

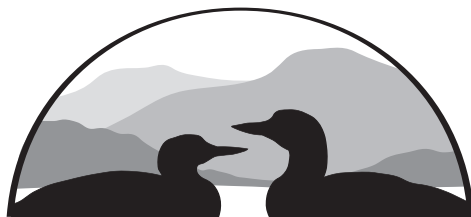
# **New Hampshire Bird Records**



**Winter 2010-11**

**Vol. 29, No. 4**

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## **Volume 29, Number 4**

### **Winter 2010-11**

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*Cover Photos: Townsend's Solitaire by Jason Lambert, 02/20/11, Hill Library, Strafford, NH.*

*New Hampshire Bird Records is published quarterly by New Hampshire Audubon's Conservation Department. Bird sightings are submitted to NH eBird ([www.ebird.org/nh](http://www.ebird.org/nh)) by many different observers. Records are selected for publication and not all species reported will appear in the issue. The published sightings typically represent the highlights of the season. All records are subject to review by the NH Rare Birds Committee and publication of reports here does not imply future acceptance by the Committee. Please contact the Managing Editor if you would like to report your sightings but are unable to use NH eBird.*

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# IN HONOR OF *Alice Cormier*

This issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*, with its color cover, is dedicated to Alice Cormier. New Hampshire Audubon is grateful for her many contributions to the organization and for her legacy gift. This sponsorship also recognizes and remembers the birders we have recently lost who made many contributions to our knowledge of birds in the state and supported their conservation (see page 2).



*Alice Cormier with her husband, Paul.*

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by Stephen R. Mirick and Rebecca Suomala

**N**H eBird has a system that automatically “flags” unusual reports for independent review. You will know if a sighting is unusual and has been flagged because you’ll be asked to confirm it after you’ve entered it. You will also notice that unexpected species do not appear on the list of species that you first see at Step 3 – you have to click “show rarities” to have unusual species appear.

If you enter a rare species, or if you enter an unusually high count of a more common species, the report will be “flagged” for review. Sightings are flagged based on “filters” which are established by month and by location in the state. When you enter a flagged sighting, you will be asked to confirm the report, and a box will appear below the species name which says “Comments.” It is important that you enter information here to support your report.

The *New Hampshire Bird Records* Season Editors review all of the flagged reports. They evaluate the records and determine whether more information is needed. Species Comments are essential for reviewers and are helpful even for other eBird users. Every flagged sighting should have at least something in the species comments field. It doesn’t always have to be a lot, but even a small amount of detail may mean the reviewer doesn’t need to ask you for more information. Examples of simple but helpful comments include:

- Photographs available.
- Bird well seen from 50 feet for several minutes. Field marks noted (preferably followed by a list of the significant markings seen).
- Coming to feeder with House Sparrows.
- Same Lark Sparrow as discovered by C. Sheridan on 11/13.
- Eurasian Wigeon continues on Great Bay with scaup flock.
- Olive green with gray head and eye line. Small bill. Yellowish wash to undertail coverts.
- Full documentation report has been written up/submitted (to *New Hampshire Bird Records*).
- Careful count of migrating birds over 4 hours.
- Flock sizes of 23, 54, and 18
- In large single flock mixed in with starlings
- Careful count of birds roosting in Hampton Beach State Park
- Complete count of 50-acre farm.

The Species Comments is also a great place to record information on plumage or nesting activity – even for common species. The new version of eBird will also have a place to record breeding codes. This kind of information can be valuable, especially for confirmation of breeding, studies on timing of nesting, or other behavioral information.

For some records you may still be asked to fill out a documentation form – especially if it is a species on the NH Rare Birds Committee mandatory review list

(available on the *New Hampshire Bird Records* web site, [www.nhbirdrecords.org](http://www.nhbirdrecords.org)). If so, you will receive an e-mail with a link to the New Hampshire documentation form. This helps document unusual reports for future generations and maintains quality control of the data base. Writing documentation is an important part of every birder's contribution to our knowledge of birds in the state. Even a rarity that 20 people saw still needs documentation from at least one person for the historic record. So don't consider it a personal affront to your birding knowledge, look at it as a valuable contribution that will last beyond your life time.

## Answer to the Photo Quiz

by David B. Donsker

**T**his issue's Photo Quiz pairs images of two raptors. At first glance, these birds seem very different from each other. The bird on the left is generally light colored. Particularly pale are its underwings, lower breast and head. The only large regions of black involve the belly and the rectangular carpal patch at the bend of the wing or wrist. In contrast, the bird on the right is generally black. Only the flight feathers of the underwing and the feathers at the base of the tail are pale.

On close examination, however, the birds share many traits in common. Both appear to be fairly large raptors with proportionally long, narrow wings and relatively long tails. If you discount the fact that the underwing coverts of the pale bird are pale and those of the dark bird are black, the pattern of the underwings of both birds is identical. Both have large dark carpal patches. Both have pale flight feathers with contrastingly dark tips on both the primary and secondary wing feathers. Although it is harder to see the undertail in the pale bird, both raptors have a two-toned tail characterized by a broad, black subterminal tail band and a pale base.

In fact, both birds belong to the same species. Both are Rough-legged Hawks (*Buteo lagopus*), but each represents a different color morph of this species. The dark morph, often less accurately referred to as "dark phase," represents a form of melanism (increased melanin pigment in the feathers) that expresses itself in some individuals in the population of some species of birds. Although melanism is usually rare in birds, it is particularly common in hawks in the genus *Buteo*. Most species of *Buteo* occur as both light and dark morphs, but some species are more likely to display this phenomenon. In the East, only Rough-legged Hawk is frequently found in both forms. Dark morphs of other buteos, however, are more common elsewhere in the country. Dark forms of Red-tailed Hawk predominate in many western subspecies including the very distinctive Harlan's Hawk. Dark morphs of the western Swainson's Hawk are not uncommon. In southern Florida, dark morph Short-tailed Hawks are to be expected, even though light morph birds are more commonly encountered in the Neotropics. Dark morph Broad-winged Hawks are very rare but can be found in populations that breed in western and central Canada. The western Ferruginous Hawk also exhibits a rare dark morph.

## Abbreviations Used

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

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