

New Hampshire

BIRD RECORDS



SPRING 2021

Vol. 40, No. 1



NH AUDUBON

Protecting our environment since 1914

NEW HAMPSHIRE BIRD RECORDS

VOLUME 40 NUMBER 1
SPRING 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

FIELD NOTES

Diana Stephens

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.

Two Barred Owlets in a nest hole that Debra Powers found, photographed and wrote about in the Spring 2021 Field Notes. Photo taken 5-4-21, in Dover, NH.

In This Issue

Snowy Owl "Squabble"	Inside Front Cover
From the Editor	2
New Hampshire's Swallows	2
Spring Season: March 1 through May 31, 2021 <i>by Eric Masterson</i>	3
Regional Report, Spring 2021 – Sullivan County and Lake Sunapee <i>by Dylan Jackson</i>	8
Virginia's Warbler <i>by Holly Bauer</i>	9
Long-eared Owl – My Nemesis Bird <i>by Stephen Mirick</i>	10
The Hinsdale Waterbird Fallout of May 5, 2021 <i>by Hector Galbraith</i>	12
Coastal Migration – Spring, 2021 <i>by Stephen Mirick</i>	13
Spring 2021 Field Notes, <i>Diana Stephens, Coordinator</i>	16
Songbirds and Squirrels Enjoy Maple "Popsicles" <i>by Sally Bertrand</i>	16
Ospreys Relocated to New Nest in Portsmouth <i>by Iain MacLeod</i>	16
Hairy Woodpeckers Do "Line Dance" in Warren <i>compiled by Diana Stephens</i>	17
Dead Razorbill Found in Chocorua <i>by Jersey Nickerson</i>	17
Four Barred Owlets in Dover <i>by Deb Powers</i>	18
Ospreys Arrive to Nest at Heron Rookery <i>by Susan Poirier</i>	18
Flash Freeze on the Magalloway	20
Migration in Errol, NH <i>by Bob Quinn</i>	20
Leucistic Red-winged Blackbird at Quincy Bog	20
A Seven Owl Day in New Hampshire <i>by Zeke Cornell</i>	21
Short-eared Owl Show	22
Portsmouth Country Club <i>by Jim Sparrell</i>	22
Dillant-Hopkins Airport <i>by Rebecca Suomala</i>	23
A Hoot of a Night <i>by Charlie Nims</i>	23
Horned Lark Nest at Concord Airport <i>by Rebecca Suomala</i>	24
The Lost Birds of Merrimack County <i>by Rob Woodward</i>	26
Birding the Periphery of Pawtuckaway State Park <i>by Kathryn Frieden</i>	29
Volunteers and Research – The Finch Research Network <i>by Matthew A. Young</i>	31
Backyard Birder – Yellow-rumped Warblers at Suet Feeder <i>by Diana Stephens</i>	33
A Flicker of Life <i>by Kurk Dorsey</i>	33
What to Watch for in Spring	35
Photo Gallery – Long-eared and Short-eared Owls	Inside Back Cover

Cover Photos: Hooded Warbler (top) by Scott Heron, 5-17-21, Brentwood, NH. Yellow-throated Warbler (lower left) by Earl Johnson, 4-28-21, Orford, NH. Virginia's Warbler (lower right), a first state record, photographed by Holly Bauer, 4-29-21, Hampton, NH.

Meadows, Vermont, along with four Surf Scoters, two Red-breasted Mergansers, a Common Tern and two Lesser Scaup. Numbers of birds were much smaller farther north than Brattleboro. It looks as though the fallout extended throughout much of the middle and upper Connecticut River Valley from Brattleboro south, and involved many hundreds of birds, at least.

We have known ever since the days when Tudor Richards was counting birds in New Hampshire in the 1950s and 1960s that inland fallouts of waterbirds occur in spring and that they are typically associated with overcast skies and rain; however, much remains uncertain. Not all days with apparently suitable weather conditions result in fallouts. Other factors may be important, for example the location, movement, and intensity of frontal systems that the birds collide with on their journey to New England. Also, the inclement weather conditions that occur in southern New England might seem promising to birders, but if they extend south to the birds' last stopover areas, they may result in the birds being grounded. Fallouts remain enigmatic and predicting them is an uncertain business. Perhaps, a serious study combining bird movements with weather radar could help reduce the unknowns.

Coastal Migration – Spring, 2021

by Stephen Mirick



Black-capped Chickadee migrating in Portsmouth by Steve Mirick, 4-18-21.

Geographically, the New Hampshire coastline doesn't seem to have as much to offer for birders as compared to that of neighboring states. Massachusetts has the prominent coastal capes of Cape Ann and Cape Cod which attract vagrants and stick out into the ocean to provide better opportunities to see pelagic birds. In Maine, the jagged contours of the coastline provide concentration points for migrants and the islands, especially Monhegan Island, are

some of the finest for birding in the eastern United States. With only 18 miles of coastline, the New Hampshire coast has perhaps one minor geographic advantage for birders, the relatively smooth coastline and the small, but distinct bend at the Massachusetts border. These two attributes provide for a natural "pinch point" and migration route for diurnal bird migrants that don't like crossing water, but need to head north toward their "summer homes" in "Downeast" Maine, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Ducks, loons, hawks, blackbirds, swallows, and a few other species of passerines can all be seen migrating north along the coast.

My wife Jane and I spend a lot of our time watching bird migration in both the spring and fall. During the spring of 2021, we managed to get out a bit more than usual, particularly as compared to the terrible "Pandemic Spring of 2020." We didn't record as many hawks and swallows as we hoped for, but we had some nice migrations of more common passerine species that are not as well known for their migration. Peak migration occurred in mid-May, but we counted (when we could) from March 27 to June 1. Just like hawkwatching, weather played a critical role in migration with westerly components to the wind essential for a good flight. Most of these counts were also from the early morning hours when migration seems to be the best for these species. We counted migrating birds wherever we were on the coast, but most of the migration was observed from three key spots.

Rt. 1A in Seabrook – Most of our observations were from the Haverhill Street access to Seabrook Beach. Here, we watched from the top of the dunes, or closer to Rt. 1A or even on the west side of Rt. 1A in the Seabrook Back Dunes. This was particularly good for our goldfinch migration. Birds were observed in groups flying directly up the dunes, or right along Rt. 1A as they headed north in the early morning.

Frost Point at Odiorne Point State Park in Rye (referred to in this article as Odiorne) – This spot requires a hike, but was an excellent spot to watch migration, especially Cedar Waxwings in late May. The nice part about this spot was being able to watch the migrants cross the water from Frost Point as they headed over to New Castle on their way north. While many species don't see this as an obstacle, some of the weak flyers like Blue Jays and Black-capped Chickadees were reluctant and were comical to watch as they would fly half way over and then double-back and dive to the safety of the trees at Odiorne.

South End of Portsmouth International Tradeport at Pease in Portsmouth – This spot is technically inland a bit from the coast and is at the turnaround circle near the entrance to the Pease Golf Course. We found it while looking for a good spring hawkwatching location. It still

may be good for hawk migration, but we “discovered” this to be excellent for chickadee migration, purely by accident. The spot is a pinch point for birds that won’t cross Great Bay or the Tradeport. This specific spot concentrates chickadees as they need to cross an open area of grassland over Grafton Road.

Below is a summary of our results for the spring of 2021.

American Goldfinch – 8,783 birds total. Goldfinches were observed migrating through the entire period including 19 birds in several small groups seen migrating past Frost Point on the seemingly late date of June 1. The peak period was May 6-16 with an amazing record high count of 3,640 moving north from Seabrook in four hours on May 9. On that morning, birds were continuously flying by and a total of 215 flocks of birds were recorded moving north in sizes between eight and 80 birds per flock. Surprisingly, observation of coastal goldfinch migration had not been historically well documented in the literature. The phenomenon was brought to light by Rick Heil with his observations from Plum Island in Massachusetts. Now Jane and I have documented it as well for the New Hampshire seacoast over the last 15 years. Goldfinches fly low over the dunes or along Rt. 1A on their journey north and can sometimes be quiet and extremely hard to see as they pass overhead quickly. They do not hesitate in their migration. American Goldfinch migrations are annual, but the numbers likely fluctuate with peak years occurring following a fall incursion.

Blue Jays – 809 birds total. Blue Jay migration was observed from May 9 through June 1 including 77 late migrants passing Frost Point on June 1. The peak period was mid-May with a high count of 322 flying north along Rt. 1A in Seabrook on May 16. Group sizes varied from

six to 50 birds. Blue Jays are “chickens” when it comes to crossing water or even large open areas. This is best observed from Odiorne when they attempt to cross the short distance to New Castle. They often double-back several times before finally crossing. Blue Jay migrations are well known from across the State, but coastal flights can sometimes be enormous. Historic counts for New Hampshire include 2,000 migrating in Rye on 5-21-66 as reported by Vera Hebert and an incredible pulse of 513 flying north in 30

minutes in Rye on 5-10-70 (Keith & Fox 2013). Blue Jay migrations are annual, but likely fluctuate with peak years following a fall incursion.



Cedar Waxwings migrating at Odiorne Point State Park in Rye on 6-1-21 by Steve Mirick.

Cedar Waxwing – 933 birds total. Cedar Waxwings were observed mostly from the second half of May until June 1 with the peak daily count of 541 on June 1. Unfortunately, no counts were made after June 1, but it is likely that significant numbers continued moving north into June. Birds generally migrate in flocks of two to 80 birds and do not hesitate as they fly north. It has been reported that Cedar Waxwings exhibit a bi-modal migration with peak migration periods of January-March and again in May (Keith & Fox 2013). I have not observed clear coastal migration during January to March; however, I have observed a regular migration during late May into very early June (i.e., 960 migrating at Odiorne on 5-26-10, 538 migrating up the coast on 5-30-10, 286 migrating at Odiorne on 5-25-18, 264 migrating at Seabrook on 5-25-11, and 201 migrating up the coast on 6-2-18). It is believed that Cedar Waxwing migrations likely consist of annual migrants, but fluctuate with peak years following a fall or winter incursion.

Black-capped Chickadee – 234 birds total. Most were moving northeast from the south end of the Pease Tradeport in Portsmouth. The peak total was on April 10 when 120 birds crossed Grafton Road in groups as large as 13. There are very few significant May migrations documented, so I was surprised to see clearly migrating chickadees as late as June 1 when two birds gathered at Frost Point at Odiorne and together crossed the water north into New Castle. Unfortunately, most of our observations didn’t start until late morning in Portsmouth and we suspect a lot more could have been counted. Chickadees are very wary about



Blue Jays migrating at Frost Point in Rye on 6-1-21 by Steve Mirick.

crossing open areas and migrate cautiously from tree to tree. The Pease spot was good for watching them stage in nearby shrubs before making the “big crossing” over Grafton Road. Like the Blue Jays, they frequently double-back before finally crossing.

Although thought of as a “resident” species, chickadee movements have been reported over the years. Banding data from Canada indicates that 90% of recaptured birds between 1921 and 1995 hadn’t moved at all. However, long distance movements (best termed “irruptions” rather than true migrations) do occur when young birds disperse southward, possibly after big reproductive years. These irruptions occur every two years or so (Foote, et al. 2020). The fall of 2020 was believed to be a big year for southbound chickadees which may partly explain the northbound movement we observed this spring.



Migrating Eastern Kingbird by Steve Mirick.

Eastern Kingbird – 123 birds total. Although Eastern Kingbirds appear to be strictly diurnal migrants, their movements are rarely recorded in New Hampshire. They are commonly reported in small numbers moving northward along the coast during mid-May, often single birds or pairs of birds on mornings with a good migration. But in 2021, there was an exceptional day that set a new record for New Hampshire. On the morning of May 14, 74 birds were counted migrating north along Rt. 1A in Seabrook with a constant flow of kingbirds heading up Rt. 1A ranging in size from single birds to flocks as large as 5, 6, 7, and even 9! The previous high daily count of Eastern Kingbirds for the State was 57 (not migrating) from a field in Concord on 8-19-07 (Keith & Fox 2013). My previous high count for migrating kingbirds was 15 on 5-18-08. Eastern Kingbirds are long distance migrants that regularly arrive in New Hampshire in early May. Their migration can last into early June and on June 1, three high flying migrants were observed together at Odiorne.

Bobolink – 252 birds total. All of the migrants were counted in two days on May 14 and May 16. Like kingbirds, Bobolinks are often reported in small numbers along the coast moving north in mid-May. This year, however, there was a big migration of Bobolinks which coincided with the Eastern Kingbirds migrating in Seabrook on May 14. A total of 218 were counted that morning in flocks of up to 40 in size. This is my highest spring count by far and most of the migration happened early in the morning between 7:00 and 8:00 am. Historically, large counts of 100 or more are sometimes reported during the spring or fall; however, the record high count for New Hampshire appears to be of 300 Bobolinks counted by Bob Quinn migrating north along the coast on 5-18-86.

Other Migrants of Note – Many other species were counted migrating north along the coast during the spring of 2021, mostly in average or below average numbers. One species of note observed moving north was Tufted Titmouse. Not normally considered a migratory species, 10 birds were counted moving north with Black-capped Chickadees in Portsmouth. Other birds of note seen moving north included five Caspian Terns (three on 5-29 and two more on 6-1) and four Red Crossbills in Seabrook on May 9. Another big migration involved 115 Lesser Yellowlegs on May 16 with flock sizes as large as 21, 14, 22, 26, and 12. Lesser Yellowlegs are generally not recorded in high numbers in spring and this is an exceptional total that represents a record high count for New Hampshire in the Spring.



Tufted Titmouse migrating 3-27-21 by Steve Mirick.

References

- Foote, J., D. Mennill, L. Ratcliffe, and S. Smith. 2020. Black-capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*), version 1.0. In *Birds of the World* (A. Poole, Ed.). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.bkccchi.01>
- Keith, A. and R. Fox. 2013. *The Birds of New Hampshire*. The Nuttall Ornithological Club, Cambridge, MA.

What to Watch for in Spring

Spring is migration time and different birds arrive at different times. Huge concentrations can sometimes occur, but it's often hard to know where or when. Here are a few events that often highlight the spring season and when to watch for them. See also Steve Mirick's migration article in this issue.

March

- Waterfowl migration is in full swing. Every week can bring different species. Watch for fallouts on open water in rainy weather, especially on large inland lakes. Flooded corn fields can also be quite good. Major river valleys and the coastal plain are the best areas. In warm springs with little ice or snow, the migration can pass through quite quickly and you can miss it.
- American Woodcocks start displaying as soon as the ground is open (or even before). Look for them at the edge of open fields, especially adjacent to wet meadows or brushy swamps.
- Black-capped Chickadees start to sing in late February or early March. Their "fee-bee" song can be mistaken for Eastern Phoebe which don't return until early to mid-April.
- Red-shouldered Hawks return and can be mistaken for Broad-winged Hawks which don't come back until mid-April.

April

- Winter visitors like American Tree Sparrows and redpolls or siskins are usually gone by April. Chipping Sparrows, the tree sparrow look-alike, arrive around mid-April.
- Watch for Broad-winged Hawks in the third week of April, especially on a warm, south wind. You can follow their progress north in eBird to know when they are getting close.
- The earliest warblers arrive mid-month: Pine, Palm, and Yellow-rumped, followed quickly by Louisiana Waterthrush. The first warblers of the main May wave often appear at the very end of the month, including Black-and-white, Northern Parula, and Black-throated Green Warblers.
- Inclement weather in late April can bring fallouts of migrating Horned and Red-necked Grebes as well as winter sea ducks such as Red-breasted Mergansers and Long-tailed Ducks. Look for them on large lakes such as Newfound, Spofford, or Lake Winnepesaukee.

- Tree Swallows are the first swallows to return in early April (and often late March), followed by Northern Rough-wingeds. Look for huge flocks over waterbodies if there's a cold spell or rainy weather. The Merrimack River, waste treatment plants, and even local ponds can provide quite a concentration.

May

- The main push of warblers happens in May and it can be spectacular. Watch for south winds that can bring in a flood of birds. A few of the northernmost species won't peak until later in the month: Blackpoll, Wilson's, and Tennessee.
- Our eagerly-awaited Ruby-throated Hummingbirds start showing up reliably in the first week of May.
- The colorful Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, and Baltimore Orioles arrive around May 5-10 and often come visit feeders when they first arrive, but then disappear as the weather warms.
- Although some shorebirds arrive by late April, their peak migration isn't until mid-May. Numbers in spring generally pale in comparison to fall, but sometimes you get lucky. Most of the action is on the immediate coast, but as with other waterbirds there are sometimes significant inland fallouts associated with rainy weather.
- Nighthawks return to nest sites around May 20-25 but migrants heading farther north can continue to mid-June.
- Of the small *Empidonax* flycatchers, Least are the first to arrive in early May but Alder, Willow and Yellow-bellied won't arrive until mid to end of May.
- Blue Jays are daytime migrants in the last two weeks of May.



Snow Geese by Jim Sparrell, 3-6-21, Greenland, NH.

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 *NH Bird Records*.

☐ NHA 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 *NH Bird Records* at the member price.

☐ Family/\$59 ☐ Individual/\$45 ☐ Senior/\$29

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

 **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 February 2022

Published by NH Audubon's Conservation Department



Printed on Recycled Paper