

New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report Spring 2021 through Winter 2021/2022 Seasons

nhbirdrecords.org/NHRBC

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This report from the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) contains the decisions for records voted on by the Committee for four seasons – Spring 2021, Summer 2021, Fall 2021, and Winter 2021/2022. These 2021 seasons included three first NH state records that were accepted by the Committee –

- Virginia’s Warbler – remarkable bird found and photographed by Holly Bauer at her Hampton home on 4/26/21. Unfortunately, this bird was not re-found by others.
- Roseate Spoonbill - discovered by Dianne and Maurice Doherty on 7/30/21 at the Androscoggin River Dam in Gorham. The bird was seen by many over the next two days. This is the same Coos County site that hosted the state’s only Neotropic Cormorant in 2018.
- Magnificent Frigatebird – found by JoAnn O’Shaughnessy on 8/19/21 at Great Boars Head in Hampton. After soaring overhead there for an hour, the bird flew north and was briefly re-found at Odiorne State Park. Presumably this same bird was seen the next two days from both the New Hampshire and Maine portions of the Isles of Shoals, and then in Massachusetts on the 22nd. This sighting replaces “Frigatebird, sp.” on the Hypothetical list based on a 2018 sight record.

These additions bring the official NH state list to 428 fully substantiated species, with an additional 4 species on the Hypothetical list (as of February 2022).

Other exciting 2021 sightings accepted by the Committee included Swallow-tailed Kite, Long-eared Owl, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Lark Bunting, Curlew Sandpiper, Swainson’s Hawk, Lazuli Bunting, Townsend’s Warbler, and a flycatcher considered to be a hybrid between Couch’s/Tropical Kingbird and a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

The members of the Committee voting on the 2021 records were: Will Broussard, Adam Burnett, Lori Charron, David Donsker, Kurk Dorsey, Jason Lambert, Jeanne-Marie Maher, Chris McPherson, and Mike Resch (Chair and 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 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 NH. The typical process used to evaluate these records is as follows:

- Species to be reviewed are those listed in the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Review List, which can be found here: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/NHRBC/nh-rare-birds-committee-review-list/>
- Records of these Review List species come to the Committee either from eBird checklists, or information submitted directly to NHBR or the NHRBC such as through the use of the New Hampshire Bird Sighting Documentation form, available at: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/documentation-forms-for-rarities/>
- 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 usually in 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 3 or more observers. If none of these criteria is met, though the record is still accepted by the Committee, the species is added to the Hypothetical State List.

Note that if the Committee does not accept a record it is not necessarily an indication that the identification was incorrect. More likely, the information received was not sufficient to allow its acceptance as a state record. One common issue is that there has not been enough research on how to separate some species in the field: for instance, currently Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes are reliably identified only by song, not by visual record or flight calls. But further research may address such challenges and then the committee may re-evaluate such records. In other words, adequate documentation is key to whether a report is accepted. 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.

Additional details on the NHRBC can be found on the Committee website – nhbirdrecords.org/NHRBC

Spring 2021 Records

Records Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Swallow-tailed Kite	3/31/21	Antrim
Wilson's Phalarope	5/8/21	Hinsdale
Wilson's Phalarope	5/16/21	Exeter WTP
Long-eared Owl	3/6/21	Hampton
Long-eared Owl	3/13/21	East Kingston
Virginia's Warbler – 1 st state record	4/29/21	Hampton
Yellow-throated Warbler	4/28/21	Orford
Worm-eating Warbler	5/15/21	Hooksett
Hooded Warbler	5/3/21	Rye
Hooded Warbler	5/17/21	Brentwood
Summer Tanager	4/30/21	Raymond
Summer Tanager	5/3/21	Rye

Records Not Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
European Goldfinch	5/28/21	Hampton
Although the ID of this bird is not in question, the provenance of this exotic species is unknown		

Summer 2021 Records

Records Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Eared Grebe	7/6/21	Lempster
Roseate Spoonbill – 1 st state record	7/30/21	Gorham
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	6/2/21	Exeter
Lark Bunting	7/17/21	Hudson
Green-tailed Towhee	7/10/21	Salem

Records Not Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Yellow-throated Warbler	6/26/21	Derry
The description could not eliminate other more common warbler species		

Fall 2021 Records

Records Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Magnificent Frigatebird – 1 st state record	8/19/21	Hampton
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	8/8/21	Rochester
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	8/9/21	Exeter WTP
Curlew Sandpiper	8/30/21	Hampton
Wilson's Phalarope	8/2/21	Keene
Wilson's Phalarope	8/20/21	N. Hampton
Swainson's Hawk	9/16/21	Meredith
Hooded Warbler	9/25/21	Odiorne SP
Lazuli Bunting	9/26/21	Star Island
Harris's Sparrow	10/20/21	Greenland

Records Not Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
Couch's Kingbird X Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	11/14/21	Dover
The kingbird parent could not be determined definitively. Therefore accepted as Couch's/Tropical Kingbird X Scissor-tailed Flycatcher		

Winter 2021/2022 Records

Records Accepted by the Committee

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION/TOWN
White-winged Dove	2/3/22	Hampton
Varied Thrush	1/17/22	Fitzwilliam
Townsend's Warbler	12/4/21	Rye
Cackling Goose	12/24/21	North Hampton

Records Not Accepted by the Committee

None