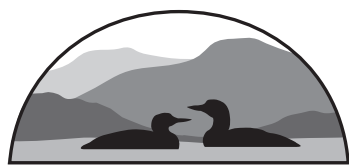


New Hampshire BIRD RECORDS



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NEW HAMPSHIRE BIRD RECORDS
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IN APPRECIATION

This issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* with its color cover is sponsored by Kathryn Frieden in loving appreciation of her four sisters. From little girls helping to take care of each other, to grown women with a wide variety of accomplishments, they are a great group of friends as well as sisters.



In This Issue

From the Editor	1
Photo Quiz.....	Inside Front Cover
Spring Season: March 1 through May 31, 2019 by Eric Masterson	3
Field Notes, Spring 2019 compiled by Diana Stephens	17
A Yellow-throated Warbler in Sunapee by Dylan Jackson	17
A (Yellow) Purple Finch!.....	18
Scarlet Tanager Eats a Balanced Meal.....	18
Bald Eagle vs. Great Blue Heron by Diana Stephens	19
A Fearless Great Blue by Jon Woolf	20
Blue-winged Warbler Hybrid Seen in Durham	20
White-winged Scoter Found in Downtown Manchester	21
The Hawk and the Wren by Catherine Fisher.....	21
Woodcock with Babies	21
Field Trip Report, Spring 2019.....	22
A "Big Day" of Spring Birding in New Hampshire by Steve Mirick	22
My Mid-May "Medium" Morning by Kurk Dorsey.....	22
Brown Thrashers Raptorthon Summary by Julie Brown.....	24
A Five-Mile Radius Big Day by Pamela Hunt.....	25
Epping "Medium" Day by Greg Tillman	26
North Country Field Trip During a Remarkable Season by Bob Quinn & Doug Bechtel	26
Photo Gallery – Bay-breasted Warbler Visits Pelagic Trip by Rebecca Suomala	28
Find Birds with eBird by Kathryn Frieden	29
Birding at the Top of New England by Will Broussard.....	30
Loon Rescue at Rye Harbor by Jon Woolf.....	32
Songbird Saver: Website to Help Prevent Birds from Colliding into Towers by Steve Holmer..	33
Birders Encounter a Satellite-tagged Merlin on Star Island by Chris DeSorbo	34
Volunteers and Research – Bahama Piping Plovers Nest in NH by Meryl Friedrich	36
A Trumpeter Swan in New Hampshire! A Historical Perspective by Diana Stephens	38
Answer to the Photo Quiz by David B. Donsker.....	42

Cover Photo: Top: Trumpeter Swan by Steve Mirick, 4-14-19, Abe Emerson Marsh WS, Candia, NH. Bottom: A Franklin's Gull with a Laughing Gull to the right and a Herring Gull behind, by Leo McKillop, 5-14-19, Rye, NH.

We counted a total of 71 species of birds including eight raptors.



Puffin hunting. Photo by Julie Brown.



Future Bird Conservation Crusaders. Photo by Julie Brown.

A Five-Mile Radius Big Day

by Pamela Hunt

As many New Hampshire birders are aware, I have a penchant for local birding, often so local that I don't even use a car. In 2019, this interest found an outlet in something called "five mile radius" birding, which as the name implies is restricted to an area within five miles of one's home. There are actually dozens of birders currently engaged in "5MR birding" these days (<http://www.iusedtohatebirds.com/p/the-5mr-2019-challenge.html>). I've also long been a fan of "big days" – birding marathons in which you try to find as many species of birds as possible in a single calendar day. These are usually done at the state level, but really any geography is acceptable. Over the years, I've managed to combine these two aspects of birding and undertake "local big days" in a restrictive geography (often a single town) and I even did several via bicycle. The stage was set for May 19, 2019, when I set out to do a big day within five miles of my house. This is the story of that day.

It started at 04:00, when immediately after my alarm went

off, I heard a robin singing outside my bedroom window. By 04:30, I was at Mast Yard State Forest listening to whip-poor-wills, a Barred Owl, and American Bittern, among other things. By 05:00, I'd found 27 species and was on my way to East Concord, picking up an Eastern Meadowlark (increasingly rare in these parts) along Mountain Road en route. After a stop at Turtle Pond (where Hooded Merganser was a bonus), I made it to the varied habitats along West Locke Road. By the time I reached the Merrimack River at 06:00, the list stood at 67, including a Virginia Rail. Migrants were somewhat scarce, however, and I started to get a little worried about the warbler diversity.

Migrant activity didn't pick up in the next hour, although I did find my first-of-year Blackpoll Warbler, and I left Locke Road just after 07:00 with 80 species under my belt. A detour into the Riverlands Conservation Area in Canterbury yielded Willow Flycatcher and Brown Thrasher (both subsequently found elsewhere), but no sign of the Lesser Yellowlegs seen the day before ("shoulda done this yesterday" is a common theme of big day narratives!). A few other stops on the way toward Bog Road brought the list up to 87 by 08:00. In the next hour, Bog Road delivered and I wrapped up just after 09:00 with 99 species. An intermittent drizzle during this period helped concentrate a few warblers, and my list for this group was now up to 19 species, including Cape May and Bay-breasted. Perhaps the highlight of this segment, however, wasn't a warbler, it was a well-seen (and early) Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.

Barn Swallows at Murray Farms were #100, while #101 and #103 were two more warblers: Tennessee and Wilson's (with a Red-tailed Hawk at #102). At this point, I headed to Horseshoe Pond, where my friend Unity Dienes joined me at 10:30 for a little while. A stop at Long Pond on the way failed to produce the local loons. Another highlight of the day was a flyover Northern Harrier which illustrated a slight problem with Horseshoe Pond; the "main" pond is almost entirely **outside** my five-mile radius (5MR). The harrier was spotted flying in from the north so, even though I was outside the radius at the time, it was clearly in my 5MR airspace. I was not so lucky with the next bird. Once Unity arrived and we headed into the field, we almost immediately found a Least Sandpiper near the causeway and thus, outside my 5MR. I had to be content with getting it on my Merrimack County year list and hoped I'd find another at Morrill's Farm later on. We walked 1.5 miles at Horseshoe, but other than the harrier my only additions in over an hour were Mallard and Canada Goose. There were a few other highlights, however, including 15 Bobolinks, another Wilson's Warbler, and a good look at a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *below eye level*. My tally by 12:00 was 106.

I stopped at Long Pond again on my way back north

and this time the loons were visible. As I scanned the pond, a Yellow-throated Vireo started singing across the street, followed by a Black-throated Blue Warbler (warbler species #22). At Morrill's, I added six species (including two Vesper Sparrows and six Solitary Sandpipers) and left a little after 13:00 with 115 species total.

By this point, things were definitely slowing down (actually, they had slowed by 10:00 given that I had 99 species by 09:00!), so I stopped by my house to take a brief lunch break. Suitably fed, I went in search of a local bluebird (unsuccessfully), but managed to find a pair of Cedar Waxwings (rare in recent weeks) instead. Over the next 1.5 hours, I made a large loop through Boscawen and Webster (even managing to get misdirected a couple of times) and added Blackburnian Warbler, Alder Flycatcher, and – at last – Eastern Bluebird. The latter was species #119, and I headed home again for a more extended break (two hours). I was still doing a big day, however, and Pine Siskins over my yard at 16:45 were species #120.

The day wrapped up with a loop to the north through Canterbury. I started at Brookford Farm (the birding spot formerly known as the “Canterbury Sod Farm”), where I added Greater Yellowlegs and another bittern, then continued east to Morrill Pond WMA (not to be confused with the farm of the same name!) and a bonus find of a singing Winter Wren. The last stop of the day was Hoit Marsh, where the last new species was Common Nighthawk, two of which were migrating overhead in the distance.

All told, I drove 94 miles, spent 13-14 hours actively birding, and found 123 species, 23 of them warblers! I missed three species seen while scouting the day before: Lesser Yellowlegs, Osprey, and Cooper's Hawk, and of course, I missed Least Sandpiper by a couple hundred feet. As a point of reference, my human-powered big days in Concord tallied roughly 110 species, so in a restricted area you might not gain all too much by using a car, and wouldn't get anywhere near as much exercise either!

Epping “Medium” Day

by Greg Tillman

I didn't do an actual, full-scale Big Day on May 25, 2019, but I did want to get outside and bird at some of the new conservation areas in town. Well, maybe it counts as a might-have-been Big Day, or Medium Day for someone with lots of other time commitments. Whatever the name, it was tons of fun!

My best ever all-day effort in Epping was 91 species, human-powered. On May 25, I managed to bird from 7:00 to 11:00 am, and 4:00 to 6:00 pm, and used the car, and I was surprised and pleased to turn up a solid 80 species. I almost left it at 79 species, because I wasn't going to drive six

miles just to see Rock Pigeons on the Rt. 101 bridge! But an evening American Woodcock, heard from the house, brought the official total up to 80.

It was a beautiful day to be outside and the warbler migration was in full swing! My seventeen species of warblers included Nashville and Canada at Mast Road Conservation Area, along with a slightly late Blue-headed Vireo. I had none of the budworm warblers (Bay-breasted, Tennessee, Cape May) despite having pretty good numbers of Bay-breasted on other trips this spring. I also missed on Blackburnian and Wilson's Warblers, but Magnolia Warbler and Northern Parula were plentiful. The timing to pick up all the possible warbler species is so delicate!

There were no rarities for the day, but I had a flyover Green Heron at Two Rivers Conservation Area, which is not a “gimme” bird in town, and heard both Alder and Least Flycatcher around the Burley Farm Conservation Area. A Carolina Wren feeding young (already!) was also a nice treat.

There were lots of misses, of course; not too surprising since I totally skipped the dawn chorus. I missed House Wren, Northern Mockingbird, both Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, and Barred Owl (no owling). Also, I had no Double-crested Cormorants or Hooded Mergansers on any of the ponds I checked. I probably could have added Yellow-bellied Sapsucker over at Kenard Hill, but I didn't make it that far in the time I had. (Oh, and no Rock Pigeon!)

One of these years, I'll plan it out, get lucky with the timing, and reach 100! A couple of birds I would really like to get in Epping are Merlin, Northern Waterthrush, and Eastern Screech-Owl. If anyone knows any good spots for those, please let me know!

See Greg Tillman's article on where to bird in Epping in the Spring 2018 issue of New Hampshire Bird Records (Vol. 37 #1).

North Country Field Trip During a Remarkable Season

by Bob Quinn and Doug Bechtel

Stop, Moose! – rang out the call, as our van rolled to a safe stop to enjoy our sixth Moose of the trip! In late May 2019, an enthusiastic and hardy group reveled in an outstanding tour to the northern reaches of our state. Pittsburg and Errol/Umbagog, in far northern New Hampshire, are spectacular yet little known and seldom visited destinations, but they are stunningly worthwhile for their scenery and wildlife.

On this trip, the overwhelming experience was of a very “late” spring season with hardly any foliage on the trees in Pittsburg. The trip was from May 27-31, 2019 and, by that time, most of the state had long been fully leafed out. It was a shock to see how much farther behind the trees were in the northern part of the state. In Pittsburg, the early poplars had

Spring 2019 Highlights



Two very different looking Summer Tanagers: an immature male (left) by Chris McPherson, 4-29-19, Nashua NH; right in full adult male plumage by Steve Hooper, 5-4-19, Colby St., Keene, NH.



Long-eared Owl by Scott Parker, 3-12-19, Keene, NH.



Yellow-headed Blackbird by Janet Butler, 5-28-19, Rye, NH.



Tricolored Heron by Jason Lambert, 5-4-19, Durham, NH.



Prothonotary Warbler by Steve Mirick, 5-18-19, Exeter, NH.

