

# New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

Winter 2013-14 through Fall 2014

*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 2013-14, Spring 2014, Summer 2014, and Fall 2014.

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*.

These seasons included several notable first sightings that were accepted by the Committee:

Anhinga – two birds seen circling overhead on 5/7/14 in Hanover. This species is on the New Hampshire list as a hypothetical species, based on three prior sight records (as reported in *The Birds of New Hampshire* by Keith and Fox). Note that a “hypothetical” record is defined as one that lacks documentation from at least three observers, a specimen, a photograph, a video recording, or an audio recording. Although the 2014 record was accepted, this species continues in hypothetical only status.

Black-necked Stilt – seen by multiple observers on 5/20/14 in Stratham. This is the first New Hampshire state record (removing it from the hypothetical list) and is #401 on the official state list.

Swainson’s Hawk – seen on 9/21/14 in Hollis. This is the first New Hampshire state record (removing it from the hypothetical list) and is #402 on the official state list.

Sandhill Crane – documentation submitted for two adults successfully nesting and fledging one immature in Monroe. This is the first New Hampshire breeding record for this species, which is expanding in New England and elsewhere in the East.

Least Bittern – documentation submitted for two adults nesting with at least three young at World End Pond in Salem. This is the first New Hampshire breeding record for this rare and elusive species.

The Committee has recently reviewed a number of records where submitted documentation was unfortunately of limited quality. One of the best ways to ensure your sighting is accepted by the NHRBC is to prepare and submit adequate documentation of the sighting. By far the best way to submit documentation is to use the “New Hampshire Bird Sighting Documentation” form, which prompts you to address all the salient topics to support the observation. This form can be obtained online at:

<http://nhbirdrecords.org/your-sightings/reporting-rare-and-unusual-bird-sightings/documentation-forms-for-rarities/>

Furthermore, we recommend that you complete a Documentation form even if you are submitting photographs of the bird(s). Recently, the NHRBC has received photographs of many of the sightings that have been submitted for review; however, the quality of these photos isn’t always the best and supplemental information contained on a completed Documentation form can be crucial in gaining acceptance of the record.

Speaking of photographs, just because you don’t have a photograph of your bird doesn’t mean it won’t be accepted by the Committee. In fact, many of the recently accepted sightings have been non-photographed birds. The photograph should be just one part of the overall record of the sighting to be submitted to the NHRBC.

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 2013-14

### Records accepted by the Committee

Gyr Falcon	12/15/2013	Hampton
Thayer’s Gull	1/8/2014	East Kingston
Thayer’s Gull	1/12/2014	East Kingston
Common Murre	2/12/2014	Jeffreys Ledge
Red-headed Woodpecker	1/4/2013	Alstead
Red-headed Woodpecker	2/15/2014	Newmarket
Spotted Towhee	1/27/2014	Rye
Dark-eyed Junco – Oregon subsp.	1/21/2014	Hampton
Dark-eyed Junco – Oregon subsp.	1/21/2014	Hampton

### Records not accepted by the Committee

Gyr Falcon	12/21/2013	Peterborough
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Since the observer was not 100% sure of the identification of the bird in question, the committee could not accept this record of an often confusing falcon species.

Nelson's Sparrow 12/18/2013 Hampton  
 A very late Saltmarsh Sparrow could not be eliminated based on the submitted description.

## Spring 2014

### Records accepted by the Committee

Anhinga	5/7/2014	Hanover
Ross's Goose	4/7/2014	Charlestown
Black-necked Stilt – first NH record	5/20/2014	Stratham
Wilson's Phalarope	5/27/2014	Seabrook
Acadian Flycatcher	5/24/2014	Durham
Northern Wheatear	5/26/2014	Easton
Gray-cheeked Thrush	5/23/2014	Rye
White-eyed Vireo	5/4/2014	Rye
Cerulean Warbler	5/5/2014	Kingston
Cerulean Warbler	5/13/2014	Merrimack
Worm-eating Warbler	5/6/2014	Peterborough
Summer Tanager	5/10/2014	Rye
Summer Tanager	5/17/2014	Rye
Yellow-headed Blackbird	4/7/2014	Charlestown

### Records not accepted by the Committee

Common Eider –  
 *borealis* intergrade 3/2/2014 Hampton  
 Neither the observer nor the Committee could eliminate the possibility of a hybrid.

Forster's Tern 5/1/2014 Sunapee  
 The possibility of other *Sterna* species could not be eliminated.

Common Murre 5/26/2014 Jeffreys Ledge  
 The Committee could not accept the record since the observer was not sure of the identification.

## Summer 2014

### Records accepted by the Committee

Pacific Loon	7/12/2014	Rye
Pacific Loon	7/12/2014	Rye
Least Bittern - first NH breeding	6/11/2014	Salem
White Ibis	7/11/2014	Rye
Sandhill Crane - first NH breeding	6/22/2014	Monroe
Royal Tern	7/14/2014	Rye
Royal Tern	7/14/2014	Rye
Common Murre	6/28/2014	Offshore waters (near Jeffreys Ledge)
Western Kingbird	6/9/2014	North Hampton
Western Kingbird	7/6/2014	Newington
Hooded Warbler	6/24/2014	Newington
Summer Tanager	6/20/2014	East Kingston
Harris's Sparrow	6/5/2014	Rye

### Records not accepted by the Committee

American Three-toed  
 Woodpecker 7/20/2014 Newport  
 The possibility that this could have been a yellow-capped immature Hairy Woodpecker could not be eliminated.

Gray-cheeked Thrush 6/16/2014 Carroll

The Committee could not eliminate the possibility that this heard-only bird could have been a Bicknell's Thrush in what was good habitat and the appropriate season for a singing Bicknell's.

Snowy Egret x

Tricolored Heron	7/19/2014	Hampton
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The Committee could not eliminate other potential parentage if the bird is a hybrid, nor could eliminate the potential for leucism as the cause for the white plumage.

## Fall 2014

### Records accepted by the Committee

Pacific Loon	10/26/2014	New Castle
Cackling Goose	10/18/2014	Nashua
Broad-winged Hawk	11/28/2014	Hampton
Swainson's Hawk – first NH record	9/21/2014	Hollis
Red-necked Phalarope	8/15/2014	Croydon
Common Murre	10/25/2014	Hampton
Northern Wheatear	10/10/2014	Nashua
Northern Wheatear	10/12/2014	Warner
White-eyed Vireo	10/21/2014	Hinsdale
Worm-eating Warbler	10/29/2014	Portsmouth
Blue Grosbeak	8/17/2014	Penacook (Concord)
Blue Grosbeak	10/17/2014	Portsmouth
Blue Grosbeak	10/5/2014	Concord

### Records not accepted by the Committee

Snow Goose x Ross's Goose 9/16/2014 Tamworth  
 The description of this very tame bird could not eliminate the possibility that the bird was a farmyard goose.

Cackling Goose 11/16/2014 Greenland  
 The Committee felt that the description could not eliminate Canada Goose.

Cackling Goose 11/21/2014 Rochester  
 The Committee felt that the description could not eliminate Canada Goose.

Western Kingbird 9/13/2014 Concord  
 Although this bird was most likely a Western Kingbird, it was only seen in flight and the description could not eliminate other kingbird species. The sighting was accepted as a "Yellow-bellied" Kingbird.

Western Kingbird 10/19/2014 Hampton  
 Although this bird was most likely a Western Kingbird, it was only seen in flight, and the description could not eliminate other kingbird species. The sighting was accepted as a "Yellow-bellied" Kingbird.

Gray-cheeked Thrush 9/17/2014 Nashua  
 The Committee could not eliminate the possibility that this bird was another *Catherus* thrush.

Gray-cheeked Thrush 10/12/2014 Rye  
 The Committee felt that Bicknell's Thrush could not be eliminated. Therefore, the sighting was accepted as Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush.

Western Tanager 11/5/2014 Plymouth  
 The description was insufficient to accept this rare western vagrant.