

# New Hampshire Bird Records





NEW HAMPSHIRE BIRD RECORDS  
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IN MEMORY OF

## Chandler S. Robbins

The 2018 issues of *New Hampshire Bird Records* are sponsored by George C. Robbins in memory and honor of his father, Chan Robbins. Each issue has an article by George about his father, highlighting his father's phenomenal accomplishments in the field of ornithology and connections to New Hampshire.



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Cover Photos: A first state record Ross’s Gull by Susan Wisley, 12-1-18, NH offshore waters (top right). A first winter record of Ross’s Goose by Kyle Wilmarth, 12-20-18, Rochester, NH (top left). American White Pelican by Kyle Wilmarth, 12-15-18, New Castle, NH (bottom).

*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](http://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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and Keene. The Vermont side of the river offers equally exciting birding.

As one moves south in Westmoreland past the Chickering Farm, there is less riverside farmland to be found, and the birding along the New Hampshire side of the river seemingly deadens until one reaches the Hinsdale Setbacks. These more southerly riverside areas suffer from a lack of birder attention. I like to believe that I live in an exceptionally good birding area, but it also has benefitted greatly from regular coverage by me and my parents as well as many other birders. If I had grown up anywhere else in New Hampshire, I might have enjoyed birding my local patches just as much. Frequent coverage and constant vigilance may explain my birding success in this area as much as anything else. Then again, it helps to have a major river, long views out over a migratory flyway, and an incursion of Black Vultures. All these birding benefits come together in the Connecticut River Valley habitat of Westmoreland and Walpole, making this beautiful area well worth visiting and a great place to have hatched and fledged as a birder.

*Adam Burnett is a first-year Ph.D. student in Earth System Science at Stanford University, where he studies climate dynamics. He grew up in Westmoreland, NH and attended Dartmouth College, so he has been fortunate to be able to bird the Connecticut River Valley for most of his life.*

## Technology Series

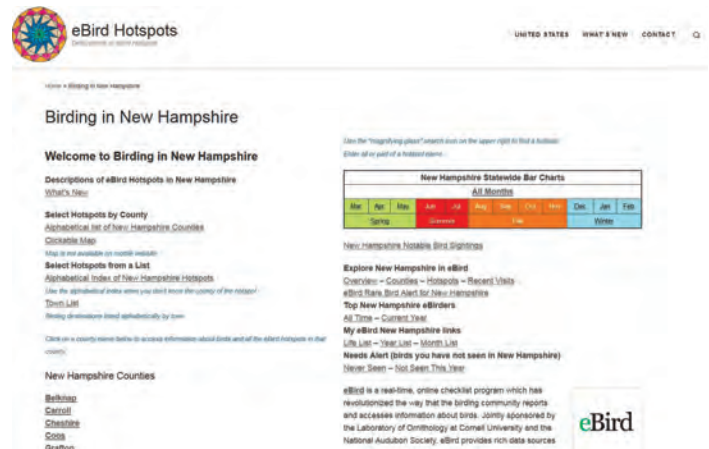
### New Birding in New Hampshire Website

by Ken Ostermiller

*A big thank you to Ken Ostermiller for creating a new website on birding spots in New Hampshire. Ken originally got involved with the New Hampshire wiki page, created by Greg Tillman, when wikispace ceased to be free. Ken migrated the New Hampshire wiki page to the eBird hot spot wiki. When Wikispaces went out of business in 2018, Ken made an archive of all the data that had been entered into the eBird Hotspot wiki and spent a considerable amount of time transferring it to a WordPress website. According to Ken, quite a few New Hampshire birders have submitted information and photos about birding sites and he sees this as truly a community project. He hopes to eventually get all of the New England states entered because "the region is compact enough that birders cross state lines as freely as the birds do." New Hampshire birders are grateful to Ken for all his hard work. — Ed.*

Would you like to know about good locations in New Hampshire to go birdwatching? There is a website for that: [ebirdhotspots.com/birding-in-new-hampshire/](http://ebirdhotspots.com/birding-in-new-hampshire/).

"Birding in New Hampshire" has descriptions and maps of eBird Hotspots in New Hampshire. In eBird, Hotspots are shared locations where birders may report their bird sightings from a particular location. Hotspots allow all sightings from one location to be grouped together under a single spot (red pin in eBird). Everyone's sighting data can then be merged so that birders can see information about these birding locations and what birds are being seen there. (Note: sightings from a personal pin, even if it's placed at the Hotspot, are not incorporated into information about a Hotspot.)



The new Birding in New Hampshire website.

The website has been under development for several years with contributions from birders. It was recently moved to a WordPress host. The "home" page lists the top 20 birding locations in New Hampshire. These are the 20 sites with the most bird species reported on eBird.

There is a page for each New Hampshire county which lists all the Hotspots in the county and highlights the top 10 locations with over 100 species reported to eBird. There is an index of all the Hotspots in the state and a list of the Hotspots by town. At the bottom of the home page is a real-time list of all the rare bird sightings reported in the state during the past week. Each Hotspot has a page, with links to eBird data, maps, and information from websites and birders. Some pages also have photos of the habitat.

### How you can help

#### Write "Tips for birding . . ."

Most pages have descriptions from and links to official webpages about the location. Birders, especially those visiting the Hotspot for the first time, appreciate more specific information about how to bird the location. Where do you park? Is there a trail or pond that is especially good to visit? Is it helpful to carry a scope? Is this spot good in a particular season? Are there birds that are regularly seen here? Are there restrooms on the site? Are there handicap accessible facilities? There is a paragraph of "Tips for birding . . ." for locations where birders have provided helpful information about the place.



## Take Photos

It is extremely helpful to have photos which illustrate the habitat, parking lot, park sign, etc. or to give birders an idea of what to expect when they visit the park. Links to photos on the official website often break when the website is updated. Photos provided by birders are much preferred. In some cases, we have added a “photo tour” of the Hotspot when a birder can provide 4-5 photos with brief descriptions. Sometimes a photo of a bird you observed also shows the habitat at the location.

## Check your favorite locations

Check the links to your favorite local birding locations to see the information we have about it on the website. Report any broken links so they can be updated. If you can provide new information or add to what is there, it will be most appreciated by the birding community.

You can use the contact form (<http://ebird Hotspots.com/how-to-help/>) on the website to send information, corrections, or ask a question. If you have photos to add, please let us know (via the contact form) and we will work with you to add them.

*Ken Ostermiller volunteers with eBird, manages the eBird Hotspots in Ohio where he lives and maintains a website about Ohio birding locations. He has connections to New Hampshire and New England and often visits. His son lives in New Hampshire and his daughter works at the University of Vermont in Burlington.*

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## Volunteers and Research

### Why do I need to clean my feeders? House Finch Eye Disease

by Jon Woolf

Naturalists advise us to clean our bird feeders regularly, because they can be a source of disease, but is this really a serious danger? After all, most diseases can't jump species and most feeders attract a large variety of bird species. Also, cleaning a feeder, getting into all the nooks and crannies where old seed and debris can hide, is hard. So, is cleaning your feeders really that important?

A couple of years ago now, I came across vivid evidence that yes, it is. At the Massabesic Audubon Center one afternoon, I observed the two birds in the accompanying photos. One is a House Finch, the other an American Goldfinch. They're both very obviously suffering from the bacterial infection formally known as “mycoplasma conjunctivitis,” but commonly called “House Finch Eye Disease.” This disease is caused by a bacterium, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*. The bacteria infects

the respiratory tract and the sinuses and produces sinusitis, conjunctivitis, respiratory distress and swelling around the eyes. In extreme cases, the eye may be swollen completely shut, as with this unfortunate House Finch. The conjunctivitis was first observed in House Finches, hence the name, but it's also known to infect several related species: Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak and possibly others. While it looks like just a messy inconvenience, House Finch Eye Disease can be deadly: if it renders both eyes blind, then the bird can't see and can't survive.



*Photos of an American Goldfinch and a House Finch with mycoplasma conjunctivitis. The House Finch close up shows that the bird is certainly blind in this eye. Photos taken by Jon Woolf, 1-27-18 at the Massabesic Audubon Center, Auburn, NH.*



What does this have to do with bird feeders? Well, as a respiratory disease, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* is transmitted primarily by airborne droplets, but it can also be transmitted by indirect contact. For example, an infected bird rubs its itching head against a hard surface, leaving some debris including live bacteria. Then another bird comes along, rubs in the same place and

picks up the bacteria. It's extremely easy for this to happen at a bird feeder where large numbers of birds congregate, especially

a tube-type feeder where birds often touch the top or sides of a feeder porthole while grabbing a seed.

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology has been tracking House Finch Eye Disease since it first appeared in 1994, as part of their “Project Feederwatch.” They have an excellent, informative webpage on the topic, plus a way to report infected birds at: <https://feederwatch.org/learn/house-finch-eye-disease/>.

The page gives a list of recommendations on how to prevent the spread of the disease. At the top of the list is, yes, clean your feeders regularly and thoroughly, using a disinfecting solution such as diluted bleach, or soap and hot water. You can also:

- Take down your feeders for at least a few days to encourage sick birds to disperse.
- Rake underneath the feeders to remove old seed and bird droppings.
- Continue to clean your feeders every week or so.

If sick birds return, avoid using feeders with big ports that the birds can rub their heads against.

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## New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

### Spring 2016 through Winter 2016-17

*Hector Galbraith, Chair*

*Michael Resch, Secretary*

This report from the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) contains the decisions for records voted on by the Committee for Spring 2016, Summer 2016, Fall 2016, and Winter 2016-17. Additionally, the Committee reviewed and voted on several historical records that were not previously voted on or required further evaluation prior to making final decisions.

The NHRBC reviews unusual sightings in an effort to maintain accuracy and scientific integrity of rare bird records in New Hampshire. It is independent of *New Hampshire Bird Records (NHBR)* and NH Audubon. All sightings are evaluated based on details submitted by the observer(s). The Committee requires a vote with not more than one dissension for acceptance of a record except for potential first state records which require a unanimous vote.

A rejection is not necessarily an indication that the identification was incorrect, but that the information received was not sufficient to allow its acceptance as a state record. Adequate documentation is key to whether a report is accepted or not. For information on the Committee and its decision-making process, see the articles in the Summer 1996

and Winter 2005-06 issues of *NHBR*.

These four 2016 seasons included a remarkable five first New Hampshire state records that were accepted by the Committee:

- Tufted Duck – a long-awaited first state record appearing at Captain Pond in Salem, NH during the period of March 4-8, 2016.
- Redwing – seen March 13-16, 2016 in Hollis, NH in and around the Hollis High School fields.
- Mountain Bluebird – seen April 4-15, 2016 at the Pease International Tradeport south end, Portsmouth, NH.
- Eurasian Collared-Dove – seen on May 25, 2016 in East Kingston, NH.
- White Wagtail, *yarrellii* race – an amazing sighting starting on 11-2-16 at Rye Harbor State Park and then making its way south to Great Boars Head in Hampton, NH through 11-4-16. This is the first North American sighting of this race, also known as Pied Wagtail in Europe.

The sightings of the Tufted Duck, Redwing, Mountain Bluebird and Eurasian Collared-Dove were detailed in the Spring 2016 edition of *New Hampshire Bird Records*. The White Wagtail record was detailed in the Fall 2016 edition. With these additions as of February 2017, the official New Hampshire state list totals 414.

The NHRBC also revisited the list of species for which documentation and review are required. Based on an analysis of the frequency of past sightings, especially over the last 10 years, several species were removed from the state’s review list, including Cackling Goose, Red-headed Woodpecker, Varied Thrush and Hoary Redpoll. The complete review list can be found at: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/rare-bird-committee-species-list/>.

A reminder that the best way to ensure your sighting is accepted by the NHRBC is to prepare and submit adequate documentation of the sighting using the “New Hampshire Bird Sighting Documentation” form, available at: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/documentation-forms-for-rarities/>.

Even if you have a photo, a supplemental documentation form can be invaluable in gaining acceptance of the record, especially with poor quality photos. If you don’t have a photograph it doesn’t mean it won’t be accepted by the Committee.

The members of the Committee voting on the Spring, Summer and Fall 2016 records were: David Donsker, Kurk Dorsey, Iain MacLeod, Eric Masterson, Mike Resch and Hector Galbraith (Chair). Two additional members were added to the Committee for Winter 2016-17 and Historical Records, Jason Lambert and Jeanne-Marie Maher. Mike Resch served as the Committee Secretary.

# New Hampshire Bird Records Endowment Fund

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For more information, contact the Managing Editor (see inside front cover).

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*American White Pelican by Jason Lambert, 12-31-18, Odiorne Point SP, Rye, NH.*

## 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

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## Winter 2018-19 Highlights

### Photo Quiz



#### Can You Identify This Bird?

We are once again able to offer a color Photo Quiz, thanks to George Robbins' sponsorship of all four 2018 issues. See inside for the answer. Photo by Stephen R. Mirick.



*Tufted Duck by Jason Lambert, 1-19-19, Exeter WTP, NH.*



*Common Redpolls were present but not in the expected large numbers. See the article inside on the ups and downs of this winter visitor. Photo by Scott Heron, 2-21-19, Kingston, NH.*



*Pine Grosbeaks visited in good numbers this winter. NH Audubon monitors the ups and downs of our winter birds thanks to all the volunteers who take part in the annual Backyard Winter Bird Survey. Photo by Len Medlock, 1-21-19, New London, NH.*

*Orange-crowned Warbler  
by Steve Mirick, 1-12-19,  
Seabrook, NH.*



*Yellow-breasted  
Chat by Jason  
Lambert, 1-7-19,  
Odiorne Point SP,  
Rye, NH.*

