

New Hampshire

BIRD RECORDS



FALL 2021

VOL. 40, No. 3



NEW HAMPSHIRE BIRD RECORDS

VOLUME 40 NUMBER 3

FALL 2021

EDITOR

Rebecca Suomala
603-224-9909 X309
rsuomala@nhaudubon.org

TEXT EDITOR

Dan Hubbard

SEASON EDITORS

Eric Masterson, Spring
Greg Tillman/Susan Wrisley, Summer
Ben Griffith, Fall
Jim Sparrell/Katherine Towler, Winter

LAYOUT

Dyanna Smith

PUBLICATION ASSISTANT

Kathryn Frieden

ASSISTANTS

Susan Burkhardt, Zeke Cornell,
David Deifik, Susan MacLeod,
Marie Nickerson, Susan Wrisley

FIELD NOTES

Kathryn Frieden

PHOTO EDITOR

Wendy Chatel

WEB MASTER

Kathy Barnes

WHERE TO BIRD

Phil Brown, Steve Lamonde

EDITORIAL TEAM

Phil Brown, Wendy Chatel, Hank Chary,
David Deifik, Ben Griffith,
Dan Hubbard, Pam Hunt,
Steven Lamonde, Iain MacLeod,
Eric Masterson, Robert A. Quinn,
Rebecca Suomala, Jon Woolf

www.nhbirdrecords.org

This issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* with its color cover is sponsored by an anonymous donor.



Steve Mirick
photographed these two
juvenile Black-backed
Woodpeckers chasing
each other at Pondicherry
Wildlife Refuge on
8-15-21.

In This Issue

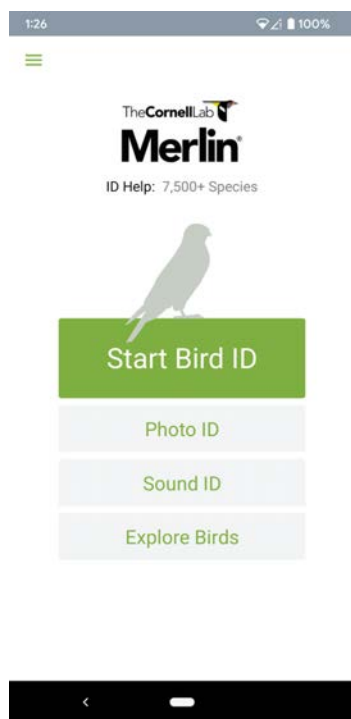
Harris's Sparrow in Greenland, NH; Black Tern at the Exeter WTP, NH	Inside Front Cover
From the Editor	2
How Many Birds in the Picture?	2
Fall Season: August 1 through November 30, 2021 <i>by Ben Griffith</i>	3
Regional Report, Fall 2021 – Sullivan County and Lake Sunapee <i>by Dylan Jackson</i>	9
A Hybrid Flycatcher in Dover <i>by Stephen Mirick</i>	9
A Lazuli Bunting on Star Island.... Again! <i>by Rebecca Suomala</i>	11
Field Notes, <i>Kathryn Frieden, Coordinator</i>	11
Northern Gannet Blown Off Course <i>by Kathryn Frieden</i>	11
Surprising Location for a Sanderling.....	12
Common Nighthawk on Star Island.....	12
Noisy Grackles <i>by Richard Bielawski</i>	12
Woodpecker Drinking from Hummingbird Feeder	12
Discovery of a Bank Swallow Colony.....	13
Black-crowned Night-Heron Bonanza!	13
Fall 2021 New Hampshire Raptor Migration Report <i>by Iain MacLeod</i>	14
Documenting Rarities in eBird <i>by Steve Mirick</i>	18
The Merlin App Sound ID <i>by Iain MacLeod</i>	20
Volunteers and Research—Black Tern with Color Bands <i>by Danielle Dauria</i>	21
Backyard Birder – Do Birds eat Small Mammals? <i>by Kathryn Frieden</i>	22
Chasing Rarities <i>by Jon Woolf</i>	23
Birding from Gorham to Errol, NH <i>by Robert A. Quinn</i>	25
Photo Gallery – Cattle Egrets Doing What They do Best!	28
Concord 2021 Nighthawk Migration <i>by Rebecca Suomala</i>	29
Corrections, Summer 2016 through Winter 2017-18.....	30
What to Watch for in Fall.....	31
More Fall 2021 Rarities	Inside Back Cover

Cover Photos: A rare hybrid flycatcher believed to be a Couch's/Tropical Kingbird x Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, found in Dover, NH. Top photo by Ken Faucher, 11-14-21; bottom right by Steve Mirick, 11-15-21; bottom left by Paul Kurseciwicz, 11-14-21.

The Merlin App Sound ID

by Iain MacLeod

Figure 1. The Merlin App home screen.



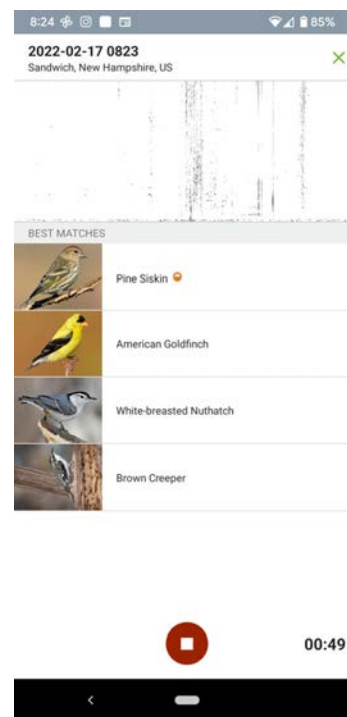
Identification of bird songs and calls is a skill that requires patience and many years of careful study. For beginning or casual birders, it's a skill they may never fully master. I have long wondered when the technology would be perfected that would allow a digital identification of songs.

In the past year, a major technological advance came along in the form of the Merlin app's song identification feature. The Merlin app (from Cornell Lab of Ornithology) has already made its mark as a go-to phone app for visual identification (including its Photo ID feature). The new

Sound ID feature makes it a soup-to-nuts app for all birders.

I was eager to try out the Sound ID. It is very simple

Figure 2. Merlin app Sound ID suggesting four species heard in my yard on a February morning.



to use. Within the normal app interface there is now a Sound ID icon. Click on it and it immediately uses the microphone built into your phone to pick up the sounds around you. I was surprised how sensitive the app and mic were, managing to pick up sounds that were really very quiet. Obviously, you are going to get better results where there is little extraneous background noise. I haven't tried the app in a noisy city environment, but I would imagine that its effectiveness would be impaired. Here in the nice quiet Lakes Region, I found it very effective.

As each bird calls, the app offers real-time suggestions for what the bird is (Figure 2). "Suggestions" is an important word here. That is how the app describes the process. A list of the species is created and each recording is automatically saved to your phone. It also creates a simple sonogram of the sounds.

Tips for using the Merlin App

- The best success will be when there's an isolated song with little background noise.
- The App is fallible. Examples include a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker identified as a Gray Catbird and children's sounds as gulls. Do not assume that Merlin is always correct.
- Use Merlin as a prompt for what to look for (or what you are missing if you are hard of hearing) then try to get a visual confirmation of the bird. This will also help you learn the song and store it in your memory.
- When species first arrive in spring, check eBird to see if they are here yet. Go to Explore – Species Maps and change the date to the current year. The map will show where they have been reported so far.
- Beware similar species such as Chipping Sparrow, Pine Warbler, and Dark-eyed Junco, or Philadelphia and Red-eyed Vireos.
- Remember that bird songs can vary, and not all birds make the classic noises. Don't forget mimics like Northern Mockingbirds, European Starlings, and Blue Jays that have exceptionally good imitations.
- In your eBird checklist indicate which sightings were identified by Merlin and upload the recording.
- **If Merlin was the only basis for identification, please don't enter it in eBird** – wait until you are able to hear and identify it yourself or visually confirm the species.
- There's no substitute for a visual confirmation – even the experts get fooled!

See the eBird article on Merlin Sound ID best practices:

<https://support.ebird.org/en/support/solutions/articles/48001214056-merlin-sound-id-best-practices>

Now . . . nothing is perfect and this new app certainly isn't. It does make mistakes. Some of the suggestions are wrong, but as long as the user is aware of that, it is manageable. A good tip is to try multiple recordings to see if the app continues to suggest the same bird. If the app "insists" that you are hearing something unusual, try to get a visual of the bird and confirm the identification. You should also upload the recording to eBird in a checklist to verify if indeed that is what you heard. If Merlin identifies something unusual and you report it on eBird and just say "identified by Merlin," that is not going to be good enough to convince the eBird reviewer that you definitely heard what you thought you heard. If you upload the recording (which is easy to do), an expert can listen to the recording and verify or challenge the identification.

I'm sure that the app will keep improving and the accuracy will get closer to 100%. As of this review, the sound ID feature only works for birds in US and Canada. They plan to add more birds/countries in the future. That is where this app could really come into its own for me – when I am visiting somewhere with completely unfamiliar birds.

The Merlin Sound ID is a great tool. Use it to enhance your ID skills, but remember it's no substitute for careful observation and a trained ear.

Volunteers and Research

Black Tern with Color Bands

by Danielle Dauria

The Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) is the rarest breeding tern in Maine and nests in just a handful of freshwater marshes in the state. Since 1989, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) has been monitoring the number of nesting pairs. The population peaked in 2006 with 115 nesting pairs, but has since declined to an all-time low of just 30 pairs at three sites in Maine in 2021. This decline is not just occurring in Maine, which is somewhat on the periphery of the Black Tern's North American range. The Black Tern has experienced a long-term decline throughout its range, even in the core of its range in the Prairie Pothole Region of the US and Canada. It is unclear what may be causing the decline. While habitat loss and degradation have occurred, the available breeding habitat does not appear to be a primary limiting factor. In areas where survival and productivity have been studied, estimated vital rates fall far below those required to maintain a stable population.

To better understand the return rates of Maine's Black Terns to their breeding wetlands, MDIFW began color



Black Tern with metal leg band on its right leg and two color bands (orange over yellow) on its left leg. Photo courtesy of MDIFW.



Black Tern with a geolocator attached to the yellow plastic band. Photo by Don Lyons, 6-17-21.

banding adults this summer. Each adult has a unique color band combination on one of its legs and a silver metal USGS band on the other leg. In addition, to contribute to a larger migratory connectivity project in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan, MDIFW also equipped five adults with geolocators which were attached to a plastic leg band. The geolocators have a light sensor and use changes in ambient light levels to estimate the times of sunrise and sunset, from which latitude and longitude can be calculated.

The derived locations will shed light on where the birds go during migration, identify areas of mixing of different sub-populations, highlight important stopover and overwintering locations, and potentially discover priority conservation issues at these sites.

New Hampshire Bird Records Endowment Fund

Donations to this fund provide long-term support for all facets of *New Hampshire Bird Records*, from the publication to the collection, organization, quality control, dissemination, preservation, and storage of New Hampshire bird sighting information.

Leave a Legacy for the Birds with a bequest in your will to the Fund:

I give and bequeath ____ % of my residuary estate (or a specific sum of \$ ____) to the New Hampshire Bird Records Endowment Fund, a permanently restricted fund of the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, 84 Silk Farm Rd., Concord, NH.

For more information, contact the Managing Editor (see inside front cover).

NHBR Subscription Form

I would like to subscribe to *New Hampshire Bird Records*.

☐ NH Audubon Member \$25.00 ☐ Non-member \$35.00

All renewals take place annually.

Mid-year subscribers will receive all issues published in the subscription year.

☐ I would like to join NH Audubon and receive *New Hampshire Bird Records* at the member price.
☐ Family/\$60 ☐ Individual/\$45 ☐ Senior/\$30

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

City, State: _____

Zip: _____

Payment is by:

☐ Check enclosed— payable to NH Audubon
☐ MC ☐ VISA

Card #: _____

Exp. Date: _____

Return to: Membership Department, NH Audubon,
84 Silk Farm Rd., Concord, NH 03301

Subscribe online at www.nhbirdrecords.org

Rare Bird ALERT

 **603-224-9909**

Available twenty-four hours a day!

Also online at www.nhaudubon.org

Abbreviations Used

AMC	Appalachian Mountain Club
BBC	Brookline Bird Club
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey
CA	Conservation Area
CC	Country Club
CFT	NH Audubon Chapter Field Trip
FT	Field Trip
IBA	Important Bird Area
L.	Lake
LPC	Loon Preservation Committee
NA	Natural Area
NHA	New Hampshire Audubon
NHBR	New Hampshire Bird Records
NHRBC	NH Rare Birds Committee
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
PO	Post Office
R.	River
Rd.	Road
RO	Raptor Observatory
Rt.	Route
SF	State Forest
SP	State Park
SPNHF	Society for the Protection of NH Forests, Concord
T&M	Thompson & Meserves (Purchase)
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WMNF	White Mountain National Forest
WS	NHA Wildlife Sanctuary
~	approximately
WTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant

New Hampshire Bird Records is published quarterly by NH Audubon's Conservation Department. Thank you to the many observers who submit their sightings to NH eBird (www.ebird.org/nh), the source of data for this publication. The published sightings typically represent the highlights of the season. Not all species reported will appear in the issue. All records are subject to review by the NH Rare Birds Committee and publication here does not imply future acceptance by the RBC.

New Hampshire Bird Records © NH Audubon May 2022

Published by NH Audubon's Conservation Department



Printed on Recycled Paper