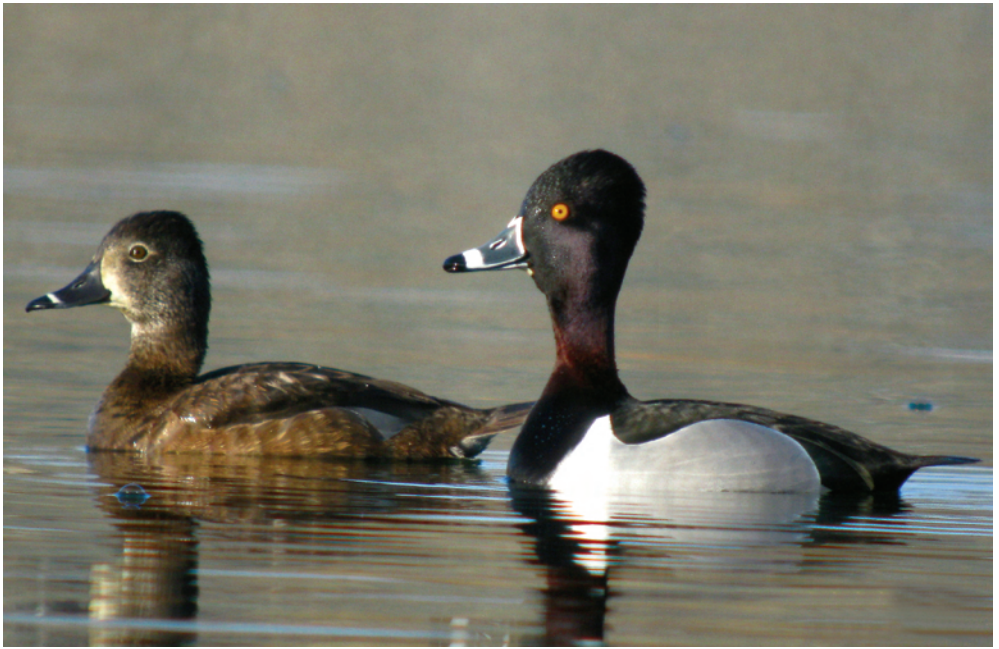
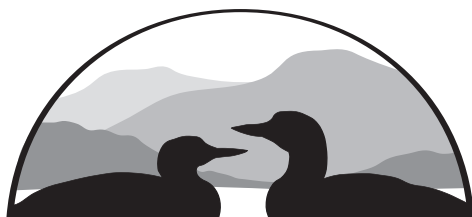


New Hampshire Bird Records



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Cover Photo: *Ring-necked Ducks at the Exeter wastewater treatment plant by Leonard Medlock. We chose this species for the front cover in honor of Tudor Richard for whom it was a favorite (see page 50).*

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IN MEMORY OF
Tudor Richards
FEBRUARY 16, 1915 – MARCH 6, 2009

New Hampshire Audubon is proud to honor Tudor Richards by sponsoring all four of the 2009 *New Hampshire Bird Records* issues in his memory. Tudor was a long-time president of New Hampshire Audubon and a true giant in the New Hampshire birding and conservation communities. Tudor was an avid birder who contributed greatly to our knowledge of New Hampshire's birds in many ways. It seems most appropriate to recognize his contributions with these memorial issues, beginning with Spring 2009. As part of the series, we will be including several items and articles by Bob Quinn that highlight some of Tudor's contributions (see page 48). We are grateful that Tudor was a part of the birding community for so long and we will miss him.

Thank you to the many generous donors who made contributions in memory of Tudor Richards.

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Tudor Richards on his last visit to Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge for the dedication of the Tudor Richards Platform, November 2006. Photo by David Govatski.

In This Issue

In Memory of Tudor Richards 1

From the Editor – Announcing NH eBird 3

2009 Goodhue-Elkins Award 4

Photo Quiz 6

Spring Season: March 1 through May 31 2009 7

by Pam Hunt

New Hampshire eBird and *New Hampshire Bird Records* 45

Tudor Richards – The Legacy of a Remarkable Birder 48

by Robert A. Quinn

Spotlight on Merlin 52

by Iain MacLeod

Birding Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge 58

by Phil Brown

Photo Gallery – A Rare Visitor: Great Gray Owl in Durham 64

by Marshall J. Iliff and Rebecca Suomala

Answer to the Photo Quiz 66

by David B. Donsker

Thanks to everyone who has renewed their subscription and welcome to new subscribers. We very much appreciate those who also made an additional contribution. Your support is critical to *New Hampshire Bird Records*.



Kumlien’s Iceland Gull by
Scott A. Young, 4/21/09,
Rochester wastewater treatment plant, NH.

Tudor Richards – The Legacy of a Remarkable Birder

by Robert A. Quinn



*Tudor Richards and David Govatski at Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge, November 2006.
Photo by Robert A. Quinn.*

Tudor Richards was an incredible pioneer in birding New Hampshire during the late 1940s and throughout his life. Each of the *New Hampshire Bird Records (NHBR)* seasons in 2009 will be in tribute to him and will have an article about Tudor the birder. In these articles I will attempt to connect him and his birding exploits with the season, highlight some of his remarkable contributions to birding in the state, and highlight some of the changes we have seen since then. This first issue also includes a brief overview on Tudor's birding career in New Hampshire. Frequently I will reference a series of articles Tudor wrote in the *New Hampshire Audubon Quarterly (NHAQ)* titled "Inland Water Birds." They were published in four parts:

Part I: Volume 25 Number 2, Spring 1972

Part II: Volume 25 Number 3, Summer 1972

Part III: Volume 26 Number 1, Winter 1973

Part IV: Volume 27 Number 4, Fall 1974

Tudor was born the year after the last Passenger Pigeon died and his lifetime overlapped with some of the big birding names in the 1900s including Ludlow Griscom, Glover Allen, and Roger Tory Peterson. During the early 1950s, he became the first person to thoroughly study the bird life of the entire state, “from Pittsburg and Umbagog in the north to Mount Monadnock and the coast in the south”, as he once told me. This was part of his job surveying waterfowl for the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. He was the first birder to “discover” Lake Wantastiquet and Powwow Pond during those waterfowl surveys.

Tudor chronicled the status of birds in New Hampshire in a series of articles in the 1954 “New Hampshire Bird News” (as the NHAQ was then called). This was the first major published information on the birds of New Hampshire since Glover Allen’s *A List of the Birds of New Hampshire* from 1902.

He saw remarkable changes in the status of numerous species and he submitted records for over 60 years. He also made substantial contributions to several regional books on birds in New Hampshire (e.g., *Birds of the Squam Lakes Region* by Beverly S. Ridgely, 1977 and 1988 and *Monadnock Sightings: Birds of Dublin, New Hampshire 1909-1979* by Elliott and Kathleen Allison).

During the Spring 2009 season and in recent months there were several themes that fit in very nicely with Tudor’s birding interests. These included the migration of waterfowl stopping along the Connecticut River from Hinsdale to Walpole, the spring fall-out of inland shorebirds in Concord and along the Connecticut River, the study of waterbirds at Powwow Pond (see “Waterbird Surveys at Powwow Pond” by Pam Hunt in the *New Hampshire Bird Records* Fall 2008 issue, Vol. 27, No. 3), and the warbler totals from this and recent spring seasons. Tudor pioneered the study of all these areas and phenomena. He also was the first contemporary birder to go to the Cherry ponds at Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge and Lake Umbagog. In recent years, his focus on Turkey Pond in Concord resulted in the highest waterbird species list for any inland body of water in the state. Many of his records were summarized in the “Inland Water Bird” articles cited above.

Waterfowl in General

It is important to realize that Tudor was studying waterfowl for the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department because the birds were still in the recovery stages after the massive slaughter during the market hunting days of 100 years ago. This is pertinent to today’s records because in many ways we are birding during a golden age when numerous species of waterfowl are at all-time historical high populations (understanding that we do not have sufficient data from before the 1880s for adequate comparisons). Species that are much more common now include all the geese species, the rarer puddle ducks such as Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon, and Northern Pintail, plus some of our more interesting local breeders such as Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser. It was not that many years ago when Mallard and Snow Goose were exceedingly rare, Canada Goose were strictly migrants, and Ross’s Goose and Greater White-fronted Goose were almost unthinkable. The flip side is that the American Black Duck has declined significantly (probably due to competition with the introduced Mallard, a duck originally native to the western United States only) and other species seem to occur in low numbers such as Redhead and Canvasback. Space

does not allow a complete list of all the significant changes in the status of waterbirds but it is worth mentioning the increase of the Common Loon as another remarkable change since Tudor first started counting them.



Ring-necked Duck by Steve Mirick.

Ring-necked Duck

We highlighted the Ring-necked Duck on the cover because of the dramatic change in its status over the last 80 years and also because Tudor studied the species for his Masters Degree, and it was always a favorite of his. Quoting from his inland waterbird article (part I, Spring 1972 NHAQ), the Ring-necked Duck "...is now fairly common in migration, which it never used to be; in fact, it was, before 1920, of only accidental occurrence."

Now let's put that quote in perspective. In the spring of 1954, the statewide high count for Ring-necked Ducks listed in *New Hampshire Bird News*, the predecessor of the NHAQ, was 39 at Powwow Pond. The next highest tallies from 1954 were 30 and 14 and the Season Editor termed these "excellent numbers"! In the spring of 1961, the total number of all reports for the entire state was 100, with a maximum of 20 for one day. Compare that with the one-day counts of 350 at Powwow Pond and 250 at Lake Wantastiquet in 2009. We have come to expect big flocks of Ring-necked Ducks but it has only been in the last ten years that we have recorded flocks exceeding 100 (with a record high of 428 at Lake Wantastiquet in April 2003 by Denny Abbott). Many geese and other ducks have had a similar increase in their populations in recent decades. So, in the spring of 2009, we have tremendous records of migrating waterfowl inland, especially at Lake Wantastiquet and Powwow Pond, and we can partly thank Tudor Richards for getting us started birding at those areas.

Shorebirds

The migration of shorebirds (sandpipers and plovers) through inland New Hampshire in the spring is usually overlooked because, if the weather is good, the birds do not stop, and if there is rain, many birders stay at home. Once again Tudor led the way, especially when he lived in Cheshire County from 1958-1969 and determined that the county was "...perhaps the best region of all (inland New Hampshire) for migratory

waterbirds....” A sampling of his records from Cheshire County during just one spring include:

May 22, 1961-85 Least Sandpipers

May 26, 1961-15 Semipalmated Plovers

May 31, 1961-16 Black-bellied Plovers

June 2, 1961-1 Sanderling

June 10, 1961-2 Ruddy Turnstones and 32 Semipalmated Sandpipers

Most, if not all, of these records were the first for that species at an inland location or a record high for the spring season (inland). It is data like these, along with his motivation example, that inspired me to go out on cold and rainy May 27, 2009, specifically to look for grounded waterbirds. I found 33 Black-bellied Plovers in Concord that day (29 in one flock at West Portsmouth Street). This is apparently the second highest inland tally ever and close to the 40 seen in the Keene area during the unprecedented shorebird fallout of May 2004. A conversation about the plovers with Rob Woodward that night motivated him to check the Horseshoe Pond fields in Concord the next morning, which yielded a flock of 20 Semipalmated Plovers (another near record inland high for spring). His sighting of the plovers then prompted me to head back to Concord that same day (May 30, 2009) where I found an adult female Red-necked Phalarope, in breeding plumage, with the plovers plus a flock of about 25 Least Sandpipers. And I suspect that Eric Masterson had some of the same thoughts (bad weather, waterbirds, Tudor) when he found a remarkable variety and high numbers of shorebirds, and three species of terns (probably unprecedented inland in one 24 hour period!) in Cheshire County during the same time period and inclement weather conditions.

Warblers

There are fewer data from Tudor concerning warblers but one of his better moments with landbirds was a May morning in Sandwich when he recorded 22 species of warblers “before breakfast”. I don’t know what time he stopped for breakfast but you get the idea. To put that in perspective, on a recent spring morning in Sandwich (2007), Tony Vazzano had a very good morning when he recorded 18 species of warblers in one flock and 20 species for the morning. 22 species is a similar total to the number of warblers found on statewide Big Days in recent years! In the spring of 2009, Steve Mirick tallied 26 species of warblers for the entire season and that included the now regularly occurring Cerulean Warbler and the unusual Hooded Warbler found by Patience Chamberlin.

Fun with Rare Birds

Rare birds may not be very significant from a biological point of view, but they are fun. The following examples are amazing records which have not been the start of a trend, but just fluke happenings. They point out the lesson that it is always worth looking! The first example is a Tundra Swan that Tudor found at Turkey Pond in Concord on March 27, 1991. Not only was this a rare bird, and a first for Concord, but it clearly shows that if you go out and look you might find something special. In an average year, there is little or no open water on Turkey Pond in late March so local birders rarely check it out. That was also true in 1991 except for a thin ring of open water all the way around the edge of the pond which prompted Tudor to go and look, and to find

the swan! Other examples include some of his rarest finds at Turkey Pond. During the first two weeks of May you usually do not expect much in the way of inland water-birds. After the rush of early spring waterfowl, there usually is a slow period and sometimes the rest of the season passes quietly. However, on May 9, 1977, Tudor went again to Turkey Pond and found a young male King Eider! Even more amazing than the eider or any other inland record, occurred when Tudor checked Turkey Pond on a nice day, May 22, 1972. Lo and behold there was a small flock of medium-sized gulls. Not the expected Ring-billed Gulls (still uncommon inland back then) but an almost unbelievable sixteen **Black-legged Kittiwakes**! In addition, there was the bonus of a single Forster's Tern, both species being the first inland records ever for New Hampshire!

The Lessons for us Today

New Hampshire birders owe a debt to those outstanding individuals who came before us and Tudor Richards is at the top of that list. Horace Wright (*The Birds of the Jefferson Region in the White Mountains*. 1911) and William Brewster (*Birds of Lake Umbagog region of Maine*. 1938) inspired Tudor, who in turn has inspired many people to make worthwhile contributions to the knowledge of New Hampshire birds. Now it is our turn to break new ground, discover new birding highlights, and bird with a purpose. How best to follow his lead? Get out as often as you can, imbue others with a sense of wonder and excitement about birds, submit your data, and above all else, have fun with birding!

August 2009

Bob Quinn enjoyed birding with, and learning from, Tudor Richards for over 30 years. Their travels were mostly in New Hampshire, especially the North Country, but also included Trinidad and parts of South America. Bob hopes to carry on Tudor's birding projects covering the changes in the bird life of the Lake Umbagog and Concord regions. Meanwhile he continues to run his birding tour and natural history business, Merlin Enterprises.

Spotlight on Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

by Iain MacLeod

Background

The Merlin (often referred to in the past as the Pigeon Hawk) is a small, stealthy falcon which breeds in northern portions of North America, from Alaska to Maine and throughout Canada. Three recognized races breed in North America. The "Boreal" race (formerly referred to as the "Taiga" race) breeds in eastern portions of Canada and northeastern United States and winters as far south as the Gulf states. The "Richardson's" (sometimes referred to as the "Prairie") race breeds in the northern Great Plains, and the "Black" race is found only in the rain forests of the Pacific Northwest. Six additional races breed in northern Palearctic regions of Europe and

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	St. Pk.	State Park
FT	Field Trip	SPNHF	Society for the Protection of NH Forests, Concord
L.	Lake	T&M	Thompson & Meserves (Purchase)
LPC	Loon Preservation Committee	TNC	The Nature Conservancy
NA	Natural Area	WMA	Wildlife Management Area
NHA	New Hampshire Audubon	WMNF	White Mountain National Forest
NHBR	New Hampshire Bird Records	WS	NHA Wildlife Sanctuary
NHRBC	NH Rare Birds Committee	~	approximately
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge		
PO	Post Office		

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