

First off, here is our 2016 list.

Brown Booby
Great Skua
South Polar Skua
Crested Caracara
Red-necked Stint
Bar-tailed Godwit
Black-tailed Godwit
Black-chinned Hummingbird
Eurasian Golden Plover
Fieldfare
Magnificent Frigatebird
Tropical Kingbird
Yellow-billed Loon



Brown Booby by Len Medlock, 6-12-17, Windham, NH.

Well right off the bat, the first choice of Brown Booby proved to be very quickly validated. A well-documented bird was seen at Cobetts Pond in Windham in June 2017. A frigatebird accepted as “Frigatebird species” by the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) was seen in September 2018 in Keene following the passage of Hurricane Florence. Also, a South Polar Skua photographed at Jeffreys Ledge on September 4, 2018 was accepted by the NHRBC, but that’s where our wisdom ground to a halt (so far). Interestingly, there have been quite a few new birds added since 2016 which didn’t make our top 13 list (or indeed, the longer list of 43 species suggested by those polled).

- A White Wagtail (of the European “Pied” race) was seen in Rye and Hampton in November 2016.
- A Yellow-nosed Albatross was seen around the Isles of Shoals in July 2017. This species was previously

on the New Hampshire list as hypothetical based on a record at Great Boar’s Head in 2006 that, although accepted, failed to meet the requirement for a first state record.

- A Common Shelduck was seen in Rye in August-September 2017.
- A MacGillivray’s Warbler was found in Rye in September 2017. Like the albatross, this species was on the official New Hampshire list as hypothetical based on a record in Gilford in 2005.
- A Western Wood-Pewee was seen on Star Island in October 2017.
- A Neotropic Cormorant was found in Berlin in August 2018.
- A Ross’s Gull was photographed off Jeffreys Ledge in December 2018.
- A Wood Stork seen in Rochester in August 2018 was the first “modern” record, but was on the official list based on a record from 1922.

Also, there are two potential firsts in 2019 pending acceptance by the NHRBC: a Trumpeter Swan would become the first “modern” record in the state since the 1700s, and two Gull-billed Terns photographed in Rye would move this species from the hypothetical list to the fully accepted list.

So, what will be next? Clearly, almost anything might turn up . . . maybe your next sighting could be something new for the list. We’ll check in again in a few years to see how we’re doing.

New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

Spring 2017 through Winter 2017-18

Hector Galbmith, 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: Spring 2017, Summer 2017, Fall 2017, and Winter 2017-18.

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 NH Audubon. All sightings are evaluated based on details submitted by the observer(s). The Committee requires a vote with not more than one dissent for acceptance of a record, except for potential first state records, which require 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 four 2017 seasons included five first New Hampshire state records that were accepted by the Committee:

- Common Shelduck – a long-staying immature seen by many birders from throughout the region and beyond during the period of 8/13 - 9/11/17 as it visited the marshes near Odiorne Point State Park in Rye. These sightings were summarized in the Fall 2017 issue of *NHBR* (Vol. 36, #3).
- Yellow-nosed Albatross – photographed on 7/4/17 at Seavey and Star Islands (previously on the New Hampshire hypothetical list).
- Brown Booby – a most cooperative bird seen 6/10-20/17 at Cobbetts Pond in Windham
- Western Wood-Pewee – both seen and heard (with calls recorded) on 10/11/17 on Star Island.
- MacGillivray's Warbler – seen during the period 9/4-11/17 at Odiorne Point State Park (previously on the New Hampshire hypothetical list).

A few comments are in order regarding the acceptance of the Common Shelduck record given the obvious concern about provenance of this rarity from Europe. Plus, the acceptance of this record by the NHRBC could have a significant impact to the "life lists" of so many birders who traveled to the New Hampshire coast to see this bird. First of all, there is no question about the identity of this well-photographed bird as an immature Common Shelduck. With regard to provenance, there is no way to prove with 100% surety that this, or any other potential waterfowl vagrant, is of wild origin, although one can conclude that a bird has escaped from captivity through evaluation of:

- Physical features such as being banded or pinioned, having excessive feather wear, or missing hind toes. The Rye bird did not exhibit any of these features.
- Behavior of the bird, including whether its activities were suggestive of extensive human interaction, resulting in tameness. Over the many observations of the New Hampshire shelduck during its nearly month-long stay, it appeared to behave as a wild individual of this species, including feeding normally, having typical reactions to flyover raptors, and being wary of loud noises and other nearby human activities.

So despite the fact that individuals of this species are

regularly contained in waterfowl collections, neither physical features nor behavior indicated that the New Hampshire shelduck was an escapee.

The NHRBC then evaluated the potential for this bird to have arrived on the New Hampshire coast as a wild vagrant. An excellent summary of Common Shelduck occurrence in North America was published in 2010 in *North American Birds* (Vol. 64, # 1), including this statement: "The species is rapidly increasing as a migrant and breeder in Iceland, the country believed to be the source of other regularly occurring European birds" in North America. Since that time, Iceland populations have continued to experience significant growth with multiple 2018 eBird reports of nearly 1,000 birds in the western part of the country.

So although there are now many individuals of this species to our northeast, can they be expected to wander to New Hampshire? Again quoting from the *North American Birds* article: "Common Shelduck is sedentary in some parts of its range but in others undertakes an early migration (usually in July) to favored sites for molting; the birds become flightless for several weeks during this period." This presents a plausible rationale for a bird to appear for a significant period of time in late summer/early fall in the northeast portion of North America.

A final factor in the NHRBC's decision was the recent decisions by two records committees to accept Common Shelduck in North America. First the Newfoundland Checklist Committee accepted two shelduck sightings, one occurring on November 17, 2009 and the other on April 3, 2014. Subsequently the American Birding Association (ABA) Checklist Committee accepted this species to the ABA Checklist in September 2017 by an 8-0 vote (*Birding*, Vol. 49, # 6, December 2017).

In summary, with no indication that the New Hampshire bird was an escapee, a logical rationale that it could have arrived naturally from nearby expanding populations, and recent acceptances of sightings by other records committees, the NHRBC has decided to accept the Rye Common Shelduck and add it to the New Hampshire state list.

With these additions to the state list, as of February 2018, the official New Hampshire list totals 418. Note that since the last report from the NHRBC, Thayer's Gull has been removed from the state list as this former species has now been lumped with Iceland Gull by the ABA.

The Committee has recently reviewed a number of records for which 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. 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 on-line at:

<https://nhbirdrecords.org/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 these records were: David Donsker, Kurk Dorsey, Jason Lambert, Iain MacLeod, Jeanne-Marie Maher, Eric Masterson, Mike Resch, and Hector Galbraith (Chair). Mike Resch served as the Committee Secretary.

Spring 2017

Records accepted by the Committee

Ruff	4/29-30/17	Hampton
Mew Gull	3/1/17	Salem
Great Gray Owl	3/1/17	Newport
Golden-winged Warbler	5/16/17	Canterbury
Yellow-throated Warbler	5/7/17	Hampton
Hooded Warbler	5/5/17	Claremont
Summer Tanager	5/9/17	Thornton
Painted Bunting	5/13/17	Littleton
Gray-cheeked Thrush	5/28/17	Hampton

Records not accepted by the Committee

Yellow-throated Warbler	4/29/17	Weare
Description of the visual observation and song could not eliminate other more common species.		
Summer Tanager	4/6/17	Chester
Committee members could not eliminate other red species visiting the observer's feeders.		

Summer 2017

Records accepted by the Committee

Yellow-nosed Albatross (first NH record – previously Hypothetical)	7/4/17	Seavey and Star Islands
Brown Booby (first NH record)		
	6/11/17	Cobbetts Pond, Windham
Brown Pelican	6/24/17	Rye
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	7/8/17	Chatham
Golden-winged Warbler	6/1/17	Odiorne Point State Park

Records not accepted by the Committee

Long-eared Owl	6/23/17	Hillsborough
Descriptions of the calls of this bird did not eliminate		

those of a Barred Owl.

Black-chinned Hummingbird 7/23/17 Milton

Description was not sufficiently detailed to accept this potential first state record.

Summer Tanager 6/14/17 Jaffrey

The observer's limited view could not conclusively eliminate Scarlet Tanager or Northern Cardinal.



Common Shelduck by Steve Mirick, 8-14-17, Rye, NH.

Fall 2017

Records accepted by the Committee

Tundra Swan	11/22/17	Hampton Beach
Common Shelduck (first NH record)		
	8/20, 22/17	Rye
American Avocet	8/23/17	Colebrook
Red-necked Phalarope	8/27/17	Lancaster
Red-necked Phalarope	8/28/17	Dalton
Western Wood-Pewee (first NH record)		
	10/1/17	Star Island
Cave Swallow	10/26/17	Rye
Cave Swallow	11/4/17	Hampton
Townsend's Solitaire	10/28/17	Pack Monadnock
Bell's Vireo	10/1-2/17	Concord
Yellow-throated Warbler	11/23/17	Rye
MacGillivray's Warbler (first NH record – previously Hypothetical)		
	9/4/17	Rye
Hooded Warbler	8/23/17	Northwood
Yellow-headed Blackbird	8/2/17	Star Island
Yellow-headed Blackbird	11/11/17	Pack Monadnock

Records not accepted by the Committee

Pacific Loon	11/25/17	Rye
The Committee felt that more common loon species could not be conclusively eliminated, especially for this distant bird.		

Winter 2017-18

Records accepted by the Committee

Common "Northern" Eider	2/3-4/18	Hampton Harbor
Western Tanager	12/19/17	Dover
Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco	12/29/17	Hollis
Western Meadowlark	12/4/17	Rye

Records not accepted by the Committee

Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco	1/1/18	Errol
The Committee felt that a female "Slate-Colored" Junco could not be eliminated.		