

NH AUDUBON
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2021 PROJECT NIGHTHAWK

From Rebecca Suomala, Project Nighthawk Coordinator

Concord was the hotbed of activity in the state in 2021 with six confirmed nests and another probable nest, totaling 13 confirmed adults. Ossipee Pine Barrens had less activity, which was a surprise since this area typically has the largest concentration of nighthawks in the state. This year there were only 11 or 12 adults. I cannot explain the decrease but, as you all know, nighthawks are still a declining species.

This year, I experienced something new at two different sites – the appearance of what I am sure were fledged chicks well after the adults had left the nest area. At EJP a fledged chick flew over me just once, silently, on the evening of August 24. There was no sign of the adults and migration was well underway. At the Concord Airport on August 10, first one and then another nighthawk flew low over me at the start of normal evening feeding time. Again, there was no sign of the adults. The light level was low enough that I couldn't visually confirm a fledgling, but the floppy flight made me almost sure they were fledglings. I was excited to see them and it's the first time I've seen fledglings re-appear at a nest site after the "family" has apparently left. Had they been there the whole time? As usual, nighthawks raise more questions than answers, teaching me that there's always more to learn.

CONCORD

The remaining nest sites in the Concord area are in what is, or once was, pine barrens and at gravel pits along the Soucook River, extending into Pembroke. We were able to get eyes on two of the six confirmed nests, both of which hatched two chicks. Unfortunately, one nest failed in the chicks' first two weeks of life but the other (at EJP) fledged

one chick. There was a lot of activity at the building on the corner of Regional and Chenell Drive but it abruptly switched to the adjacent area of the Concord Airport where it clearly nested. We believe it fledged two chicks. The other sites were confirmed by behavior, including two nests again this year on the Steeplegate Mall.



Nest 6/21/21 (right) and chicks 7/5/21 (above) at Clough Mills Rd. Sadly, this nest failed.

Concord Results

- ◆ 2 watches held
- 7 males
- 6 females
- 4 chicks

Nesting Sites

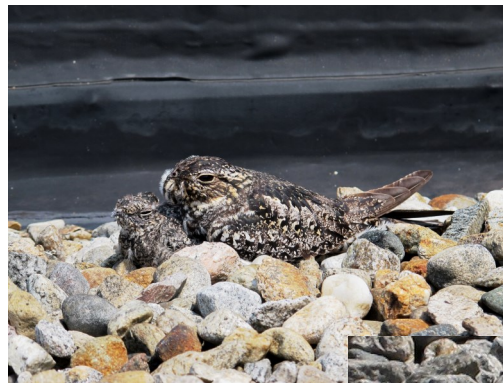
- ◆ Clough Mill Rd
- ◆ Concord Airport NE
- ◆ Concord Sand and Gravel (probable)
- ◆ EJ Prescott
- ◆ Pembroke Sand and Gravel
- ◆ Steeplegate Mall - BonTon end and Sears end

Photos by Rebecca Suomala

KEENE

There was a nest at Keene State College again this year. It was on Elliot Hall, near Rhodes Hall where they nested last year.

All indications are that the chick fledged successfully. The chick was 19 days old on the last day it was seen, which is one day after first flight. Adults continue to feed chicks for several weeks after fledging and last year's chick stayed in the area until it was 37 days old. The continued activity of the adults near Elliot Hall indicated the chick was still in the area even though watchers couldn't find it. Thanks to Brett Thelen of the Harris Center and the Keene volunteers for tracking this nest.



Female with chick (above) on 7/1/21.

Newly hatched chick with unhatched egg 6/17/21 (right).



Photos by Brett Amy Thelen

Keene Results

◆ 1 watch held

◆ Total:

1 Male

1 Female

1 Chick

Active Sites

◆ Elliot Hall

More Keene nest photos taken 6/23/21

Photos by Rebecca Suomala



Chick

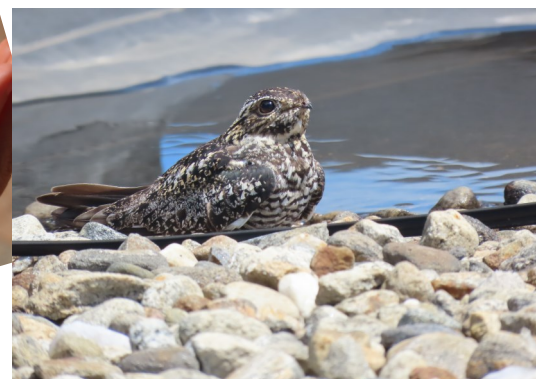


Female brooding chick under left wing

Female



Unhatched egg



OSSIPEE PINE BARRENS

We had no confirmed nests in the pine barrens in 2021, but we also had limited watching. Nests in the barrens are difficult to confirm but there were five sites with activity indicating possible or probable nest sites. The “Red Baron” site had four males interacting intensely as is typically at this site. It was disappointing to have no activity at one of last year’s nest sites on Depot Road in Tamworth, and almost no activity at the West Branch Pine Barrens where there’s been very consistent nesting.

There was a significant Gypsy Moth outbreak in one area of the barrens we call the “Thicket” but it’s close to the West Branch Pine Barrens. It’s unclear if the defoliation would impact nesting nighthawks but it may reduce the native insects they prey on.



Gypsy Moth defoliation

Photos by Rebecca Suomala, 6/24/21 at the Thicket in Freedom.

Ossipee area Results

- ◆ 2 watches held
 - 8-9 Males
 - 3 Females
- ◆ Nest Sites
 - ◆ Red Baron Gate (probable)
 - ◆ Thicket NE, Freedom (probable)
 - ◆ Depot Rd. log landing (possible)
 - ◆ #767 Depot Rd. (probable)
 - ◆ West Branch Pine Barrens (possible)

OTHER LOCATIONS

GRANTHAM, NH

There were no watch dates in Grantham this year, but there was a report of peenting and booming on 5/17/21 on Splitrock Rd.

BLACK CAP MOUNTAIN, CONWAY, NH

A male was displaying over prior nest site. Defensive quacking by female on 7/26/21 confirmed breeding. The confirmed nest on Black Cap is in the same area as previous nests.

WIND FACILITIES

Consultation for NH Fish & Game on nighthawks at the wind facility in Lempster, NH continued.

The information gathered by nighthawk watchers over many years was used to consult on the design of post-construction nighthawk surveys at the wind facility in Antrim. It included a site visit with Stan-tec, the consulting company, and the result was a strong protocol for the surveys which will take place through 2022.



Antrim Wind Turbines

Photo by Rebecca Suomala

2021 VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to the dedicated volunteers who logged over 254 hours for Project Nighthawk and traveled over 1,829 miles to make this project possible. Volunteers help in Concord, Conway, Keene, and Ossipee or may follow up on sightings elsewhere in the state.

Beth Aronson
Michael Ballen
Isabel Britnall
Sheridan Brown
Russ Cobb
Zeke Cornell
Zoe Dreyfus
Steve Gehman

David Hoitt
Dave Howe
Pam Hunt
Rich Kaszeta
Susan Lee
Jeanne-Marie Maher
Tom McShane
Sue Moran

Walter Morgan
Charlie Nims
Ellen Nunes
Michael Pahl
Bill Parkinson
Stephanie Parkinson
Bob Quinn
Robert Reynolds

Marsha Richelli
Kris Rines
Betsy Robinson
Barbara Skuly
Kim Snyder & Leah
Mark Suomala
Brett Amy Thelen
Robert Vallieres

Remembering Mary Wright

by Rebecca Suomala

Mary Wright was a birder, a conservationist, and a volunteer for many bird projects. She died on July 19, 2021, at her home in Gilsum, NH, and will be greatly missed. She loved Common Nighthawks and we often talked about their decline. When we stumbled on an idea to try putting nesting patches on rooftops, Mary supplied the initial funding to get the project started and so Project Nighthawk began. That was back in 2007 and the project continues today. On my last visit with her in the summer of 2021, I had just been on a rooftop in Keene checking a nighthawk nest with Brett Thelen. Mary was delighted to see my photos of the nighthawk chick and the unhatched egg I had collected.

Mary brought energy, curiosity, support and enthusiasm to Project Nighthawk and we will miss very much.



Mary Wright (left) with Becky Suomala, sharing photos of a nighthawk chick at a Keene nest on 6/23/21.

2021 DONORS

Pamelyn Blair
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Brett Thelen

Roy Van Vleck
Paul West
Susan Whittemore
CherylAnne Williams
Meta Alice Keith Bratten Foundation
in honor of Tracy Holmes
Wendy Howes
Ware River Nature Club



We gratefully acknowledge the many hosts who have installed nest patches on their roof tops and the many others who have helped support Project Nighthawk with their donations over the past years.