



# 2023 PROJECT NIGHTHAWK

## Common Nighthawk 2023 Nesting Season Summary by Rebecca Suomala, Project Nighthawk Coordinator

It was a rainy summer in 2023 and rain is a significant impediment to nighthawk watching if you're trying to locate nesting birds. Nesting nighthawks don't exhibit their typical behavior in the rain so Project Nighthawk protocol calls for watches in good weather only. That made it a struggle to fit in nighthawk watches during June and July. Thanks to volunteer help we were able to at least locate active territories even if we couldn't do full watches to determine nesting status.

The nighthawks held their own with 15 known nesting territories, similar to the last two years. There were five confirmed nests statewide and ten other sites where we suspected nesting but couldn't confirm. Four of the confirmed nests were in Concord and the other confirmed nest was at Black Cap Mountain in Conway (see page 3).

There were seven nighthawk territories in the Ossipee pine barrens. Some of these territories have more than one male displaying but it takes a lot of careful, close watching to spot females in this habitat and determine whether there's more than one nest. The pine barrens is one of the strongholds for the species in New Hampshire but we weren't able to do enough watches to confirm nesting. It is interesting to note that the remaining nesting territories in Concord are all in or near the remnants of the Concord Pine Barrens. Also, the site that Charlie Nims mentions on page 3 at the Eastern Slopes Airport in Fryeburg is also in an area of pine barrens.

A thank you to Project Nighthawk donors who fund our work with Common Nighthawks.

### CONCORD AREA

Three of the four confirmed nests in Concord failed due to either heavy rain or extreme heat. These were at 60 Regional Drive, Agile Magnetics, and Havenwood Heritage Heights (see page 2). The fourth at Steeplegate Mall was suspected to be successful. There are plans to renovate the mall that may unfortunately result in the loss of the flat, gravel roof the nighthawks use for nesting. There were also two other sites with suspected nesting in the Concord area (EJ Prescott and Pembroke Sand & Gravel).



Male over BonTon at Steeplegate Mall on 7/25. Photo by Robert Reynolds

#### Concord Results

- ◆ 2 watches held  
10 males  
5 females

#### Nesting Sites

- ◆ 60 Regional Dr.
- ◆ Agile Magnetics
- ◆ EJ Prescott (probable)
- ◆ Havenwood
- ◆ Pembroke Sand & Gravel (probable)
- ◆ Steeplegate Mall - BonTon end

## A Nighthawk Nest in Concord

by Rebecca Suomala

A female nighthawk laid two eggs on the roof at Havenwood Heritage Heights in Concord, NH (you can see the eggs next to the middle section of the small iron bar). It had been many years since there was nighthawk activity at Havenwood, but back in 2008 Project Nighthawk put an experimental gravel nest patch on top of their four-story building. When Mark Jenks, Director of Maintenance then and now, found the nest with two eggs this summer on their lower pea stone roof, he contacted me right away. With support from Mark and Mike Palmieri we monitored the nest, hoping for hatch. By the time I took the photo on July 27 it was very late for hatch and we were getting worried. Nighthawks migrate at the end of August and there wasn't much time for a chick to develop into a well-flying adult. Unfortunately, the female abandoned the nest a couple of days later. An examination of the unhatched eggs showed signs of very early development and it's likely they were made inviable by extreme heat or a cold, flooding rain.



Female with 2 eggs on July 27. (above)  
Photo Rebecca Suomala

Female July 24.  
Photo Rebecca Suomala



Nighthawk nest with female July 24. (left)  
Photo Rebecca Suomala



Abandoned eggs August 1.  
Photo Rebecca Suomala



Becky Suomala and Mark Jenks setting up the camera on July 18.  
Photo Chris Martin



Nighthawk nest camera.  
Photo Rebecca Suomala

Havenwood also let us put up a trail-camera on the nest. The hope was, that if the nest suffered from predation we would be able to identify the predator. Nests often fail right around hatch and it's difficult to determine the cause.

## KEENE

We are sad to report that, for the second year in a row, there were no nighthawks in Keene, NH. Thanks to Brett Thelen of the Harris Center and her crew of volunteers for all their watching.

### Keene Results

- ◆ 2 watches held
- ◆ Total: no activity



# CONWAY, NH

## BLACK CAP MOUNTAIN, CONWAY, NH

Charlie Nims monitors this site and he had an amazing night of watching on June 21, which he reported in a post to the NHBirds email list on 6-22-2023:

**A (birding) Solstice Night Cap on top of Black Cap.** Sheila's 16-year-old grandson, Thomas, and I had a bonanza with Common Nighthawks (CONI) on top of Black Cap Mtn. (Conway, NH). It started with a good omen: as soon as we got out of my vehicle, I heard Red Crossbills calling and Thomas quickly got us on four of them. Shortly after, we started on the 1.1 mile hike to the top, we had—among a few other species—a Barred Owl calling.

This evening hike up to the peak was part of NH Audubon's Common Nighthawk monitoring which I now have been doing for 5-6 years. When we got to the top, all was quiet for over 30 minutes, discouraging compared to prior years. But, right around 8:30 pm, the "floodgates" opened. We ended up having continuous CONIs, at least three and probably four, with at least two peenting and booming for a full hour. When we started down in the dark a bit after 9:30 pm, the birds were still calling.

What a great Summer Solstice treat for Thomas (a relatively new young birder) and me but, more importantly, great to see the success this declining species is having here in the Mt. Washington Valley. As an aside, I was with a nature group led by Joe Scott a couple days ago at the Eastern Slopes Airport in Fryeburg, ME (only about four air miles from Black Cap) where we had about ten CONIs. So, regardless of state borders, we have a nice cluster of nesting CONIs in this area.

Finally, we "capped" off our hike back down with probably the same Barred Owl calling.

The pleasures of birding!!

## WHITE LOT BROOK AREA, CONWAY, NH

The Tin Mountain Conservation Center along White Lot Brook had two male nighthawks calling at one of their study areas in Conway. There were clearly two territories separated by some distance. There was a nest in this area in 2016, but there's been only occasional activity at the site since then.

# OSSIPEE PINE BARRENS

There were seven active nighthawk sites in the Ossipee Pine Barrens area.

Charlie Nims discovered a new site at Goodwin Town Forest in Madison, NH during his whip-poor-will survey route. There was a male displaying with a probable female and a second male seen briefly.

At Kennet Lumber East in Freedom, NH, a male was observed displaying. It landed where a nighthawk was photographed on the ground in August last year. We have not had activity at this site before.

Other known sites had behavior consistent with nesting but we couldn't fit in enough watches to

confirm. Red Baren Gate in Ossipee, NH had three males displaying with a probable female. At Thicket NE Extension in Freedom, a male was displaying with a probable female. Three males were constantly active at West Branch Pine Barrens in Madison, NH. A special thank you to Susan Lee for checking sites early in the season.



Red Baron Gate in 2020.

Photo by Rebecca Suomala

## Ossipee Area Results

- ◆ 1 watch held
  - 14 Males
  - 3 Females
- ◆ Nesting Sites
  - ◆ #767 Depot Rd. (possible)
  - ◆ Depot Rd. log landing (possible)
  - ◆ Goodwin Town Forest (probable)
  - ◆ Kennet Lumber east (probable)
  - ◆ Red Baron (probable)
  - ◆ Thicket NE (or Thicket) (probable)
  - ◆ West Branch Pine Barrens (probable)

## 2023 VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to the dedicated volunteers who logged over 163 hours for Project Nighthawk and traveled over 1,435 miles to make this project possible. Volunteers help in Concord, Conway, Keene, and Ossipee or may follow up on sightings elsewhere in the state.

Tony Baldasaro  
Judy Boyer  
Zeke Cornell  
Wyatt Fernando  
Lynne Hart  
AJ Haskins

Lindsay Herlihy  
Dave Howe  
Mark Jenks  
Susan Lee  
Martha Maltais  
Nanci Mitchell

Charlie Mitchell  
Charlie Nims  
Ellen Nunes  
Robert Reynolds  
Marsha Richelli  
Ryan Rotigliano

Holly Stone  
Mark Suomala  
Brett Amy Thelen

## MIGRATION

Common Nighthawks migrate in large flocks, on one of the longest migration routes of any North American bird, most flying over the Gulf of Mexico to reach their win-



Nighthawk during migration on August 20, 2023. Photo by Judd Nathan

tering grounds in southern South America.

Nighthawks nesting in Canada migrate through New Hampshire at the end of August. Volunteer-led migration watches were held in Concord (Zeke Cornell) and at a new site in Franklin started by Rob

Woodward (who started the Concord watch). He had 8,603 nighthawks on *one* night on 8/28/23! Amazing! His full report will be in the Fall 2023 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*.

The Harris Center also held a migration watch in Hancock for the second year in a row.



Concord Nighthawk Migration watchers on August 28, 2023.

Photo by Rebecca Suomala

## 2023 DONORS

Ross Bennett  
Isabel Brintnall  
Roberta Collins  
Kathleen Connors  
Larry Denoncourt  
Anne Thomas Donaghy  
Regina Dunn  
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Lane Kirby

Deb Lievens  
Robert & Connie Linna  
Charlie Nims  
Kathleen Palfy  
Stephanie & Bill Parkinson  
Jane Rice  
Marsha Richelli  
Kimberly Snyder  
Nathaniel & Sharon Stout

Brett Amy Thelen  
Roy Van Vleck  
Margaret Watkins  
CherylAnne Williams  
Rob Woodward



**We are grateful for the many donors who have made Project Nighthawk possible.**