

New Hampshire

BIRD RECORDS



WINTER 2020-21

VOL. 39, No. 4

A "Superflight" of Winter Finches

The winter of 2020-21 saw a big irruption of winter visitors, which began in the fall (see the Fall 2020 issue). Here are a few of the species. See Pam Hunt's article, the season summary, and the Christmas Bird Count report for more information.



A very colorful Common Redpoll by Debra Powers, 1-31-21, Newmarket, NH.

*White-winged Crossbill
by Steve Mirick, 2-13-21, Greenland, NH.*



*Pine Grosbeaks
were one of the stars
of the superflight.
This male was
photographed by
Len Medlock,
1-18-21, Epping,
NH.*



Evening Grosbeaks were also part of the superflight. One individual shows xanthochromic coloration. See the Field Notes for more. Photo by David Govatski, 12-30-20, Jefferson, NH.



A leucistic Evening Grosbeak in Lyndonville, VT photographed on the same day as the xanthochromic bird, 12-30-20, by Tom Berriman.

Where's the Photo Quiz?

It's on hold at present. If you're interested in taking on this feature, please contact Becky Suomala (email on page 1).



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IN MEMORY OF

Frank Nims

This issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* with its color cover is sponsored by Charlie Nims – “It is dedicated to my father who imbued in me a deep passion for the natural world. During my youth, he put out winter feeders which attracted mobs of Evening Grosbeaks, one of my spark birds, and took me fishing for native Brook Trout in the tiniest of streams, memories that I treasure. His military burial plaque reads, ‘Capt. Frank R. Nims, a Lover of Nature.’ That love has carried over to me, expressed in my passions for birding, hiking and the natural world.”



Bea and Frank Nims at their Lake Winnepesaukee cabin on Treasure Island.

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near the Portsmouth Yacht Club. Wintering loons and ducks can be in good numbers on the river, along with occasional grebes, scoters, and razorbills. After returning to Rt. 1B, take an immediate right onto River Road. The cove here can also be productive for ducks, particularly Buffleheads in fall and winter. A left on Oliver Street will return you to Rt. 1B. Back track with a left on Rt. 1B (heading east) to get to our next stop.

The hotspot in New Castle for land birds is Neal's Lane to Neal's Pit Lane. This is not a through road, so park at the Maude Trefethen Elementary School on the north side of Rt. 1B when it is not in session and walk across Rt. 1B and down Neal's /Pit Lane. I would not advise parking anywhere on the lane. The lane has some wet areas, brush, and wooded areas. It also is bordered by two marshes. Although they are somewhat frustratingly inaccessible, the marshes bring in diverse species that are often active near the lane. Spring migration can be surprisingly productive here.

The last available stop before leaving New Castle on the Portsmouth end of the island is a walk along the causeway and in the Riverside Cemetery located just before the causeway. There's a small pullout on the south side of the road where the corner of the cemetery meets the causeway. Some people keep their dinghies there and they don't seem to ticket. Walk through the cemetery for views of the back cove and look for Eastern Screech-Owls in the big old trees. They're around here somewhere! Walk on the causeway (if the wind isn't howling) for viewing both the back cove (also known as the Back Channel), its islands, and the river. An additional way to access the causeway is to use the pullout on Goat Island, which is on the left as you cross the causeway on Rt. 1B towards Portsmouth. This is a very busy spot in the summer, however parking is usually available off season. Check the cove and islands in all seasons. A Western Reef-Heron was spotted from here in 2006!

New Castle is seacoast birding in a nutshell. My advice is to find a legal parking place and just walk if you are able. Stop for a snack or lunch and you'll have spent the day well.

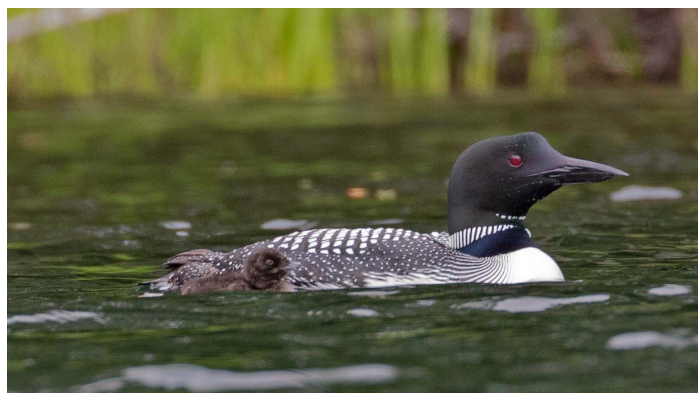
Patience has been birding for about twenty years, first in Exeter, and now in New Castle with her (patient and supportive) husband, Tom.

*American Wigeon
by Steve Mirick,
1-24-21, New
Castle, NH.*



Old Man Knowles – The Dangers of Discarded Fishing Tackle

by Janice Landry



"Old Man Knowles," the Knowles Pond loon and his chick, by Jan Landry, 6-29-20.



The same Knowles Pond chick, three months later showing a lure is visible in the chick's bill. Photo by Jan Landry, 9-26-20, just prior to rescue.

My husband and I relocated to the Lakes Region in 2016 after raising our family in our hometown of Berlin, NH. Shortly after settling in to our new location, I researched conservation areas, trails and kayaking spots that would be easily accessible from our home. One of the highlights I discovered was Knowles Pond, a small conservation area in Northfield that offers beautiful walking trails and access to the pond for non-motorized boats. I spent many hours paddling around Knowles, binoculars and camera in hand, ready to take a closer look or capture a photo of the abundant birds and wildlife that could be spotted along the shores. One of the highlights was watching the established Common Loon pair that made Knowles Pond their home. Watching and photographing these particular loons led to my relationship with the Loon

Preservation Committee (LPC) as well as establishing a friendship with a fellow loon-watcher, Mark Chaffee.

Mark had been watching and documenting these particular loons since 2006. He has kept data on nesting as well as volunteering to place signs and float lines around the loon nesting site each year for the LPC. This particular male loon on Knowles had been the “resident male” since Mark began watching many years prior. Mark affectionately named him “Old Man Knowles.” Old Man Knowles was easy to distinguish from other loons as he had a broken lower mandible and had been banded by the LPC in 2012. Old Man Knowles had quite the personality.....ornery, feisty and very protective of the chicks he raised over the years. It was all part of his charm.

In 2020, Mark and I placed the nesting signage and float lines around the nest. We enjoyed early morning paddles watching Old Man Knowles and his mate incubate two eggs from a safe distance. We were elated when one egg hatched producing a female chick. Over the next month, I visited Knowles on a regular basis to check on the progress of the chick. All was going as expected. The chick was growing. Mark and I shared observations via text and would run into each other paddling at Knowles on a regular basis.



Old Man Knowles with visible monofilament fishing line wrapped around his bill. Photo by Caroline Hughes, August 2020.

On August 6, the story of Old Man Knowles took an unfortunate turn. Caroline Hughes, a Biologist at LPC, contacted both Mark and me to let us know that Old Man Knowles had been rescued on Silver Lake in Tilton. Several residents on Silver Lake had been watching him for a few days. He was acting “odd” and they

were concerned. When he was rescued, he was wrapped in monofilament fishing line. He was untangled, his lead level checked (which came back low) and released in hopes that he would catch some fish and regain his strength. Mark and I diligently checked Knowles Pond in hopes that he would fly home to continue helping his mate care for their chick.

On August 24, it was relayed to both Mark and me that Old Man Knowles had turned up as a mortality on Silver

Lake the previous day. We were devastated. The following day, Mark and I met up at Knowles to kayak. We paddled and told our favorite stories about Old Man Knowles and his “antics” to say goodbye to this special loon. The female and chick were both present and we enjoyed watching her feed and care for the chick. We still looked forward to watching the chick grow and fly to the Atlantic Ocean in the fall.



Knowles Pond female caring for chick after the untimely death of Old Man Knowles. Photo by Jan Landry, 8-25-20.

Mark and I continued to communicate via text, updating each other with the progress of the chick. She continued to grow and become more independent and we felt positive about her chances of flying to the ocean in the fall. On September 26, I set out for a kayak paddle on a beautiful fall day. As I was photographing the chick, I noticed she was not acting normally and I paddled closer. The loon chick was entangled in a large fishing lure. One end was embedded in her bill, the other end was embedded in her wing. I immediately contacted Caroline Hughes at LPC as well as my friend Mark. Per Caroline’s direction, I was able to get the chick into my kayak and met Mark and Caroline at the boat landing. The chick was brought to a vet where the lure was removed, then brought to Wings of the Dawn for overnight observation. It was decided the best course of action was to release her the next morning. Mark and I met up with Caroline at Knowles and were present when the chick was released. The chick proceeded to beach herself and our hopes of her recovery sank. After Caroline made several calls, it was decided the chick would be brought to Avian Haven, a wild bird rehabilitation facility in Unity, ME in an attempt to save her. Despite all of the efforts made for this chick, she died on her way to Avian Haven.

Two loon deaths from the same family in one season. Both deaths linked to human-related causes. There had to be something that could be done to raise awareness of properly disposing monofilament line and fishing lures. Not just for the sake of loons, but for the sake of all wildlife,

including eagles, hawks, owls, kingfishers, and marine life, that could potentially be impacted. Public education regarding the dangers of lead tackle as well as proper disposal of monofilament fishing line should be an integral factor for all of New Hampshire residents who recreate in our beautiful outdoors.



Mark Chaffee and Jan Landry holding the chick with head covered, just after the rescue (top). The chick's beak after removal of the fishing lure, showing the damage (left). Photos by Caroline Hughes, LPC biologist, 9-26-20.

Lead Tackle

The statistics of lead ingestions for New Hampshire loons each year is staggering. Lead poisoning has accounted for 42% of loon deaths in NH since 1989 (Loon Preservation Committee website, loon.org). NH RSA 339:77 and NH RSA 211:13-b ban the sale and use of all lead fishing sinkers or jigs that weigh less than one ounce for all freshwater within NH.

The Loon Preservation Committee partnered with NH Fish and Game and several retailers to initiate a Lead Tackle Buyback Program. An individual can exchange one ounce or more of banned lead fishing tackle for a \$10 merchandise voucher redeemable at participating tackle shops. More information regarding this program as well as a list of participating retailers is available at Loonsafe.org

Monofilament Fishing Line

Monofilament line is frequently used by anglers as it is incredibly strong and durable. It is so durable, that it can take up to 600 years to break down once discarded. Problems arise for wildlife if the line is lost while fishing or if the line is discarded overboard. The line can become entangled around fish, waterfowl or birds. It can also be consumed by a variety of animals, causing blockages and malnutrition which ultimately can lead to death. The line can also cause injury to people if left in areas where people recreate, as well as possibly becoming entangled in motors causing extensive damage.

What can be done to prevent the impact of discarded monofilament fishing line on New Hampshire's wildlife? New Hampshire has no formal Monofilament Line Recycling Program, but there are steps that can be taken to decrease the impact on wildlife. Education and awareness of its potential impact is key. Currently, 26 states have a formal "Monofilament Line Recycling Program."

The program is simple to run. Monofilament Line Receptacles are built and installed in accessible areas where fishing occurs. When a fisherman is done using his line, he can recycle it in this bin. Volunteers or paid staff collect and clean the line from the bins and mail the clean fishing line to Berkley Recycling. The company is located in Spirit Lake, Iowa and has been recycling monofilament line since 1990. Their website states that they have recycled over nine million miles of fishing line! Once the cleaned monofilament line arrives at Berkley, it is melted down into raw plastic pellets and made into toys, tackle boxes, spools for fishing line, and artificial fish habitats used in both freshwater and saltwater.

Mark and I are both members of our respective town's Conservation Commissions and are in the early stages of planning a workday to build a few Monofilament Line Receptacles to collect monofilament line in our towns. My hope is for the tragic outcome of both Old Man Knowles and his chick to be the catalyst to implement this program in New Hampshire.

If anyone is interested in spearheading a project in their area, please contact me: janlandry1972@yahoo.com

Jan grew up in the Great North Woods of New Hampshire. She is an avid hiker, birder and general lover of the outdoors. She currently lives in the Lakes Region with her husband where in her spare time you can find her exploring the Lakes Region or spending time in Dummer, NH at her family's remote camp on Sessions Pond. Her love for loons started at a young age while spending time with her family fishing on remote lakes in the Great North Woods.

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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.

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