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.

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.
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.

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

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

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

Female brooding chick under left wing

Unhatched egg

Female
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 night-hawks 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)

**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.

**Other Locations**

**Grantham, NH**
The 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.

Antrim Wind Turbines
Photo by Rebecca Suomala
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  
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Zoe Dreyfus  
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Marlen Suomala  
Jeanne-Marie Mahler  
Bob Quinn  
Brett Amy Thelen  
Tom McShane  
Sue Moran  
Robert Reynolds  
Robert Vallieres

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in honor of Tracy Holmes  
Wendy Howes  
Ware River Nature Club

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

**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.