

New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

Spring 2018 through Winter 2018-19

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: Spring 2018, Summer 2018, Fall 2018, and Winter 2018-19.

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 dissension 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 2018 seasons included four first New Hampshire state records that were accepted by the Committee:

- Neotropic Cormorant – discovered on 8-2-18 by F. Izaguirre on the Androskoggin River in Gorham. This was not only a first for New Hampshire, but also likely a first for all of New England. The bird remained through 9-12-18 for many to see.
- South Polar Skua – a bird photographed off-shore on 9-4-18 by several birders. A long-awaited first for New Hampshire, it replaces “Skua, sp.” which was on the official list based on several skua sight records that could not be assigned to species.
- Frigatebird, sp. – observed by S. Lamonde on 9-20-18 in Keene following the passage of Hurricane Florence. A detailed written description and sketch were provided. Accepted for addition to the Hypothetical state list due to lack of multiple observers or photograph required for a first state record. Although this was initially recorded as a Magnificent Frigatebird, the sighting was changed to “Frigatebird, sp.” since Lesser Frigatebird could not be ruled out.
- Ross’s Gull – photographed off-shore on 12-1-18 by multiple observers.

With these additions to the state list, as of February 2019, the official New Hampshire list totals 420 fully substantiated species, with an additional seven species on the Hypothetical list. The updated list can be found on the *New Hampshire Bird Records* web site.

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 2018

Records accepted by the Committee

Tundra Swan	4-11-18	Newfound Lake, Hebron
Common Eider (Northern)	3-3-18	Rye Harbor State Park
Common Eider (Northern)	3-25-18	Great Boars Head, Hampton
Common Eider	5-25-18	Pickering Ponds, Rochester
Red Phalarope	4-17-18	Mill Pond, Ashland
Northern Wheatear	4-14-18	Oyster River Forest, Durham

Golden-winged Warbler	5-9-18	Old Monson Village, Hollis/Milford
Kentucky Warbler	5-7-18	Great Bay Discovery Center, Stratham

Hooded Warbler	5-6-18	Exeter
Hooded Warbler	5-11-18	Contoocook
Summer Tanager	5-15-18	Farmington
Hooded Warbler	5-28-18	Rhododendron State Park, Fitzwilliam

Records not accepted by the Committee – None

Summer 2018

Records accepted by the Committee

Common Eider	6-3-18	Long Pond, Lempster
Royal Tern	7-6-18	Ragged Neck, Rye Great Boars Head, Hampton
Cerulean Warbler	6-9-18	Chesterfield/Hinsdale

Records not accepted by the Committee – None

Fall 2018

Records accepted by the Committee

Neotropic Cormorant (first NH record)	8-2-18	Androskoggin River, Gorham
Frigatebird, sp. (first NH record for Hypothetical list)	9-20-18	Keene
Wood Stork	8-9-18	Pickering Ponds, Rochester
Barnacle Goose	11-12-18	Odiorne Point State Park, Rye
Red-necked Phalarope	9-5-18	Newfound Lake
Red Phalarope	10-20-18	Exeter Wastewater Treatment Plant
South Polar Skua (first NH record)	9-4-18	Offshore Waters
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	11-8-18	Hampton Beach State Park, Hampton
Ash-throated Flycatcher	11-4-18	Odiorne Point State Park, Rye
Western Kingbird	9-23-18	Rye

Townsend's Solitaire	11-9-18	Bow
Hooded Warbler	11-4-18	North Hampton
Western Tanager	11-11-18	Pembroke
LeConte's Sparrow	10-13-18	Jackson
Yellow-headed Blackbird	10-15-18	Concord

Records not accepted by the Committee

Swallow-tailed Kite	8-14-18	Newfields
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The video and description of this distant bird could not eliminate more common species.

Winter 2018-19

Records accepted by the Committee

American White Pelican	12-11-18	Odiorne Point State Park Rye
Ross's Goose	12-19-18	Rochester Wastewater Treatment Plant
Tufted Duck	1-5,19-19	Exeter Wastewater Treatment Plant
Ross's Gull (first NH record)	12-1-18	Jeffreys Ledge
Long-eared Owl	1-21-19	Hampton
Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco	12-29-18	Hollis

Records not accepted by the Committee – None

Gulls do not have a hooked bill, while the Gull-billed Tern has a thicker "gull-like" bill, although it is not hooked like a Herring Gull bill. Feeding behavior is also helpful, as terns hover and dive for food, while gulls obtain their food from the surface.

Our quiz photo was taken on June 2 in Rye, NH. Given the date, we can rule out any juvenile plumages as it's much too early for them to be out and about. We'll concentrate on the adult breeding (or adult summer) plumage and ignore first and second summer plumages to keep things as simple as possible.

One way to start is by ruling out other species of terns that can be seen at the seacoast during this time of year. Caspian Terns have a large thick coral-red bill and black legs. They're also the largest tern in the world. Royal Terns are also large and have a big thick orange bill with black legs. Least Terns have a yellow bill, often with black tip, along with a white forehead. Gull-billed Terns have black legs and a thick, shorter black bill. Black Terns have a black head, breast, and belly.

Forster's Tern is much more difficult to rule out as the differences between it and the Common Tern are more subtle when perched. Forster's Tern has a slightly thicker bill with black extending farther back from the tip and its primaries are lighter when compared to a Common Tern. When we look at past confirmed sightings in eBird, there are only four records of Forster's Tern in May or June in New Hampshire, while Common Tern is easily the State's most abundant tern during this time of year. Outside of a few other extremely rare terns for our area, we are left with Common Tern, Roseate Tern, and Arctic Tern.

There are four individual terns in the photo, two of which are the same species, and one each of the two other species. The individuals in the upper center (UC) and upper right (UR) both have a slightly heavier orange-red bill with a black tip, while the middle right (MR) has a more slender solid black bill and the bottom left (BL) has a solid red bill that's a little shorter than those of the others. Comparing the color of the upperparts (the overall back area of the bird including nape, mantle, scapulars, and wing covers) of the individuals, UC and UR are noticeably darker gray than MR, with BL somewhere in the middle. The legs of UC, UR, and MR look pretty similar in color and size, while the legs of BL are noticeably shorter and darker red. The tail of MR extends noticeably past the wingtips, while the tails of the other individuals look even with the wingtips or maybe just a little past, but nowhere near as long as MR. Also notice the difference between UR and BL regarding the thickness of the white in the lores (region between the eye and the base of the bill). BL has narrower white lores than UR. Keep in mind, there are other differences between these three species that can be seen when in flight or heard when vocalizing, though

Answer to the Summer 2019 Photo Quiz

by Leo McKillop

Note: a new Photo Quiz will return in the next issue. – Ed.



Photo by Leo McKillop.

Summer on the seacoast brings an abundance of different seabirds that we sorely miss during the winter. In this photo, we have three different species of terns. Terns are generally differentiated from gulls by having more pointy wings, sharper bills, and shorter legs in relation to body size, whereas gulls generally have broader wings, stout hooked bills, and longer legs in relation to body size. As with most things in life, there are exceptions. Bonaparte's and Little