



2020 PROJECT NIGHTHAWK

COVID-19 Update

The pandemic limited our ability to train new volunteers and conduct field work in 2020 and may do the same in 2021. The top priority is to be sure everyone is safe and healthy. Fortunately local field work can often be done safely so I'm hopeful we can continue at least some monitoring of active sites. A special thank you to Ellen Nunes who has continued to do Project Nighthawk work from home, even when I've had limited availability to provide help or direction. It is thanks to her that this newsletter is in your hands.

2020 Overview

Common Nighthawks had a good nesting season in 2020, perhaps because of the warm summer and lack of storms. Numbers held steady or even increased in some areas. There were ten confirmed nest sites in the state – a fantastic number – with fledged chicks at four sites and failure at two (reasons unknown). Special thanks to everyone who helped watch in 2020.

— Rebecca Suomala, Project Nighthawk Coordinator

The Concord area had five confirmed nesting locations, and one possible nest at EJP.

Steeplegate Mall had confirmed nesting (birds landing on the roof) at both BonTon and Sears. The two males were very active peenting and booming, often until 11:00 pm, much later than usual. Why? We have no idea!

The Clough Mill Road gravel pit had a nest with two chicks, but it may have failed around

fledging.

Concord Sand & Gravel had a male and female and an inter-loper. Nesting was confirmed by male quacking and defensive behavior.

Phoenix Precast had a female going to and from the roof and a male displaying but activity ceased abruptly, indicating nest failure.

CONCORD

Concord Results

- ◆ 1 watch held
 - 6-8 males
 - 4-6 females
 - 2 chicks

Nesting Sites

- ◆ Steeplegate Mall - BonTon end and Sears end
- ◆ Clough Mill Rd.
- ◆ Concord Sand and Gravel
- ◆ Phoenix Precast

New Project Nighthawk videos on NH Audubon's YouTube channel:

Female distraction display: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xgmGz6nDEw>

Sound of male displaying: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1On-CRxLNc>



Female distraction display (far left) and two chicks at Clough Mill Road. Photos by Rebecca Suomala.

KEENE

Brett Amy Thelen (Harris Center for Conservation Education) and a crew of nighthawk watchers conducted a coordinated watch on June 16 at five different locations.

Nighthawk activity observed at Rhodes Hall led to the discovery of a nest with one chick. Brett observed the chick (approx. four days old) from an office window on June 25. The chick stayed on site until it was 37 days old, by which time it was flying well. That's the longest Project Nighthawk has

recorded a chick staying at the nest site.

Congratulations to the Keene volunteers for their monitoring.



Keene Results

◆ 1 watch held

◆ Total:

1 Male

1 Female

1 Chick

Active Sites

◆ Rhodes Hall

July 7, 2020 - the female with the chick on the roof of Rhodes Hall.
Photo by Brett Amy Thelen

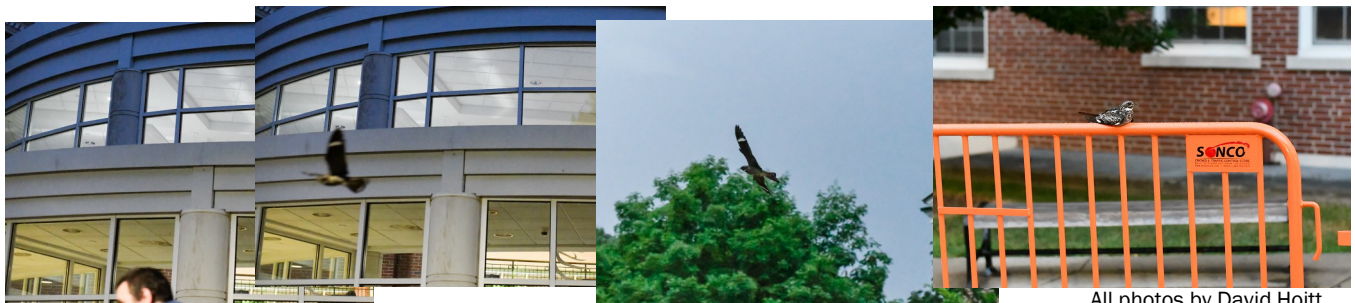
“Keene” Observations at Rhodes Hall, Keene State College by David Hoitt

On June 29, 2020, the male landed on the roof, then the chick went over to the male. I included an image of the male, chick, and female. Also, an image of the chick flapping wings with the female behind.



I went to KSC last night on June 30 to try out some different camera settings, and was very surprised to watch a nighthawk (female?) dive at a bicyclist right in front of me!!!! It actually happened twice: first, as the bicyclist rode past Rhodes Hall to go to Elliot, then again when the cyclist returned. The first time the nighthawk flew right past the cyclist almost at his side. The second time the nighthawk dove down just in front of the cyclist's head! (I'm wondering if some of those close fly-bys we previously experienced might have been territorial behaviors, and not just feeding on insects.)

Another surprise was that the male flew to the construction barrier and stayed on the rail for a while. I only had a wide angle lens on the camera, so I slowly walked toward the barrier, rested the camera on the opposite rail, and took some photos. I then slowly walked back away from the barrier. The male didn't seem to be bothered at all. He stayed another 30 sec. or so, then flew up near the roof.



All photos by David Hoitt

OSSIPEE PINE BARRENS

The pine barrens are one of the only known natural nesting sites for nighthawks in the state of New Hampshire. On the June 21 coordinated watch, and a mini-watch on July 18, there were birds in the usual places.

Red Baron Gate was the hotspot of activity thanks to management by The Nature Conservancy that improved nighthawk habitat. We observed five males and one female, with the female quacking and landing, confirming a nest site.

The Thicket in Freedom also had a nest, with the female coming up from the ground and the male landing multiple times. One male displayed at Thicket NE but interloped on Thicket a lot.

The Depot Road clearcut in Tam-

worth had a confirmed nest with one or two fledged chicks.

The site behind #767 Depot Road, had a probable nest with two males and a probable female coming into the area of last year's nest.

At the Depot Road log landing, two males were seen and heard peenting and booming, one likely from #767 Depot Road. There was no sign of nesting at this site.

The West Branch Pine Barrens, had two males, possibly a third, feeding, peenting and circling overhead, indicating a possible nest.

Ossipee area Results

- ◆ 1 watch held
 - 13 Males
 - 2 - 4 Females

Nest Sites

- ◆ Red Baron Gate
- ◆ The Thicket, Freedom
- ◆ Depot Rd. clearcut
- ◆ #767 Depot Rd.
- ◆ West Branch Pine Barrens

OTHER LOCATIONS

GRANTHAM, NH

There were no coordinated watches this year in Grantham. There were a few sightings: One bird was seen flying towards Grantham Mt. from Walker Rd. (by R. Hocker); 1-2 peenting males "pretty much every night" were seen from a Splitrock Rd. yard (by R. Kaszeta); and there were regular flyovers, including three birds at once, at Dunbar Hill Rd. (by S. Brown).

BLACK CAP MOUNTAIN, CONWAY, NH

On June 10 one male nighthawk was observed peenting and booming in the same area as last year's nest.

TIN MT. WHITE LOT, CONWAY, NH

Two males were seen but there was no sign of nesting behavior.

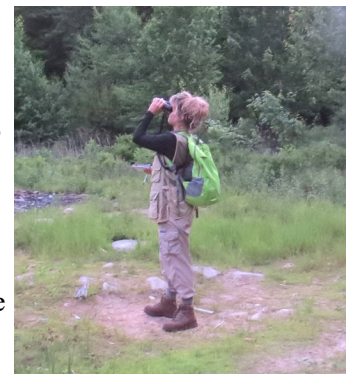
LEMPSTER

A nest was confirmed with two fledged chicks.

Thank you Jane!

Jane Kalias has been a volunteer for Project Nighthawk since its inception in 2007. She began as the office assistant and also helped install nest patches on rooftops. She quickly became an experienced field observer which she continued doing after retiring as the office assistant (to take a job at NH Audubon!). Jane has been a key field volunteer in the Concord area as well as at the Ossipee pine barrens. In 2020 Jane retired from her NH Audubon job and moved to Vermont. I am so grateful for her help and support over the years. She has often encouraged me, been an inspiration to investigate new things, and been a constant source of new ideas. We will miss her help here in Concord but I think the Keene folks may find they have a terrific new observer. Thank you, Jane, for all you have contributed to Project Nighthawk.

-Becky Suomala, Project Nighthawk Coordinator



Jane Kalias at Broken Ground, June 17, 2016.

Photo by Rebecca Suomala

2020 VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to the dedicated volunteers who logged over 290 hours for Project Nighthawk and traveled over 1,678 miles to make this project possible. Volunteers help in Concord, Conway, Keene, and Ossipee or may follow up on sightings elsewhere in the state.

Judy Bell
Chris Brehme
Zeke Cornell
Rich Grumbine
Lynne Hart
Dick Hocker
David Hoitt
Dave Howe

Kathy Huston
Kyle Huston
Arian Jones
Karrie Kalach
Jane Kolias
Teddy Kraly
Steven Lamonde
Susan Lee
M. Moran

Sue Moran
Charlie Nims
Ellen Nunes
Bill Parkinson
Stephanie Parkinson
Bob Quinn
Robert Reynolds
Cooper Sampson

Karen Seaver
Barbara Skuly
Kim Snyder
Mark Suomala
Kristine Wentzell
Sage Wentzell
Terri Wentzell

NIGHTHAWK MIGRATION

Zeke Cornell continued to lead the volunteer Nighthawk Migration Watch in Concord, NH in the fall of 2020. The watch began on August 17 and tallied a total of 3,903 nighthawks through September 13. That is nearly identical to the 2019 count of 3,930 but far short of the record 6,794 in 2016.

The winds early in the season were not conducive to high counts with many days of low numbers and rain on one of the traditional peak dates (Aug. 24). The log jam broke on August 31 with 2,202 nighthawks, the third highest daily count for this watch site. The second highest count for the 2020 migration was 381 on the late date of September 6.



A rainbow after one of the many rain showers during the beginning of the Concord Nighthawk Migration Watch.

Photo by Rebecca Suomala



Nighthawks fill the sky (no, that's not dust on the camera lens!) on August 31, 2020.

Photo by Rebecca Suomala

2020 DONORS

Leslie Casey
Julie Coffey
Roberta Collins
Larry Denoncourt
Anne Donaghy
Richard Grumbine
Jane Kolias
Mary Malan
Sonjia McNear
Charlie Nims

Eric Orff
Kathleen Palfy
Stephanie & Bill Parkinson
Jane Rice
Marsha Richelli
Sigrid Scholz
Susan M. Sielke
Roy Van Vleck
CherylAnne Williams

Meta Alice Keith Bratten Foundation
in honor of Tracy Holmes
Ware River Nature Club



We gratefully acknowledge the many hosts who have installed nest patches on their roof tops and the many others who have helped support Project Nighthawk with their donations over the past years.