the breast and throat) as well as a faint gray hind collar and forehead. Although juvenile Purple Martins have paler lower breasts and bellies than do females, their throats and upper breasts are similarly dark gray and the bellies are faintly streaked or spotted. So, both juvenile and female Purple Martins lack the crisply two-toned, white-throated appearance of the featured bird.

Barn Swallow, rather similarly to this bird, has a long slender tail, but an adult Barn Swallow has an even longer, deeply forked tail, rather than a notched tail. A juvenile Barn Swallow has a more shallowly forked tail, however, which might recall the notched tail in this bird. Also, like this bird, Barn Swallow has a band that separates the throat from the breast, but the breast band of Barn Swallow is much thinner and less prominent than that in our featured species. Further, in many other aspects, Barn Swallow is quite unlike the featured bird. It may have very pale, nearly white, underparts, but its throat is always contrastingly dark. Its underwings are two-toned with dark flight feathers, but with pale under wing coverts. The featured bird has uniformly dark underwings.

Cliff and Cave Swallows are superficially rather similar to each other. They have dark bluish-black upperparts, pale underparts and throats that contain various shades of orange