

New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

Spring 2019 through Winter 2019-20 and Selected Historical Records

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 2019, Summer 2019, Fall 2019, and Winter 2019-20. Additionally, votes were recorded for three historical records. These 2019 seasons included three New Hampshire state records that were accepted by the Committee:

- Gull-billed Tern – photographed on 5-2-19 by Andrea and George Robbins at Pulpit Rocks in Rye. This species was formerly on the Hypothetical List based on a 1998 sight record. Interestingly, the second accepted New Hampshire record for this species occurred just four months later in September 2019.
- Cassin's Sparrow – discovered and eventually photographed by Eric Masterson at Star Island at the Isles of Shoals on 9-21-19.
- Brambling - photographed by Scott Young at his feeder in Northwood on 12-4-19. This species was formerly on the Hypothetical List based on a 1987 sight record.

With these additions to the state list, as of February 2020, the official New Hampshire list totals 423 fully substantiated species, with an additional five species on the Hypothetical List.



Gull-billed Tern by Andrea Robbins, 5-2-19, Pulpit Rocks, Rye, NH.

Additionally, the NHRBC accepted records of the Trumpeter Swan seen from April through November 2019 at Abe Emerson Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary in Candia. This was the first modern New Hampshire record of this species. The only prior reference for this species in New Hampshire

is from Jeremy Belknap's *The History of New Hampshire* (1812); "It is certain that our swan is heard to make a sound resembling that of a trumpet, both when in the water and on the wing." Glover Allen stated in his 1903 book, *A List of the Birds of New Hampshire*, that he believed that Belknap was referring to the Trumpeter Swan based on his account of the vocalizations. Plus Trumpeter Swan is believed to have been more widespread in the central and eastern US at that time.

The members of the Committee voting on the 2019 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.

NHRBC Background

The NHRBC reviews rare and unusual bird sightings in New Hampshire in an effort to maintain the accuracy and scientific integrity of rare bird records in the state. It is independent of *New Hampshire Bird Records (NHBR)* and New Hampshire Audubon. Per the NHRBC Bylaws, the purpose of the Committee includes the following:

- To review reports of unusual occurrences of birds within the state of New Hampshire and adjacent ocean waters.
- To accept or reject such reports based upon the adequacy of documentation.
- To establish and maintain an official state list of the birds of New Hampshire.
- To permanently maintain copies of evaluated records and their associated documentation and all Committee votes, comments, and pertinent outside expert information regarding those records.
- To respond to a request from the observer of the result of the evaluation of his/her records and to educate the birding community in general of the results of those deliberations.
- To work closely with the editors and staff of *NHBR* toward our common goals.
- To function as an independent technical advisory committee to *NHBR*.

One of the most important functions of the NHRBC is the evaluation of records of rarities found in New Hampshire. The typical process used to evaluate these records is as follows:

- Species to be reviewed are those listed in the NHRBC Review List, which can be found here: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/all-articles/NHRBC%20Review%20List%201-1-17.pdf>
- Records of these Review List species come to the Committee from eBird checklists, some of which may be entered from information submitted directly to *NHBR*.

- The NHRBC will request additional information on those records where key details are not provided or limited.
- Records are compiled once a year, generally in early Spring, by the Committee Secretary, to include four consecutive seasons: Spring (March-May), Summer (June-July), Fall (August-November), and Winter (December-February).
- The members of the Committee review each of the records and submit their votes to the Secretary, who then compiles all the votes.
- The Committee typically meets once per year in early summer, often by phone, to discuss any vote that is not unanimous, and finalize the votes for all records.
- 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 first state record also requires at least one of the following: photograph, specimen, video recording, audio recording, or separate documentation from three or more observers. If none of these criteria is met, the record may still be accepted by the Committee and placed on the Hypothetical State List.

Note that the Committee's rejection of a record is not necessarily an indication that the identification was incorrect, but more likely, that the information received was not sufficient to allow its acceptance as a state record. In other words, adequate documentation is key to whether a report is accepted or not. A reminder that the best way to ensure your sighting is accepted by the NHRBC is to prepare and submit adequate documentation of the sighting using the New Hampshire Bird Sighting Documentation form. Even if you have a photo, a supplemental documentation form can be invaluable in gaining acceptance of the record, especially with photos of limited quality, but not to worry, if you don't have a photograph, it doesn't mean the record can't be accepted by the Committee.

The Review List, documentation form, and additional details on the NHRBC can be found here: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/NHRBC/>

Spring 2019

Records accepted by the Committee

Pacific Loon	5/5/19	Pulpit Rocks, Rye
Trumpeter Swan (1st modern NH record)	4/13,14/19	Candia
Ross's Goose	3/19/19	Walpole
Ross's Goose	3/21/19	Walpole
Franklin's Gull	5/14/19	Rye

Gull-billed Tern (1st NH state record)	5/2/19	Pulpit Rocks, Rye
Long-eared Owl	3/12/19	Keene
Yellow-throated Warbler	4/26/19	Sunapee Lake
Yellow-throated Warbler	4/27/19	South Hampton
Yellow-throated Warbler	5/1/19	Hampton Meadow
Yellow-throated Warbler	5/20/19	Enfield
Cerulean Warbler	5/14/19	Bradford
Cerulean Warbler	5/25/19	Mt. Wantastiquet
Prothonotary Warbler	5/18/19	Exeter
Hooded Warbler	5/17/19	Hollis
Summer Tanager	4/29/19	Nashua
Summer Tanager	5/4/19	Keene
Summer Tanager	5/6/19	Swanzy
Summer Tanager	5/11/19	Hampton
Painted Bunting	4/29/19	Dover
Painted Bunting	5/24/19	Middleton
Yellow-headed Blackbird	5/28/19	Rye

Records not accepted by the Committee

Tufted Duck	3/15/19	Great Bay, Greenland
		A hybrid with a Scaup could not be eliminated.
Gray-cheeked Thrush	5/26/19	Mine Falls Park, Nashua
		No details provided on this nocturnal flight call.
Gray-cheeked Thrush	5/27/19	Plaistow
		Insufficient details provided on this nocturnal flight call which can be difficult to discern from other species.
Bicknell's Thrush	5/23/19	Penacook
		Description was insufficient to eliminate the very similar Gray-cheeked Thrush. Accepted as "Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush".
Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler	5/3/19	Errol
		Limited description could not eliminate other more common species.
Yellow-throated Warbler	5/19/19	Merrimack
		Description did not include several key field marks necessary to confirm identification.
Worm-eating Warbler	5/20/19	Exeter
		Description of the song of this heard-only bird could not eliminate other trilling species like Chipping Sparrow and Pine Warbler.
Dark-eyed (<i>cismontanus</i>) Junco	5/19/19	Jaffrey
		"Slate-colored" Junco could not be eliminated.

Summer 2019

Records accepted by the Committee

Brown Booby	7/26/19	Offshore Waters
Little Egret	6/8/19	Rye
Tufted Duck	7/27/19	Exeter

Records not accepted by the Committee

Cerulean Warbler	6/19/19	Lincoln
		Description of the song of this heard-only bird could not eliminate Black-throated Blue Warbler.

Fall 2019

Records accepted by the Committee

Brown Pelican	9/9/19	Offshore Waters
Tundra Swan	11/15/19	Suncook

Tundra Swan	11/15/19	Greenland
Tundra Swan	11/16/19	Connecticut River, Plainfield
American Avocet	8/17/19	Rye Harbor
American Avocet	8/22/19	Hampton
Gull-billed Tern	9/28/19	Odiome Point SP, Rye
Black Skimmer	9/14/19	Hampton
Black Skimmer	9/21/19	Odiome Point SP, Rye
Black Skimmer	9/29/19	Rye Harbor
Cassin's Sparrow (1st NH state record)	9/21/19	Star Island, Isles of Shoals
Hooded Warbler	8/25/19	Penacook
Lazuli Bunting	10/22/19	Bow

Records not accepted by the Committee – None

Winter 2019-20

Records accepted by the Committee

American White Pelican	12-11-18	Odiome Point SP, Rye
Western Tanager	12/6/19	Plaistow
Western Tanager	12/14/19	North Hampton
Painted Bunting	2/6/20	Albany
Green-tailed Towhee	12/4/19	Chichester
Bullock's Oriole	1/1/20	New Castle
Bullock's Oriole	1/3/20	Stratham
Brambling (1st NH state record)	12/4/19	Northwood

Records not accepted by the Committee – None

Selected Historical Records

Records not accepted by the Committee

Long-eared Owl	5/31/17	East Kingston
Description of the calls of this heard-only bird was insufficient to confirm the ID.		
Greater White-fronted (Western) Goose	9/30/18	Dover
The more likely Greenland race cannot be eliminated.		

Hammond's Flycatcher	10/14/18	Pondicherry NWR
Description and photo cannot eliminate Least Flycatcher, particularly as a potential first state record. Accepted as " <i>Empidonax</i> , species".		



Little Egret by Warren Trested, 6-14-19, Wallis Marsh, Rye, NH.

NH Rare Birds Committee Update

by Mike Resch

Mike Resch is the Chair and Secretary for the NH Rare Birds Committee.

New Website

I am happy to announce that the NH Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) has a new website. Many thanks to volunteer Kathy Bames who developed the site. The NHRBC website can be reached at: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/NHRBC/>

Features of the website include –

- Purposes and Bylaws of the NHRBC
- Official state list of the birds of New Hampshire
- NHRBC review list
- Process used to evaluate records of rare birds
- Documentation form for rarities
- Past reports of the NHRBC

Each page also has a photo of a recently-approved rarity for a bit of "eye candy."

New Hampshire Bird Records is providing space for the NHRBC web page, but neither *New Hampshire Bird Records* nor NH Audubon is affiliated with the NHRBC. The NHRBC is totally independent and unrelated to either entity. The NHRBC is solely responsible for the content on their web page(s). A list of members is on the site.

Feel free to contact me with thoughts or comments on the website: reschmike1@gmail.com

New Hampshire State List Update

The NHRBC has updated the "official" New Hampshire State Bird List as of 2/28/20. This updated list not only incorporates new records approved by the NHRBC through 2/28/20, but also lists the species in their taxonomic order per the ABA Checklist, Version 8.0.8, dated March 2021.

The list is not meant to include all records for each of the rare birds, but rather to assure that there is at least one credible record for each species that is included on the list. The list is on the NHRBC website.

NHRBC Review List

The NHRBC has also updated the list of species that are of sufficient rarity in the state to require a review of reports. Any species not on the New Hampshire State List also requires review. Additionally, any species observed outside its regular range (e.g., Northern Gannet observed inland), or regular seasons (e.g., Swainson's Thrush observed in winter), could be considered to be of sufficient rarity to be reviewed by the NHRBC. The list will be updated by the NHRBC as warranted.