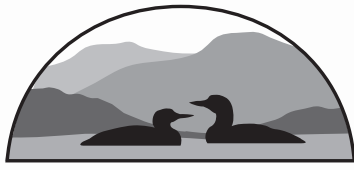


# New Hampshire Bird Records





**NH AUDUBON**  
Protecting our environment since 1914

**NEW HAMPSHIRE BIRD RECORDS**  
VOLUME 34, NUMBER 2  
SUMMER 2015

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*Cover Photos, A Least Tern pair nested in New Hampshire for the first time since 1960. Photographed by Len Medlock on eggs on 7/11/15 and feeding a new chick on 7/7/15 at Hampton Beach State Park.*

*New Hampshire Bird Records* is published quarterly by New Hampshire 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. 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.

*New Hampshire Bird Records* © NHA August, 2016

Published by New Hampshire Audubon's Conservation Department

IN CELEBRATION OF

# Michael J. Bartlett



*Mike Bartlett birding in Belize, taken by Bob Quinn in 2016.*

With this issue we celebrate Mike Bartlett's retirement as President of NH Audubon and honor his many contributions to NH Audubon and the conservation of birds and wildlife. Mike's leadership at NH Audubon was instrumental in the revitalization of the organization and the strengthening of its programs. Prior to NH Audubon, Mike was Supervisor of the New England Field Office at the US Fish & Wildlife Service where he led efforts to protect endangered species, restore habitat, and mitigate natural resource damage. We are grateful for all he accomplished for NH Audubon and for conservation during his long career.

## In This Issue

From the Editor .....	1
Photo Quiz .....	1
Summer Season: June 1 through July 31, 2015.....	2
<i>by Tony Vazzano</i>	
Field Notes.....	14
compiled by Rebecca Suomala	
Spotlight on Acadian Flycatcher ( <i>Empidonax vireescens</i> ) .....	16
<i>by Stephen R. Mirick</i>	
Backyard Birder – Cross-Species Feeding Among Birds .....	18
<i>by Brenda Sens</i>	
Birding While Kayaking – Hampton Harbor .....	19
<i>by Scott Heron</i>	
Field Trip Report.....	22
Birding in the Connecticut River's Upper Valley <i>by Blake Allison</i>	
Capital Area Chapter Walk in Concord, July 2015 <i>by Robert A. Quinn</i>	
Common Nighthawk 2015 Nesting Season.....	23
<i>by Rebecca Suomala</i>	
Have You Seen a Twigger? .....	24
<i>by Robert A. Quinn</i>	
Birding Notes from the 1930s .....	26
<i>by Sandy Turner</i>	
Cuckoo Mysteries – A Partial Explanation.....	28
<i>by Robert A. Quinn</i>	
Nest Finding in Concord.....	29
<i>by Rob Woodward</i>	
Old Bird Names – A Fun Quiz .....	31
<i>by Robert A. Quinn</i>	
Research – Identifying Hybrid Saltmarsh-Nelson's Sparrows – Appearances Aren't Everything ....	33
<i>by Jennifer Walsh &amp; Adrienne Kovach</i>	
Photo Gallery – Nesting Least Terns and Piping Plovers.....	36
Answer to the Old Bird Names Quiz.....	38
Answer to the Photo Quiz.....	39
<i>by David B. Donsker</i>	
Corrections .....	40

### Summer 2015

by Rebecca Suomala

#### **Thank You, Tony Vazzano!**

This is Tony's tenth and last issue as the Summer Editor of *New Hampshire Bird Records*. We are grateful for all his hard work as editor and we will miss him! He has been through the transformation from pre-eBird to post-eBird and seen the summer records increase from almost 4,500 with the old system to over 45,000 with eBird. What a challenge! We appreciate all that Tony has done during the past ten years.

Please welcome Kathryn Frieden as the *New Hampshire Bird Records* Publications Assistant. Kathryn will be helping me with all aspects of the publication. She already volunteers with *New Hampshire Bird Records* helping to resolve eBird database questions and corrections. We are delighted to have her in this expanded role helping to put the publication together and keep me organized!

Volunteers are the heart of *New Hampshire Bird Records*. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact me (see inside front cover).

## PHOTO QUIZ

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### Can You Identify This Bird?

Answer on page 39.

Photo by Wendy Chatel.



#### **Volunteer Needs – Join the Team!**

##### **Field Notes Editor Needed**

Select and gather all materials for the *New Hampshire Bird Records* Field Notes feature: select stories (includes reviewing the NHBirds e-mail list for material), contact authors or compile written material, collect photos and captions. Familiarity with birds and birding helpful.

##### **Season Editor — Winter**

The Season Editor for *New Hampshire Bird Records* reviews the eBird reports for their season, writes the summaries of the highlights and determines the reports to be published. The job requires experience birding in New Hampshire, good writing skills, familiarity with eBird and Excel, and the ability to meet deadlines. Subscriber to the NH Birds e-mail list important; active birder and reporter to eBird preferred.

## SUMMER SEASON

### June 1 through July 31, 2015

by Tony Vazzano



Similar to the previous year, the summer was relatively dry except for a couple of brief, wet spells, one in early June and the other the last few days of June and the first day of July. Temperatures were fairly typical with June being a little on the cool side and July slightly above normal. It is unlikely that weather was responsible for any widespread nesting problems.

New Hampshire's first known breeding American Wigeons were at Lake Umbagog, although breeding was not confirmed until just after the summer season. Equally exciting were nesting Least Terns in Hampton for the first time since 1960. Bald Eagles had a record year, fledging 43 young. Peregrine Falcons had a good year overall with numbers similar to the previous breeding season. **Mississippi Kites** returned to Newmarket where two nests were noted this year.



*Mississippi Kite by Nathan Purmort, 7/11/15, Newmarket, NH.*

While rarities were not numerous this summer, there were a few very unusual birds. A **Pacific Loon** was seen along the coast in June and the **White-faced Ibis** seen in July is the only summer record of this species for the state. **Sandhill Cranes** returned to Monroe where three birds were seen. An **American Avocet** was at the coast in July, a **Red-headed Woodpecker** was seen in June in Milan, and there were three reports of **Acadian Flycatcher** from the southern portion of the state. For the first time since we began using eBird as our database, the volume of summer season reports decreased slightly, by about 1,400, to nearly 46,000.

### Waterfowl through Grebes



*Ring-necked Duck female with one chick at the southernmost known breeding site in the state. Photo by Phil Brown, 6/25/15, Pudding Pond, North Conway, NH.*

A Whooper Swan reported in Hampton in July was undoubtedly a remnant from an escaped population. American Wigeons were seen at Lake Umbagog in June and the biologist at the wildlife refuge said that he had seen them there in two previous summers. In August, breeding was confirmed by the presence of young ones. While they breed in Maine and Quebec, this is the first known breeding record for New Hampshire. Ring-necked Ducks were noted in Conway last summer and this year two families were seen in the same location. This is now the southernmost breeding area in the state for them. They are occasionally seen farther south in summer but only as non-breeders. This summer, one was also seen in southern Grafton County. The 200 Black Scoters is one of the highest, and possibly the highest summer count ever recorded in the state since 1992; numbers have gradually been increasing in summer for the past several years. Numbers of White-winged Scoters and Surf Scoters lingering along the coast also increased from last summer.

Up to six Red-throated Loons lingered along the coast in early June. A **Pacific Loon**, in breeding plumage, was also seen along the coast in early June. A one year-old was seen the previous summer (2014). They are rare in fall but very rare in summer. The Loon Preservation Committee reports that there was a record number of nesting pairs of Common Loon and also a record number of chicks hatched. The 29 chicks on Lake Winnepesaukee is a significant increase (there were only seven in 2013) and indicate that the increase in intensive management is helping as two-thirds of the chicks were from nest sites with rafts or signs. A Horned Grebe was seen in Hampton in early July; they are very unusual in mid-summer.

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Brant</b>			
06/03	1	Hampton Harbor	S. Mirick
07/03	3	Rye Ledge	S. Mirick

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>American Wigeon</b>			
06/10	2	Magalloway R., Errol	R. Quinn, F. Nevers, W. Brust, L. Feryus

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Green-winged Teal</b>			
07/26	1	Meadow Pond, Hampton	S. Mirick

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Ring-necked Duck</b>			
06/04	1	Dead Diamond Rd., Second College Grant	D. Hof
06/10	8	Magalloway R., Errol	R. Quinn, F. Nevers, W. Brust, L. Feryus
06/11	1	Pondicherry NWR, Jefferson/Whitefield	M. Harvey
06/17	10	Umbagog NWR, Eames Rd., Errol	D. Hof
06/26	17	Pudding Pond, Conway	P. Brown
07/07	1	Grey Rocks CA, Hebron	A. Clarke

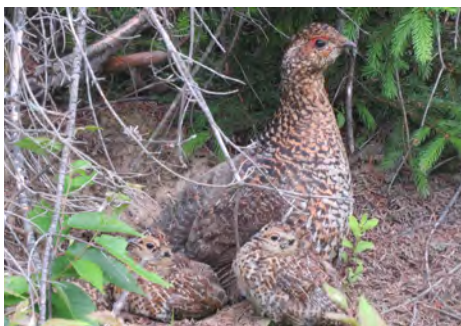
Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Surf Scoter</b>			
06/03	24	Little Boars Head, N. Hampton	S. Mirick
06/13	12	Little Boars Head, N. Hampton	S. Mirick
07/18	1	NH coast	S. Mirick

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>White-winged Scoter</b>			
06/06	48	NH coast	S. Mirick

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Black Scoter</b>			
06/02	200	Little Boars Head, N. Hampton	S. Mirick
06/06	103	Jeness/Sawyers Beach, Rye	S. Mirick
07/18	10	N. Hampton State Beach	S. Mirick

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Common Goldeneye</b>			
06/18	2	Metallak Rd., Pittsburg	E. Nielsen, S. Sweet
07/09	2	Umbagog NWR	E. Edwards, D. Lima
07/31	3	Braggs Bay, Errol	R. Quinn

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b>			
06/03	1	Rt. 1A, Rye at N. Hampton line	S. Mirick
06/06	2	Rye Ledge	S. Mirick
06/20	1	Rye Ledge	S. Mirick



*Spruce Grouse female with young by Rebecca Suomala, 7/11/15, Pittsburg, NH.*

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Spruce Grouse</b>			
06/18	3	Umbagog NWR, Mollidgewock Brook Rd., Errol	D. Hof
06/21	6	River Rd., Pittsburg	S. Miller
07/02	4	Dixville Peak	D. Hollie
07/03	7	Umbagog NWR, Mollidgewock Brook Rd., Errol	D. Hof
07/11	6	East Inlet Rd., Pittsburg	R. Suomala, Z. Cornell
07/17	14	Mt. Isolation, Sargents Purchase	D. Durocher

Date	#	Location	Observer
07/29	1	Mt. Washington Auto Road at Signal Corps Site, T&M Purchase	D. Govatski

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Red-throated Loon</b>			
06/06	6	NH coast	S. Mirick
06/15	1	beach at end of Wallis Rd., Rye	P. Laipis

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Pacific Loon</b>			
06/03	1	Little Boars Head, N. Hampton	S. Mirick

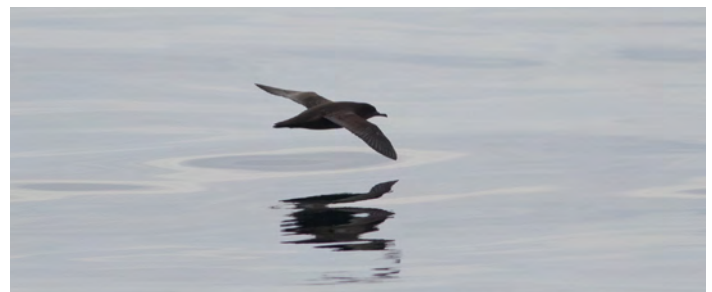
Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Common Loon</b>			
06/06	23	NH coast	S. Mirick

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Pied-billed Grebe</b>			
06/07	2	Brentwood Mitigation Area	K. Towler, J. Sparrell
06/13	8	Copps Pond WMA, Tuftonboro	S. Mesick
06/25	2	Dahl WS, Conway	C. Rosenblatt
07/02	3	Basin Pond, Chatham	D. Beattie
07/18	2	Pondicherry NWR, Jefferson/Whitefield	B. Harris, et al.
07/26	1	River View Rd., Newport	B.& C. Baker

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Horned Grebe</b>			
07/04	1	Henrys Pool, Rt. 101E, Hampton	S. Heron, D. Jackson, S. Mirick

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Red-necked Grebe</b>			
06/06	2	Little Boars Head, N. Hampton	S. Mirick
07/20	1	Thayer Rd., Rindge	C. Edge
07/28	1	Contoocook Lake, Rindge/Jaffrey	C. Caron

## Shearwaters through Cranes



*Sooty Shearwater by Lauren Kras, 7/4/15, Jeffreys Ledge, offshore waters, NH.*

Oddly, while Great Shearwater was reported on only one day this summer, Cory's Shearwater was reported on four different days and Sooty Shearwater on two. Great Shearwater is usually the more expected species. It is only within the past decade that Cory's have gone from being rare to being routine. Great Cormorant breeds off the coast of Maine, but it is not typical here in summer. Four immatures were seen roosting at the Isles of Shoals. Last summer, Least Bittern was documented as a breeder in southern New Hampshire and, while breeding was not documented this summer, one was seen in the same location so hopefully they nested again. Glossy Ibis are usually found very near the coast so individuals seen at wastewater treatment plants in Exeter and Rochester were not in typical locations. A **White-faced Ibis** was seen in Rye in early July. This western ibis is

# SUMMER SEASON

occasionally seen among Glossy Ibis in the East, but all of the three previous New Hampshire records were during spring migration. Black Vulture continues to make inroads from the south. It has become annual in the state and this summer there were three separate sightings.

Bald Eagle breeding statistics were up this season, according to NH Audubon raptor biologist Chris Martin. Numbers in parenthesis are for 2014. There were a record 45 territorial pairs this year (41), 30 incubating pairs (27), and 43 young fledged (41). All of the 2015 numbers are at least twice those of 2010! Northern Harrier is rare in summer south of Coos County. One was well described in very appropriate habitat in Enfield in southern Grafton County. Given that it was reported in the last week of July, perhaps it was an early migrant. **Mississippi Kites** were back in Newmarket and this year two nests were discovered. One nest was in the same location as last year but apparently failed approximately at hatch. Copulation was observed on May 25 and if eggs were laid shortly after, hatch would be expected around July 1 (incubation is about 30 days). The birds were still incubating on June 25, but on July 3 Steve Mirick reported no activity at the nest and subsequent reports also found no birds at the nest. Mississippi Kites are reportedly sensitive to rain and wind while nesting and the heavy rainstorm on July 1 may have had a detrimental effect. The only chick came from a second nest found in a different part of Newmarket.

Three **Sandhill Cranes** were seen in the usual Monroe location. Last year was the first time they nested and fledged a chick. This year no chick was seen so there was likely a failed nesting attempt. There were three individuals instead of two, however, and it is assumed that the third one was last year's chick. After the three birds arrived, local residents reported seeing only two for a period of time and then the third reappeared.



*Cory's Shearwater by Lauren Kras, 7/4/15, Jeffreys Ledge, NH*

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Cory's Shearwater</b>			
07/04	14	Jeffrey's Ledge (NH)	B. Griffith, L. Kras
07/19	5	Jeffreys Ledge (NH)	R. Suomala, Z. Cornell

Date	#	Location	Observer
<b>Great Shearwater</b>			
07/04	2	Jeffreys Ledge (NH)	B. Griffith, L. Kras
<b>Sooty Shearwater</b>			
07/04	6	Jeffreys Ledge (NH)	B. Griffith, L. Kras
07/13	1	Jeffreys Ledge (NH)	A. Gurka
<b>Wilson's Storm-Petrel</b>			
07/04	120	Jeffreys Ledge (NH)	B. Griffith, L. Kras
07/18	19	NH coast	S. Mirick
07/19	115	Jeffreys Ledge (NH)	R. Suomala, Z. Cornell
07/26	24	NH coast	S. Mirick
07/29	12	Little Boars Head, N. Hampton	S. Mirick
<b>Northern Gannet</b>			
06/02	10	NH coast	S. Mirick
06/20	4	Rye Ledge	S. Mirick
07/19	4	Jeffreys Ledge (NH)	R. Suomala, Z. Cornell
07/25	25	White & Seavey Islands, Isles of Shoals	Tern Project
<b>Great Cormorant</b>			
06/06	1	White & Seavey Islands, Isles of Shoals	Tern Project
06/07	4	Star Island, Rye	M. Harvey
<b>Least Bittern</b>			
06/24	1	World End Pond, Salem	K. Wilmarth
<b>Great Egret</b>			
07/04	40	Yankee Fisherman's Coop, Seabrook	D. Jackson, S. Mirick, S. Heron
07/26	6	White & Seavey Islands, Isles of Shoals	Tern Project
07/26	1	Webster Lake, Franklin	C. Healey
07/27	1	Horseshoe Pond, Merrimack	M. Jacobson
07/28	1	Rt. 103 & Morse Hill Rd., Newbury	B.& C. Baker
07/29	58	Hampton Harbor	S. Mirick
<b>Snowy Egret</b>			
07/12	25	Little River saltmarsh, N. Hampton	M. Resch
07/29	42	pools s. of Odiorne Pt. SP, Rye	S. Mirick



*Little Blue Heron by Jason Lambert, 7/19/15, Rye, NH.*

<b>Little Blue Heron</b>			
07/19	1	pools s. of Odiorne Pt. SP, Rye	J. Lambert
07/22	1	pools s. of Odiorne Pt. SP, Rye	J. Maher
<b>Black-crowned Night-Heron</b>			
07/03	5	Hampton Harbor	S. Mirick
07/18	5	Island Path, Hampton	S. Heron
<b>Glossy Ibis</b>			
06/09	15	Hampton salt marsh	S. Mirick
07/15	1	Adams Point WMA, Durham	R. Prieto
07/18	1	Exeter WTP	S. Heron

Date	#	Location	Observer
07/27	2	White & Seavey Islands, Isles of Shoals	Tern Project
07/28	1	Rochester WTP	D. Hubbard

**White-faced Ibis**

07/05	1	Huckleberry Ln., Hampton	S.&J. Mirick, et al.
07/12	1	Little River saltmarsh, N. Hampton	S. Bennett, M. Resch

**Black Vulture**

06/04	1	Rt. 93 at Exit 4, Londonderry	E. Lipton
06/09	1	Brattleboro Rd., Hinsdale	B. Griffith
06/10	1	River Rd. s., Walpole	W. Ward
06/17	1	Brattleboro Rd., Hinsdale	M. Resch
07/02	1	Rt. 93 at Exit 16, Concord	P. Hunt



*Mississippi Kite*  
by Joel Huntress,  
7/23/15,  
Newmarket, NH.

**Mississippi Kite**

06/03	1	Dame Rd. at Gonet Rd., Newmarket	P. Miliotis
07/06	3	Durrell Woods, Newmarket	S. Bennett
07/11	3	Durell Dr. at Huckins Dr., Newmarket	R. Doherty, S. Mirick

**Northern Harrier**

06/05	1	Quincy Bog, Rumney	A. Ports
06/24	1	Rt. 3 s. of Whitefield/Carroll line	A. Burnett
07/05	1	Green Hill Rd., Chatham	B. Crowley
07/25	1	Rt. 89, Enfield	R. Poznysz



*Virginia Rail* by Amanda Altana, 7/12/15, Salem, NH.

**Virginia Rail**

06/03	3	Beaver Brook Great Meadow, Hollis	C. Sheridan
06/14	5	Geremonty Dr. marsh, Salem	K. Wilmarth

**Sora**

06/13	1	Old Mill Rd mitigation area, Lee	K. Dorsey
06/14	1	Geremonty Dr. marsh, Salem	K. Wilmarth, A. Altana

**Sandhill Crane**

06/03	1	Riverside Farm Dr., Lee	D. Blezard
06/27	3	Plains Rd., Monroe	J. Sparrell
07/24	3	Rt. 135, Monroe	L. Medlock

**Shorebirds through Alcids**

Piping Plovers had a good year along the beaches with the NH Fish and Game Department reporting 12 chicks fledged from eight nests. It is interesting to note that in Maine, there were 115 chicks, the most they've had in 35 years of monitoring. Greater Yellowlegs seen during the latter half of June were difficult to classify as late or early migrants. Perhaps a few simply never made it to their breeding grounds. NH Fish and Game also reported a dozen Upland Sandpiper chicks from four or five successful nests at Pease International Tradeport. An **American Avocet** was seen at the coast in Hampton in late July. While they breed in the West, they winter to our south and one is occasionally seen in the Northeast during fall shorebird migration. Hudsonian Godwit has become a difficult bird to find in New Hampshire during fall migration when it is most often seen but a presumed northbound migrant on June 7 is exceedingly rare. Both Ruddy Turnstone and White-rumped Sandpiper are known to be late spring migrants and so are sometimes seen in early or mid-June. Both species were observed on June 12 this year but the turnstone was inland in Cheshire County making it a very rare record.



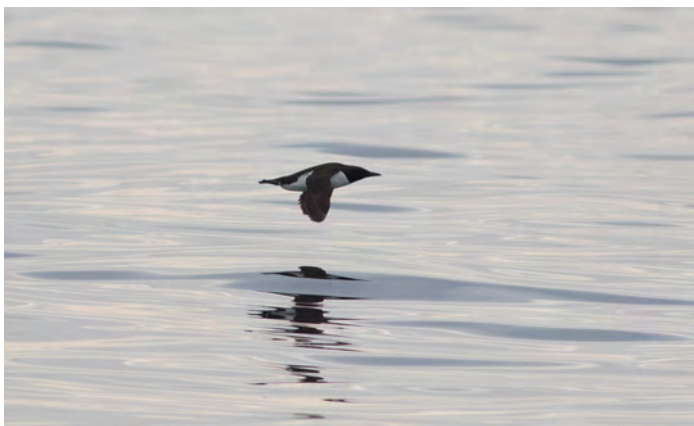
*Lesser Black-backed Gull (center)* by Steve Mirick, 7/26/15, Rye, NH

An Iceland Gull seen along the coast in July was a rare summer visitor. They are usually seen from later in fall into the spring. Lesser Black-backed Gull is very uncommon in the state any time of year, with the possible exception of the Rochester Wastewater Treatment Plant. One was seen early in summer and a couple in late summer in Rockingham County.

Least Terns bred on Hampton Beach which, although they breed regularly in Maine and Massachusetts, was the first New Hampshire nesting since 1960 according to the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in New Hampshire*. There were two nests; one was lost to predation according to a report from

# SUMMER SEASON

NH Fish and Game, but one chick was successfully fledged from the other nest. **Royal Tern** is rare in the Northeast but one made an appearance in Hampton Harbor in July. Black Tern is a bird that breeds in other northern New England states and also nearby in Quebec, but has never been known to nest in our state. They are occasionally seen in summer in New Hampshire; one was seen near the Second Connecticut Lake in June. Common Terns had a good season at the Isles of Shoals. In the past ten years, the number of nesting pairs has been fairly steady with an overall increase. It has gone from a low of 2,227 in 2008 to this year's record 2,881. The numbers of Roseate and Arctic Tern nests have also been fairly steady; this year there were 74 nesting pairs of the former and three of the latter.



*Common Murre by Lauren Kras, 7/4/15, Jeffreys Ledge, offshore waters, NH.*

A Common Murre was seen from a whalewatch boat in early July. While they are regular offshore on the Gulf of Maine, they are more typically seen farther Downeast off of Maine's Mid-coast.

*Date # Location Observer*



*American Avocet by Steve Mirick, 7/26/15, Seabrook, NH.*

## American Avocet

07/25 1 Hampton Harbor K. Wilmarth, A. Altena  
07/27 1 Rt. 286 pools, Seabrook L. Medlock

## American Oystercatcher

06/05 2 Yankee Fisherman's Coop, Seabrook S. Heron, et al.

*Date # Location Observer*

## Black-bellied Plover

06/05 2 Yankee Fisherman's Coop, Seabrook M. Resch  
07/29 6 Hampton Harbor S. Mirick

## Semipalmated Plover

06/02 17 Hampton salt marsh S. Mirick  
06/12 1 Little Jacks restaurant, Rt.1A, Hampton T. Andresen  
07/04 5 Rye Harbor SP B. Griffith  
07/25 35 Hampton-Seabrook marsh S. Heron  
07/29 132 Hampton salt marsh S. Mirick

## Solitary Sandpiper

07/11 1 Indian Stream at Connecticut R., Pittsburg D. Hof  
07/15 2 Saco R., N., Conway R. Steber

## Greater Yellowlegs

06/13 5 Hampton-Seabrook marsh S. Heron  
06/20 1 Hampton salt marsh S. Mirick  
06/25 2 Hampton salt marsh S. Mirick

## Lesser Yellowlegs

07/01 2 Little Jacks restaurant, Rt. 1A, Hampton G. McKibben  
07/05 6 NH coast A. Altena  
07/18 20 NH coast S. Mirick

## Upland Sandpiper

06/09 4 Pease Intl. Tradeport, Portsmouth M. Harvey

## Whimbrel

07/19 1 Hampton Harbor S. Mirick  
07/25 3 Hampton Harbor A. Altena

## Hudsonian Godwit

06/07 1 Eastman Slough, Hampton Falls L. Medlock

## Ruddy Turnstone

06/12 1 Spofford Lake, Chesterfield M. Harrison  
07/29 2 Hampton Harbor S. Mirick

## Sanderling

07/18 3 NH coast S. Mirick

## Dunlin

06/02 2 Hampton salt marsh S. Mirick

## Least Sandpiper

07/02 2 Hampton Harbor K. Wilmarth  
07/03 4 Hampton salt marsh S. Mirick  
07/18 45 Hampton-Seabrook marsh S. Heron

## White-rumped Sandpiper

06/09 1 Hampton salt marsh S. Mirick  
06/12 18 Little Jacks restaurant, Rt.1A, Hampton T. Andresen

## Pectoral Sandpiper

07/16 1 Rochester WTP D. Hubbard  
07/29 1 pools s. of Odiorne Pt. SP, Rye S. Mirick

## Semipalmated Sandpiper

06/02 100 Hampton salt marsh S. Mirick  
06/13 46 Hampton salt marsh S. Mirick  
06/13 20 Hampton-Seabrook marsh S. Heron  
07/04 4 Jeffreys Ledge (NH) B. Griffith, L. Kras  
07/18 25 NH coast S. Mirick



Date	#	Location	Observer
07/22	100	Hampton salt marsh	J. Maher
07/29	359	Hampton salt marsh	S. Mirick

**peep sp.**

07/18	267	NH coast	S. Mirick
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**Short-billed Dowitcher**

07/02	16	Hampton Harbor	K. Wilmarth
07/03	10	Rye Harbor	P. Brown
07/05	55	Little Jacks restaurant, Rt. 1A, Hampton	S. Mirick

**Red-necked/Red Phalarope**

06/06	1	Hampton North Beach	S. Mirick
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*Bonaparte's Gull by Amanda Altena, 6/27/15, Hampton, NH.*

**Bonaparte's Gull**

07/03	10	Hampton Harbor	S. Mirick
07/18	1	Pondicherry NWR, Jefferson/Whitefield	B. Harris, et al.
07/26	24	Jenness/Sawyers Beach, Rye	S. Mirick

**Laughing Gull**

06/05	2	NH coast	K. Towler, J. Sparrell
07/26	2	Jenness/Sawyers Beach, Rye	S. Mirick, S. Bennett



*Iceland Gull by Steve Mirick, 7/18/15, Rye, NH.*

**Iceland Gull**

07/18	1	Jenness/Sawyers Beach, Rye	S. Mirick
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**Lesser Black-backed Gull**

06/02	1	South Rd., E. Kingston	D. Finch
07/26	2	Jenness/Sawyers Beach, Rye	S. Mirick, S. Bennett
07/29	1	Jenness/Sawyers Beach, Rye	S. Heron

**Black Tern**

06/09	1	Second Connecticut Lake ramp, Pittsburg	R. Quinn, W. Brust, L. Feryus
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**Roseate Tern**

06/28	25	Hampton Harbor	S. Mirick
07/18	12	NH coast	S. Mirick
07/29	20	Hampton Harbor	S. Mirick

**Common Tern**

06/07	1500	Star Island, Rye	M. Harvey
07/01	100	Hampton Beach SP	G.&J. McKibben, J. Maher
07/18	230	NH coast	S. Mirick
07/29	210	Hampton Harbor	S. Mirick

Date	#	Location	Observer
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*Arctic Tern by Amanda Altena, 6/27/15, Hampton, NH.*

**Arctic Tern**

06/07	1	Star Island, Rye	M. Harvey
06/27	2	Hampton Harbor	K. Wilmarth, A. Altena

**Royal Tern**

07/02	1	Hampton Harbor	K. Wilmarth
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**Parasitic Jaeger**

06/09	2	Pulpit Rocks, Rye	S. Mirick
07/13	1	Jeffreys Ledge (NH)	K. Towler, J. Sparrell

**Common Murre**

07/04	1	Jeffreys Ledge (NH)	B. Griffith, L. Kras
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**Razorbill**

06/12	2	White & Seavey Islands, Isles of Shoals	Tern Project
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**Black Guillemot**

06/20	4	Jeffreys Ledge (NH)	P. Laipis
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**Atlantic Puffin**

06/02	2	White & Seavey Islands, Isles of Shoals	Tern Project
06/04	2	White & Seavey Islands, Isles of Shoals	Tern Project

**Cuckoos through Corvids**

Both Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos were widely reported across central and southern sections of the state. The former ranged as far north as Jefferson in Coos County while the latter was found north to Jackson in Carroll County. The Common Nighthawk nesting season proved interesting and exciting for the Common Nighthawk Project. See the story on page 23. A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was photographed in Milan, in Coos County, during the first week of June. Red-bellied Woodpecker was widespread across the southern half of the state; the most northerly report was one in Conway. Black-backed Woodpecker was also widely reported; it breeds in boreal type habitats throughout the northern half of the state.



*Peregrine Falcon carrying what appears to be a Black-billed Cuckoo as shown by the long tail with the white tips on the feathers. Photo by Christine Sheridan, 7/21/15, Nashua, NH.*

# SUMMER SEASON

Both American Kestrel and Merlin were widely reported throughout the state and there were a few more reports than usual for both species. Merlin continues to breed across nearly all sections of the state from the northern border to the southern border. Peregrine Falcon had a good year with numbers down only slightly from last year according to NH Audubon's Chris Martin. Twenty territorial pairs were three less than the previous year and 13 successful pairs are down one from 2014. The 34 chicks fledged averaged 2.00 per nesting pair compared to a 34 year average of 1.65.

The Olive-sided Flycatcher in Keene in early June was undoubtedly a late migrant. Other reports listed are from the southern part of their range; they are more likely to be found in the northern part of the state. A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was seen in Lempster in June near the southern limit of its summer range, while two in Nottingham in early June were late migrants. **Acadian Flycatcher** is still rare, but it has been seen in southern New Hampshire in the three previous summers. This year there were three reports from different locations. For more see the Spotlight on Acadian Flycatcher, p. 16. Yellow-throated Vireo is more typical in southern New Hampshire than in central areas and the reports listed are indicative of the northern edge of their range in the state. A Philadelphia Vireo was seen in Freedom, in Carroll County, in early June and was probably a late migrant; all breeding records are from farther north. They are mostly found in Coos County but they occur farther south in higher elevations and those are the reports that are listed here.

*Date # Location Observer*

## Eastern Screech-Owl

06/09 1 Penacook Place Apts., Concord S. Duncan  
07/11 7 Ponemah Bog WS, Amherst L. Deming  
07/14 1 Highland Ave., Salem K. Wilmarth

## Northern Saw-whet Owl

06/04 1 Newfound Lake T. McLane, K. Jones  
06/04 1 Ravenwood Farm, Greenfield T. Shiel  
06/10 1 Fairwood Bible Institute, Dublin A. Aldrich  
06/11 1 Mast Yard SF, Concord/Hopkinton P. Hunt  
07/03 1 Umbagog NWR, Rt 16 bog, Errol D. Hof

## Common Nighthawk

06/05 8 McDaniels Marsh WMA, Springfield D. Jackson  
06/07 2 Pickering Ponds, Rochester C. Nims  
06/17 5 TNC land, Ossipee R. Quinn, J. Koliias  
07/18 6 Aerodrome, Springfield R. Quinn, J. Koliias  
07/29 5 Tin Mountain Timberlands, Conway C. Rosenblatt

## Eastern Whip-poor-will

06/24 13 Mast Yard SF, Concord/Hopkinton P. Hunt  
07/06 3 Green Hill Rd., Conway B. Crowley, J.& D. Scott  
07/14 10 Freedom Town Forest P. Paul

*Date # Location Observer*

## Chimney Swift

06/02 300 Merrimack R., Manchester S. Mirick  
06/03 360 Powder House Pond, Exeter S. Lewis  
06/03 60 World End Pond, Salem K. Wilmarth, A. Altena  
06/08 150 Bank St. Ext., Lebanon L. Thompson  
06/13 75 St. Paul Church, Franklin R. Quinn  
06/23 53 Masonic Temple, Main St., Laconia R. Quinn  
07/01 400 Merrimack R., Manchester S. Mirick  
07/08 95 KUA powerplant, Meriden S. Hardy  
07/24 215 Durgin Block parking garage, Concord R. Quinn  
07/26 80 String Bridge, Exeter S. Lewis  
07/30 98 Old Academy Bldg., Orford J. MacQueen  
07/31 144 KUA powerplant, Meriden S. Hardy

## Red-headed Woodpecker

06/03 1 Milan Hill Rd., Milan T. Levesque

## Olive-sided Flycatcher

06/03 1 Three Mile Reservoir, Keene W. Ward, H. Walters  
06/07 2 McDaniels Marsh WMA, Springfield J. Gamble  
06/14 1 Dodge Pond, Lempster D. Jackson  
06/21 1 Scales Brook marsh, Goss Rd., Hanover D. Jackson  
07/26 1 Little Hill Road, Webster R. Quinn  
07/27 1 River View Rd., Newport B.& C. Baker



*Yellow-bellied Flycatcher by David Forsyth, 7/21/15, Caps Ridge Trail, Mt. Jefferson, NH. This species breeds in the White Mountains and spruce-fir forests of northern New Hampshire.*

## Yellow-bellied Flycatcher

06/10 2 Pawtuckaway SP, Middle Mt. trail, Nottingham J. Maher  
06/17 1 Ashuelot River Headwaters Forest, Mountain Rd., Lempster J. Swatt

## Acadian Flycatcher

06/04 1 Brindle Pond, Barnstead J. Lambert  
06/07 2 Pawtuckaway SP, Nottingham/Deerfield B. Griffith, L. Kras, J. Lambert, R. Prieto  
06/12 1 Brindle Pond Rd., Barnstead J. Sparrell  
06/16 1 Hinsdale Setbacks H. Galbraith

## Yellow-throated Vireo

06/07 8 Pawtuckaway SP, Nottingham/Deerfield B. Griffith, L. Kras, J. Lambert, L. Herlihy, R.& R. Prieto  
06/22 1 Freedom Town Forest G.& A. Robbins  
06/22 1 Chick's Corner, Sandwich B. Ridgely, W. Batsford  
07/07 1 Diamond Ledge, Sandwich T. Vazzano  
07/18 1 Diplomat Dr., Wolfboro R. Parsons

## Philadelphia Vireo

06/10 1 Pawtuckaway SP, Middle Mt. trail, Nottingham J. Maher  
06/13 1 Green Mountain, Dearborn Trail, Effingham K. Elwell, et al.

Date	#	Location	Observer
06/27	1	Mt. Lincoln, Franconia	G. Robbins
07/02	1	Basin Pond, Chatham	D. Beattie
07/03	1	Cobb Farm Rd., Hart's Location	C. Nims



Gray Jay adult (left) by Amanda Altena and juvenile (right) by Ben Griffith, 6/20/15, Pittsburg, NH.

**Gray Jay**

06/14	3	Pondicherry NWR, Jefferson/Whitefield	J. Huestis
06/18	4	Umbagog NWR, Mollidgewock Brook Rd., Errol	D. Hof
06/20	8	East Inlet Rd., Pittsburg	S. Heron
07/08	6	Dixville Ridge	B. Crowley, J. Scott
07/17	4	Mt. Isolation, Sargents Purchase	D. Durocher

**Fish Crow**

07/09	20	Rockingham Park, Salem	K. Wilmarth
07/11	8	Hampton Beach SP	S. Mirick
07/29	6	Great Pond, Kingston	S. Heron
07/31	7	E. Ridge Rd., Merrimack	M. Jacobson

**Larks through Warblers**



The Purple Martins of Cross Beach Rd. in Seabrook, NH. Most nests are in the gourds but a pair continues to use the yellow house where the first pair was discovered at this site. Colony photo by Steve Mirick, 7/26/15; a youngster trying to swallow a dragonfly, by Steve Mirick, 7/26/15; chicks waiting to be fed, by Scott Heron, 7/18/15.

Purple Martin has been an uncommon breeder in the state during the past few decades and in the past ten years it became a rare breeder here. The colony that was established in Seabrook in 2014 was going strong this year. The only other known colonies in the state are the long standing one in Laconia and a colony of only two pairs in Wakefield. A couple of seemingly random sightings came from Coos County in early June, but there are no known colonies there. Carolina Wren was widely reported in the southern half of the state but reports were not as numerous as in the previous summer. Perhaps the cold, snowy late winter had an impact, considering the high numbers that were seen on Christmas Bird Counts early in winter in the southern part of the state. Brown Thrasher is fairly common in southern and central New Hampshire but becomes less so to the north. The reports published are from the same location in Pittsburg where an adult was seen feeding a fledgling on July 11.

A Cape May Warbler in Lyme in the middle of June was noteworthy; it was either a late migrant or a wandering bird. Some warblers are known to migrate fairly late. Good examples are a Wilson's Warbler in Pittsfield and two Magnolia Warblers and a Blackpoll Warbler found at Star Island at the Isle of Shoals, all during the first week of June. Blackpoll Warbler is often seen in migration south of its breeding range in early June. Northern Waterthrush is common in northern and central New Hampshire as a breeder and the reports listed reflect the southern portion of their range.

**Horned Lark**

07/09	2	Mt. Cardigan, Orange	A. Clarke
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**Northern Rough-winged Swallow**

06/01	5	Amoskeag Rowing Club, Hooksett	R. Quinn
06/06	7	SPNH Merrimack River Conservation Area, Concord	R. Quinn, W. Brust, L. Feryus
06/29	6	Hinsdale Setbacks	H. Galbraith
07/20	5	Mud Pond, Dublin	P. Brown



Purple Martin by Amanda Altena, 7/3/15, E. Wakefield, NH.

**Purple Martin**

06/05	12	Cross Beach Rd., Seabrook	S. Heron, D. Skillman, W. Trested
06/07	2	Old Cherry Mtn. Rd., Carroll	S. Stoddard
06/09	1	Fort Hill WMA, Stratford	S. Stoddard
06/13	7	Funspot, Laconia	P. Hunt
07/02	23	Cross Beach Rd., Seabrook	P. Hunt, et al.

# SUMMER SEASON

Date # Location Observer

## Purple Martin—continued

07/04 4 Scribner's Pond, Wakefield K. Wilmarth  
 07/21 17 Funspot, Laconia P. Hunt  
 07/26 20 Cross Beach Rd., Seabrook S. Mirick  
 07/31 2 South Rd., Kensington G. Gavutis, Jr.

## Tree Swallow

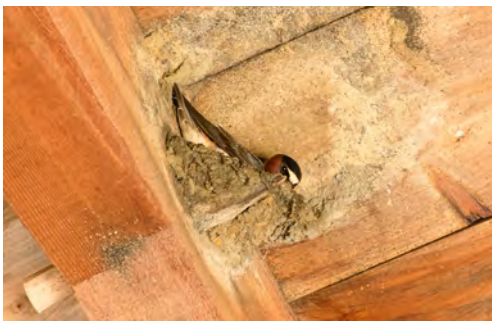
06/29 100 Hinsdale Setbacks H. Galbraith  
 07/03 70 McDaniels Marsh WMA, Springfield D. Jackson  
 07/09 110 Cross Beach Rd., Seabrook C. Nims, J. Scott  
 07/22 50 Lubberland Creek Preserve, Newmarket N. & K. Devine  
 07/30 100 Pickering Ponds, Rochester C. Breen

## Bank Swallow

06/06 75 SPNHF Merrimack River Conservation Area, Concord R. Quinn, W. Brust, L. Feryus  
 06/08 38 Rt. 135 farm fields, Lancaster R. Quinn, W. Brust, L. Feryus  
 07/03 40 McDaniels Marsh WMA, Springfield D. Jackson  
 07/07 72 Saco R., N., Conway R. Steber

## Barn Swallow

07/09 50 Trask Brook Rd., Sunapee D. Jackson  
 07/18 100 Boire Field, Nashua D. Fortnam



*One of only a few Cliff Swallow nests at Fort Constitution in New Castle, NH, where there were once more than 100 birds. Photo by Nathan Purmort, 6/6/15.*

## Cliff Swallow

06/09 1 Fort Constitution, New Castle G. & J. McKibben  
 06/09 75 Tabor Rd., Pittsburg R. Quinn, W. Brust, L. Feryus  
 06/19 10 Androscoggin R. bridge, Milan P. Hunt  
 06/24 4 Burleigh Farm, Holderness W. Batsford  
 07/08 8 Washington Street Mills, Dover S. Heron

## Marsh Wren

06/03 4 World End Pond, Salem K. Wilmarth, A. Altena  
 06/09 5 Surrey Ln. marsh, Durham M. Harvey  
 06/17 2 Hinsdale Setbacks J. Russo  
 06/25 5 Thompson WS, Sandwich P. Brown

## Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

06/07 2 Pawtuckaway SP, Nottingham/Deerfield B. Griffith, L. Kras, J. Lambert, L. Herlihy, R. & R. Prieto  
 06/17 3 Pickering Ponds, Rochester D. Hubbard, et al.  
 06/30 4 Hinsdale Setbacks E. Huston  
 07/03 1 Squam Lake ne., Sandwich D. Hudgins, O. Babb  
 07/12 3 Woodridge area, Durham K. Dorsey  
 07/19 4 Horseshoe Pond, Concord R. Woodward  
 07/27 4 Pickering Ponds, Rochester D. Hubbard

Date # Location Observer

## Bicknell's Thrush

06/04 6 A-Z Trail at Mt. Tom spur, Bethlehem E. Lipton  
 06/07 6 Mt. Moosilauke, Woodstock J. MacQueen  
 06/22 6 Kinsman Ridge Trail, Franconia A. Merritt  
 07/10 6 Dixville Peak D. Hof  
 07/19 7 Cannon Mt., Franconia T. Pirro  
 07/19 12 Caps Ridge Trail, T&M Purchase B. Harris, et al.

## Swainson's Thrush

06/11 22 Caps Ridge Trail, T&M Purchase M. Harvey  
 06/27 21 East and Little East Pond loop, Livermore T. Pirro  
 07/04 20 Nancy Pond Trail, Hart's Location A. Burnett  
 07/11 26 East Inlet, Pittsburg R. Wirtes, O. Soltau, D. Mercurio, A. Mistril  
 07/11 39 Drake's Brook Trail, Noon Peak, Waterville Valley J. Young  
 07/12 20 Scott Bog Rd., Pittsburg Z. Cornell, R. Suomala  
 07/18 30 Unknown Pond, Kilkenny B. Harris, et al.

## Brown Thrasher

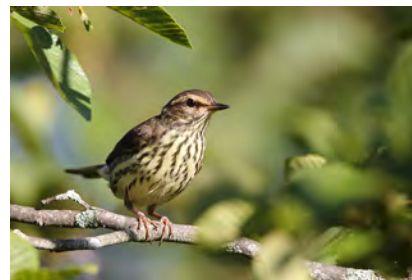
06/18 1 Indian Stream Rd., Pittsburg S. Stoddard  
 07/02 2 Indian Stream Rd., Pittsburg K. Towler, J. Sparrell  
 07/11 2 Indian Stream at Connecticut R., Pittsburg D. Hof

## American Pipit

06/07 2 Gulfside Trail, T&M Purchase S. Schwenk  
 07/17 2 Mt. Washington, Sargents Purchase S. Mirick

## Louisiana Waterthrush

06/04 1 Tin Mountain Conservation Ctr., Conway C. Rosenblatt  
 06/06 4 Pawtuckaway SP, Reservation/Tower Rd. loop, Deerfield R. Woodward, Capital CFT  
 07/17 1 Diamond Ledge, Sandwich T. Vazzano



*Northern Waterthrush by Scott Heron, 7/31/15, Kingston, NH.*

## Northern Waterthrush

06/14 1 South Rd., East Kingston D. Finch  
 06/14 1 Tuttle Swamp, Newmarket S. Mirick  
 06/16 1 Manchester Cedar Swamp Preserve C. Sheridan  
 06/16 2 Hillsborough County P. Brown  
 06/17 2 Penacook survey route P. Hunt  
 06/17 2 Long Pond trail, Lempster J. Swatt  
 07/16 1 Stevens Hill Road, Nottingham P. Miliotis  
 07/31 1 Green Road, Kingston S. Heron

## Blue-winged Warbler

06/03 3 Pickering Ponds, Rochester D. Hubbard  
 06/06 3 Yudicky Farm/Southwest Park, Nashua C. Sheridan  
 06/07 1 Cilley SF, Concord R. Quinn  
 06/14 3 Tuttle Swamp, Newmarket S. Mirick  
 07/04 2 Doe Farm CA, Durham K. Dorsey

Date # Location Observer

**Tennessee Warbler**

06/13 1 Old Cherry Mtn. Rd., Carroll P. Jacobson,  
S.& C. Whitebread, J. Scott, K. Rawdon, C. Nims  
06/16 1 Deer Mountain SP, Pittsburg S. Stoddard  
06/25 1 Hubbard Brook, Woodstock C. Harper  
07/04 1 Lake Shore Dr., Pittsburg J. Maher  
07/12 1 Scott Bog Rd., Pittsburg R. Suomala, Z. Cornell

**Mourning Warbler**

06/03 3 Tin Mountain Timberlands, Conway C. Rosenblatt  
06/04 2 Dummer Pond Rd., Dummer A. Schmierer  
06/14 2 Day Rd., Perry Stream, Pittsburg S. Surner  
06/15 2 East Inlet Rd., Pittsburg E. Nielsen, S. Sweet  
06/16 1 Ravine Rd., Benton J. Williams  
06/17 2 Scott Bog Rd., Pittsburg E. Nielsen, S. Sweet  
07/09 3 East Branch Rd., Nash Stream SF, Odell P. Hunt

**Cape May Warbler**

06/04 1 Old Cherry Mt. Rd. s., Carroll N. Mitiguy  
06/07 3 Engine Hill, Sargents Purchase J. Maher  
06/10 1 Hurricane Mountain Rd., Conway S. Mesick  
06/10 1 Dorchester Rd., Lyme P. Ackerson  
06/18 2 Umbagog NWR, Mollidgewock  
Brook Rd., Errol D. Hof  
06/20 1 Sugarloaf Mt. trail, Stratford C. Nichols  
07/31 1 Braggs Bay, Errol R. Quinn

**Cerulean Warbler**

06/07 1 Pawtuckaway SP, Nottingham/Deerfield B. Griffith,  
L. Kras, J. Lambert, L. Herlihy, R.& R. Prieto

**Magnolia Warbler**

06/07 2 Star Island, Rye M. Harvey



*Bay-breasted Warbler by  
Lauren Kras, 6/19/15,  
Pittsburg, NH.*

**Bay-breasted Warbler**

06/15 4 East Inlet Rd., Pittsburg E. Nielsen, S. Sweet  
06/18 3 Umbagog NWR, Mollidgewock Brook Rd., Errol  
D. Hof  
06/20 5 Day Rd., Perry Stream, Pittsburg E. Nielsen, S. Sweet

**Blackpoll Warbler**

06/04 20 Cannon Mt., Franconia T. Ludwick  
06/05 42 Mt. Tom to Ethan Pond, Bethlehem E. Lipton  
06/07 1 Star Island, Rye M. Harvey  
06/09 20 Mt. Washington Auto Road, Greens Grant E. Speck  
06/11 35 Caps Ridge Trail, T&M Purchase M. Harvey  
07/11 26 Sandwich Mt., Waterville Valley J. Young

**Palm Warbler**

06/11 2 Pondicherry NWR, Jefferson/Whitefield M. Harvey  
07/25 2 Church Pond Bog, Albany/Livermore P.& L. Brown

Date # Location Observer

**Palm Warbler - Yellow subsp.**

07/07 12 Umbagog NWR, Mollidgewock Brook Rd., Errol  
D. Hof  
07/13 5 Umbagog NWR, Rt 16 bog, Errol D. Hof

**Prairie Warbler**

06/05 10 West Branch Pine Barrens Preserve, Madison  
G.& A. Robbins  
06/07 4 Pawtuckaway SP, Nottingham/Deerfield B. Griffith,  
L. Kras, J. Lambert, L. Herlihy, R.& R. Prieto  
06/11 5 Morse Preserve, Alton L. Kras  
06/11 4 USFWS Karner Blue easement, Concord  
M. Watson, M. Viens  
06/20 9 Concord Airport R. Woodward  
07/25 5 Woodmont Orchard, Hollis C. McPherson

**Canada Warbler**

06/03 5 Umbagog NWR, Mollidgewock Brook Rd., Errol  
D. Hof  
06/06 6 Old Cherry Mtn. Rd., Carroll C. Nims, J. Scott  
06/16 4 Elbow Pond Rd., Woodstock J. Williams  
06/27 6 Cherry Pond, Jefferson S. Spangenberg  
07/01 8 Bretton Woods X-C Ski Area, Carroll A. Burnett  
07/31 6 East Branch Rd., Nash Stream SF, Odell P. Hunt

**Wilson's Warbler**

06/03 1 Tilton Hill Rd. at Suncook R., Pittsfield A. Robbins  
06/14 1 Great Bay NWR, Newington P. Laipis  
06/14 1 Day Rd., Perry Stream, Pittsburg E. Nielsen, S. Sweet  
06/15 1 East Inlet Rd., Pittsburg E. Nielsen, S. Sweet  
06/16 1 Indian Stream Rd., Pittsburg E. Nielsen, S. Sweet  
06/17 1 Scott Bog Rd., Pittsburg E. Nielsen, S. Sweet  
07/14 1 Chemung SF, Meredith P. Paul

**Sparrows through Finches**



*Nelson's Sparrow by Amanda Altana, 7/5/15, N. Hampton, NH.*

Nelson's Sparrow continues to be reported from the coast but, given the lack of sharp-tailed sparrow hybrids being reported, it begs the question: Are all of the Nelson's reports of purebreds? These sparrows are known to hybridize frequently where their breeding ranges overlap along the coast (see page 33 for results of recent research into their

# SUMMER SEASON

hybridization on our coast). New Hampshire's summer Fox Sparrow population has been increasing during the past few years and this year the trend was maintained with reports from five different locations in Coos County. Red Crossbill reports were scarce but a few were reported from northern, central, and southern New Hampshire. In Gilmanton, an adult male was seen feeding three begging chicks. There were only two reports of single White-winged Crossbill sightings, both from Errol in the far north. Pine Siskin was widely reported across the entire state this summer and fledged chicks were reported all the way south to near the Massachusetts border.



*Pine Siskin adult feeding a fledged young. Photo by Evelyn Nathan, 6/3/15, Kingston, NH.*

<i>Date</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Observer</i>
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## **Eastern Towhee**

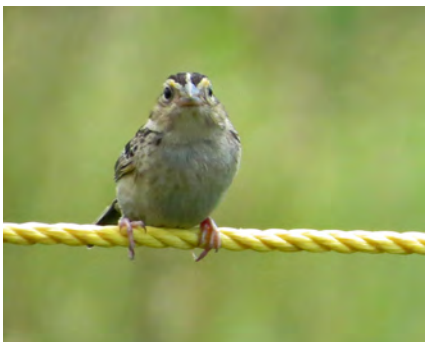
06/05	12	Freedom Town Forest	G.& A. Robbins
06/20	12	Concord Airport	R. Woodward

## **Field Sparrow**

06/11	6	Morse Preserve, Alton	L. Kras
06/20	10	Concord Airport	R. Woodward
07/25	18	Woodmont Orchard, Hollis	C. McPherson

## **Vesper Sparrow**

06/05	1	Freedom Town Forest	G.& A. Robbins
06/11	1	Morse Preserve, Alton	L. Kras
06/19	1	USFWS Karner Blue easement, Concord	J. Sparrell
06/20	1	Concord Airport	R. Woodward
06/25	1	Ossipee Lake Rd., Freedom	G.& A. Robbins
07/26	1	Old Mill Rd mitigation area, Lee	K. Dorsey



*Grasshopper Sparrow by Christine Sheridan, 7/23/15, Cemetery Fields, Amherst, NH.*

<i>Date</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Observer</i>
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## **Grasshopper Sparrow**

06/03	6	Cemetery Fields, Amherst	C. Sheridan
06/16	2	Concord Airport	P. Brown
07/04	2	Pease Intl. Tradeport, McIntyre Rd., Newington	S. Heron, D. Jackson
07/06	7	Cemetery Fields, Amherst	C. Sheridan, J. Maher

## **Nelson's Sparrow**

07/02	1	Philbrick Marsh, N. Hampton	K. Wilmarth
07/07	2	Philbrick Marsh, N. Hampton	K. Towler, J. Sparrell

## **Saltmarsh Sparrow**

06/09	9	Chapmans Landing, Stratham	M. Harvey
07/02	5	Chapmans Landing, Stratham	P. Hunt, R. Stevens
07/05	6	Little Jacks restaurant, Rt. 1A, Hampton	S. Mirick

## **Fox Sparrow**

06/07	1	Caps Ridge Trail, T&M Purchase	E. Lipton
06/17	1	Mt. Eisenhower Trail, Sargents Purchase	S. Smith
06/27	1	Mt. Lincoln, Franconia	G. Robbins
06/29	1	turbine access road, Millsfield/Dixville	B. Crowley
07/10	2	Dixville Peak	D. Hof
07/22	1	Crawford Path, Beans Grant	K. Settel
07/25	5	Mt. Eisenhower & Mt. Pierce, Beans Grant	A. Burnett

## **Lincoln's Sparrow**

06/11	2	Pondicherry NWR, Jefferson/Whitefield	M. Harvey
06/18	3	Magalloway Rd., Pittsburg	E. Nielsen, S. Sweet
07/02	2	Umbagog NWR, Mollidgewock Brook Rd., Errol	D. Hof
07/04	1	Nancy Pond Trail, Hart's Location	A. Burnett
07/25	1	Dummer Pond Rd., Dummer	C. Caron

## **Bobolink**

06/07	7	Russell-Shea SF, Concord	R. Quinn
06/11	7	Lubberland Creek Preserve, Newmarket	M. Viens, M. Watson
06/12	14	Trask Brook Rd., Sunapee	D. Jackson, J. Gamble
06/25	12	Dundee Rd., Jackson	R. Steber
06/27	35	Rockingham County Complex fields, Brentwood	S. Heron
07/07	16	Rt. 11, New London	D. Jackson
07/09	12	Pleasant St., Webster	H. Babb
07/25	25	Cemetery Fields, Amherst	M. Jacobson
07/28	25	Strafford County Farm Complex, Dover	D. Hubbard
07/29	30	Trask Brook Rd., Sunapee	D. Jackson

## **Eastern Meadowlark**

06/16	1	Tin Mountain Conservation Ctr., Conway	C. Rosenblatt
06/17	1	Strafford County Farm Complex, Dover	G. Sheridan
06/20	1	Rt. 3, Whitefield	C.& K. Hofer
06/27	2	Rockingham County Complex fields, Brentwood	S. Heron
07/05	1	Benton Rd., N. Haverhill	J. Hill
07/09	6	Pease Intl. Tradeport, Short St., Newington	C. Nims, J. Scott

Date # Location Observer



*Rusty Blackbird by John Williams, 6/16/15, Elbow Pond, Woodstock, NH.*

**Rusty Blackbird**

06/16	3	Smith Brook Rd., Pittsburg	E. Nielsen, S. Sweet
06/16	3	Elbow Pond Rd., Woodstock	S. Smith
06/19	3	East Inlet Rd., Pittsburg	E. Nielsen, S. Sweet
06/30	3	Smarts Brook Trail, Sandwich Mt., Sandwich	S. Smith

**Orchard Oriole**

06/06	1	SPNHF Merrimack River Conservation Area, Concord	R. Quinn, W. Brust, L. Feryus
06/09	1	Strafford County Farm Complex, Dover	J. Kelly
06/13	1	Old Mill Rd mitigation area, Lee	K. Dorsey
06/14	1	Rail Trail s., Salem	K. Wilmarth
06/17	1	Fort Eddy boat launch, Concord	N. Mitiguy
06/17	2	Pickering Ponds, Rochester	D. Hubbard, et al.
06/24	3	Walden Pond Dr., Nashua	C. Sheridan
06/27	2	Nashua R. at Merrimack R., Nashua	C. Sheridan



*Purple Finch by David Forsyth, 7/19/15, Caps Ridge Trail, Mt. Jefferson, NH. Purple Finch are most commonly found in the White Mountains and to the north in the summer but some of the more southerly reports are included below.*

**Purple Finch**

06/04	7	Ravenwood Farm, Greenfield	T. Shiel
06/07	8	Pawtuckaway SP, Nottingham/Deerfield	B. Griffith, L. Kras, J. Lambert, L. Herlihy, R.& R. Prieto
06/14	8	Cheshire County, Keene	P. Brown
06/26	8	Green Hill Rd., Chatham	B. Crowley
07/04	6	Lake Tarleton/Armington access, Piermont	K. Settel
07/09	12	Green Hill Rd., Chatham	B. Crowley
07/14	11	Lyman survey route	S. Turner
07/17	4	Watts WS, Effingham	S. Mirick
07/17	7	Under the Mountain Rd., Lyman	S. Turner
07/17	6	Kearsarge Valley Rd., Wilmot	K. Reiser
07/27	6	Ten Rod Rd., Rochester	D. Hubbard

Date # Location Observer

**Red Crossbill**

07/08	4	Pine Circle Rd., Gilmanton	M. Cahill
07/09	2	Columbia Rd., Nash Stream Forest NA, Odell	P. Hunt
07/18	3	Unknown Pond, Kilkenny	B. Harris
07/18	7	Umbagog NWR, Magalloway River Trail, Wentworths Location	D. Hof
07/22	2	Pisgah SP	C. Caron
07/23	3	Umbagog NWR, Mollidgewock Brook Rd., Errol	D. Hof
07/27	1	Pond Brook/Sawyer Pond area	C. Nims
07/28	3	Greenough Pond Rd., Errol	D. Hof
07/29	4	Umbagog NWR, Mountain Pond Rd., Errol	D. Hof

**White-winged Crossbill**

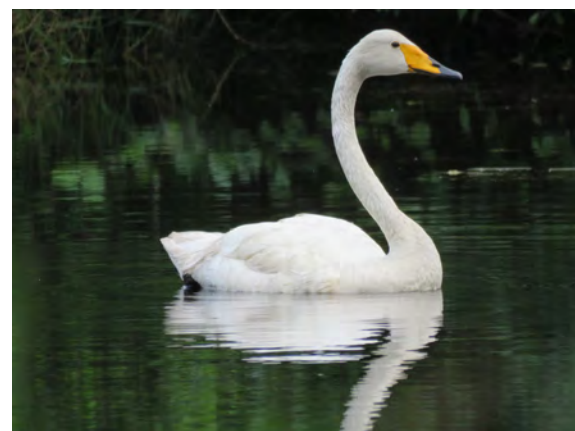
07/23	1	Umbagog NWR, Mollidgewock Brook Rd., Errol	D. Hof
07/28	1	Greenough Pond Rd., Errol	D. Hof

**Pine Siskin**

06/05	10	Sanborn Rd., Ashland	I. MacLeod
06/09	5	Mt. Washington Auto Road, Greens Grant	E. Speck
06/11	5	Ravenwood Farm, Greenfield	T. Shiel
06/12	5	River Rd., Penacook	L. York
06/14	5	Cheshire County, Keene	P. Brown
06/27	5	Crawford Path to Mizpah Spring Hut, Beans Grant	A. Burnett
06/29	6	Wildcat Mt. Ski Area, Pinkham's Grant	J. Nestler, J. Patterson
07/25	6	Mt. Eisenhower & Mt. Pierce, Beans Grant	A. Burnett
07/25	5	Mt. Jackson & Mt. Webster, Beans Grant	A. Burnett

**Evening Grosbeak**

06/10	3	Crawford Depot, Carroll	A. Burnett
06/13	2	Glebe Rd., Westmoreland	D. Hudon
06/21	2	Umbagog NWR	D. Hof
07/04	2	Gilford	D. Marchant
07/10	3	Ravenwood Farm, Greenfield	T. Shiel
07/13	2	Cole Plain Swamp, Lisbon	S. Turner
07/20	3	AT, Kinsman Mt. area, Lincoln	W.& L. Strobel



*Whooper Swan, an escaped exotic, that was seen at several locations in New Hampshire. It arrived at Amy Kane's in North Hampton on July 26, 2015 when she took this photo, and it stayed for the rest of the summer.*

# Summer 2015 Field Notes

Compiled by Rebecca Suomala



## Northern Gannet on Hampton Beach

This Northern Gannet (also appearing on the Back Cover) is a full adult that was sitting on Hampton Beach on July 11, 2015. Northern Gannets are an ocean going bird that feeds on fish that it captures by plunge diving. It is rare to see it on land except on the cliffs where they nest. The bird was not well and, according to Steve Mirick (posts to NH Birds on 7/11/15 and 7/12/15), it was brought to the Center for Wildlife in York, Maine. The bird was badly emaciated and unfortunately did not make it.

## Gray Jays Panhandling



Gray Jay watching for an opportunity to steal some food from hikers. Photo by David Forsyth, 7/20/15, Caps Ridge Trail, Mt. Jefferson, NH.



A Gray Jay "stealing" food from Jane Mirick on the Caps Ridge Trail. Photo by Steve Mirick, 6/27/15.

## Merlin Chick Rescue

by Scott Heron and Rebecca Suomala



Merlin chick on the ground, found and photographed by Marie and Sofia Kruger, 7/7/15, Kingston, NH.



Adult Merlin by Scott Heron, 7/31/15, Kingston, NH.

On July 6, 2015, Marie Kruger found a young Merlin on the ground along Main Street in Kingston, NH. The chick seemed to be in good shape and was delivered to the care of a licensed wildlife rehabilitator thanks to Evy Nathan and Marie.



Wildlife rehabilitator Jane Kelly worked to train the Merlin to hunt and, after he had made good headway perfecting his skill, he was successfully hunting live mice. In August while she was free flying him, he took to the skies and did not return. She reported: "I am confident in his skills and feisty temperament that he will thrive and reproduce in the wild. He was quite handsome and very smart!"

As Evy Nathan said, "True to form for him...he released himself. He really was a feisty little thing!"

### Eastern Screech-Owl Chicks at Ponemah Bog



*What's that brown blob in the tree?*



*It's seven Eastern Screech-Owl chicks at NH Audubon's Ponemah Bog Wildlife Sanctuary, in Amherst, NH. Photos by Laura Deming, 7/11/15.*

### Summer is Baby Bird Time!



*Bank Swallow babies at the mouth of a nesting hole in a sand bank where they typically nest. Photo by Steve Mirick, 7/3/15, Newmarket, NH.*



*Fledglings in the road! These babies (species unknown) only recently left the nest. Photo by Amanda Altana, 7/3/15, Bretton Woods, NH.*



*American Redstart nest by David Forsyth, 7/27/15, Randolph, NH.*

*Common Eider have only been confirmed breeding in New Hampshire at the Isles of Shoals. Every summer very young chicks are seen at the coast, like these photographed by Len Medlock, 6/27/15, in Rye, NH. According to waterfowl biologists the young could swim from the islands to the coast, so the challenge is to find a nest on the coast while the female is still incubating.*



# Spotlight on Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*)

by Stephen R. Mirick



Acadian Flycatcher by Jason Lambert, 6/4/15, Barnstead, NH.

## Background and Breeding

The Acadian Flycatcher is a small flycatcher of the southeastern United States with a breeding range that extends from eastern Texas to Florida in the south to southern Wisconsin and southern New England, as far north as southern Massachusetts. It is a long distance migrant that winters from Nicaragua south to Colombia and Ecuador and is thus considered a “neotropical” migrant.

Throughout most of its breeding range, it prefers undisturbed mature forests. These include swampy woodlands with bald cypress in the south and American beech and maple forests in the central parts of its range. In northern parts of its range, it prefers older hemlock ravines and mixed forests, where it typically forages from exposed branches in the understory. It builds its nest between three and nine meters high, often in the branches of a hemlock tree.

It is a member of the cryptic *empidonax* genus of flycatchers and is therefore very difficult to identify by sight. It is much more easily located by its explosive and distinctive song, which it persistently gives from late May into early July.

## Historic Records for New Hampshire

The northern edge of the breeding range for Acadian Flycatcher has historically been south of New England; however, the species has slowly been expanding its range northward. Outside of a single nesting record in 1888, the species went unrecorded in Massachusetts until 1961. Since then, the number of records in Massachusetts has increased and it is now established as a breeding species, locally, in many portions of the state, primarily south of Boston. This increase is thought to reflect the growth and maturity of hemlock and red maple forests in Massachusetts.

Curiously, many of the first records for New Hampshire occurred from central and northern parts of the state. The first record may have occurred on August 16, 1972, when an empidonax flycatcher was banded in Center Harbor, New Hampshire. It was measured and photographed; however, there appeared to have been some questions as to the accuracy of the identification and it was considered hypothetical at that time. From 1977 to 1980, single birds were located by song each year in New London, Bennington, Conway, and Littleton.

Since 1990, there have been approximately 29 reports of Acadian Flycatchers. Many have come from the mature forest at Pawtuckaway State Park in Nottingham and all sightings have come from south of the Lakes Region of the state. The species is irregular, however, and in some years none are reported.

## Seasonal Occurrence in New Hampshire

Almost all of the records in New Hampshire come from May, June, and July. This isn't surprising as the bird is most easily detected and identified at this time of year by its loud song. As with other flycatchers, the Acadian Flycatchers migrate south quickly and quietly in August and early September. The only exception to this is a single report of a bird photographed on Star Island at the Isles of Shoals on October 22, 2011, which is not only the first fall record for this species in the state, but possibly the latest New England record!

## Nesting Status in New Hampshire

Remarkably, the first attempted nesting in New Hampshire occurred as far north as Sandwich, when a female (without a mate) built a nest and laid three eggs in 1986. The nest and infertile eggs were collected and are now in the collection at the University of New Hampshire. The only other report of an attempted nesting came in 1998 from Pawtuckaway State Park, when a pair was observed building a nest in a hemlock grove; however, this nest also failed.

Figure 1. Map of Acadian Flycatcher records by town in New Hampshire, 1976-2015. Data sources as cited below.

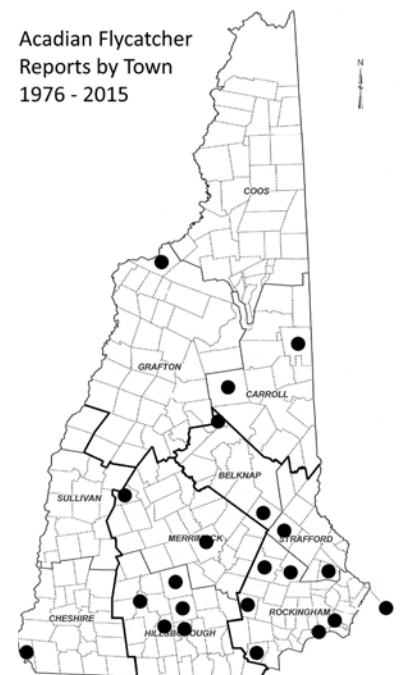
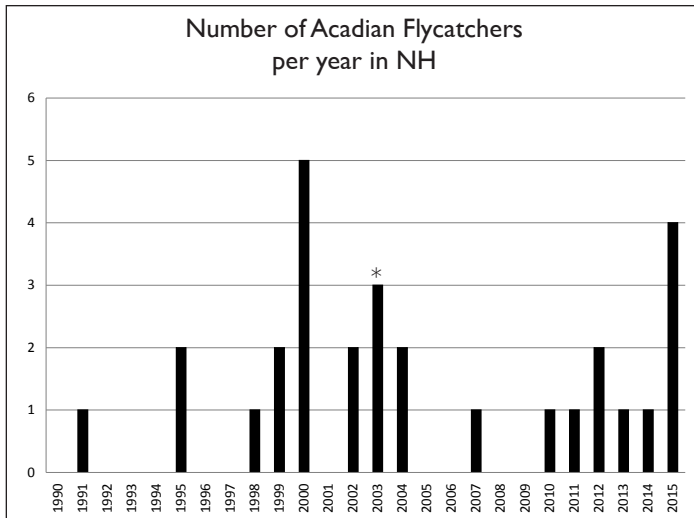


Figure 2. Number of Acadian Flycatchers per year (duplicate sightings of the same individual are not included) in New Hampshire from 1990-2015. Data sources as cited below.



\* in 2000, 3 of these records were from the brief banding operation at Star Island.

Other than these two nesting attempts, all records are of apparently unpaired, singing males. Several of these individuals stayed for long periods, but no clear nesting activity was observed and most birds did not return the next year. Despite the increases in Massachusetts, the species has failed to gain a foothold as a nesting species in New Hampshire. *To date, there are no records of successful nesting for this species in the State.*

## Habitat Selection and the Woolly Adelgid

Hemlock forests in the northeastern United States have been decimated by the invasive woolly adelgid, an aphid like insect that originated in Asia and kills hemlock trees. It has slowly advanced northward through the mid-Atlantic states as far as southern New Hampshire. Hemlocks are a preferred habitat for the Acadian Flycatcher and some studies have shown corresponding declines for this species in infected forests.

One interesting aspect of recent sightings in New Hampshire has been the seemingly atypical habitat selection of singing males. As stated earlier, this species prefers mature forests, especially hemlocks, and most of New Hampshire's sightings are from this type of habitat. The following recent sightings, however, were from habitats where one normally wouldn't expect to find this species.

- In 2012, a singing male, apparently without a mate, frequented an area near Horseshoe Pond in Concord. This habitat is largely urban floodplain and lies adjacent to several large open fields. It sang regularly for about two weeks in late May into early June in 2012. It returned again in 2013 when it sang in the same area from late May until July 21!
- In 2014, a singing male, apparently without a mate, was found along Bennett Road in Durham in an area

of overgrown pasture and alders. It stayed from late May into late June, sometimes singing from a large oak tree adjacent to the pasture land.

- In 2015, a singing male, apparently without a mate, showed up along Brindle Pond Road in Barnstead. The area was dominated by alders and wetland habitat along the drainage from Brindle Pond. It sang regularly for at least nine days in mid-June.

It remains to be seen how the loss of hemlock forests to our south and these strange changes in habitat selection in New Hampshire might impact the northward expansion of Acadian Flycatchers in the state. Birders should learn its distinctive song and be on the lookout for the species, potentially from anywhere in the state and in any habitat!

## Data Sources

The following data sources were searched for records of this species.

- New Hampshire Bird Records* and archives, circa 1963 through November 31, 2012. New Hampshire Audubon, Concord, New Hampshire.
- Bulletin of New England Bird-life*, 1936–1944. New England Museum of Natural History, Boston, Massachusetts.
- Records of New England Birds, in Massachusetts Audubon Society Bulletin*, 1945–1955. Massachusetts Audubon Society, Concord, Massachusetts.
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- Whitehead, D. and T. Taylor. 2002. Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax vireescens*). In *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online.
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# Backyard Birder

## Cross-Species Feeding Among Birds

by Brenda Sens

On July 21, 2014, the New Hampshire Audubon Society received a very interesting observation from Jeffrey Coventry. He wrote:

“I am writing to you for an understanding of what I witnessed one day at my feeder. Recently, I saw a female cardinal feeding a Rose-breasted Grosbeak baby. At first, I thought maybe the cardinal was confused, but that couldn't happen, right? Later that evening at the last feeding of the night, I noticed a male cardinal feeding a baby Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Do you know if this is a common thing or just one of those things that just happens if the babies lose their parents or parent. Just before this feeding happened, we found an adult dead grosbeak in the backyard where all the bird houses are located.”

It often happens that one sighting, however unusual it seems, begets another and on August 2, Matt Tarr wrote:

“Attached is a video of a Veery feeding Common Yellowthroat nestlings on one of my study sites. I have never seen any other bird species come to my yellowthroat nests. This Veery showed up about five minutes prior to the attached clip, checked out the nest and went through the motions of feeding the nestlings (but didn't have food) and then flew off. It came back with a bill full of what looks to be ants and beetles.

I can only assume that this Veery had a nest nearby and that the nest was predated (sic) recently. I have always imagined that this is a confusing experience for a bird...perhaps this bird searched the nearby area and came across this yellowthroat nest and assumed it was her nestlings? Pure speculation. What is odd is that this nest is in the wettest location I have ever had a Common Yellowthroat nest – it is near the edge of the powerline ROW (where we do have Veerys nesting occasionally), but it was in a little cattail-alder wetland.”

You can see this video on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/saO426M9SI0> (or find it on the NH Audubon YouTube site with other videos, <https://www.youtube.com/user/NewHampshireAudubon>).

As strange as these sightings seem, research reveals that such instances have been reported often enough to warrant a serious review of the phenomenon. Eliminating cases that

involved captive and parasitic birds and any switching of eggs done by an experimenter, Marilyn Muszalski Shy in her “*Interspecific Feeding Among Birds: A Review*,” managed to summarize 140 cases of such feeding representing 22 families and 65 species who were fed by 22 families and 71 species. Learning who feeds whom is interesting, but the primary question is why the behavior takes place at all. Muszalski Shy states that, “The subject is potentially of considerable evolutionary interest since in interspecific helping, kin selection is impossible.” With that in mind, and based on the circumstances of the reports she studied, she has come up with a number of categories to explain the causes.

- 1. Mixed Clutches:** The competition for suitable nesting sites often becomes so fierce, especially with hole-nesting birds, that the female of one species will lay eggs in the nest of another or take the nest over completely leading to the raising of more than one species by another.
- 2. Close Nesting of Species:** If the nests of two different species of birds are close together, one or both pairs often take an interest in the nest of the other. Nesting birds are so programmed to respond to the calls of their hungry nestlings that the calls of other young birds, nestlings or fledglings, may trigger the behavior. Orphaned birds are often fed for the same reason.
- 3. Male Feeding a Different Species while Mate Incubates:** This behavior was observed quite often with some males so enthusiastic about feeding their own nestlings that they have been seen offering food to unhatched eggs—a sweet sight to imagine.
- 4. Mateless Birds:** In some cases, a bird that does not succeed in finding a mate has been seen feeding nestlings of another species and, in others, a mateless bird joined forces with a bird of another species whose mate had disappeared and both raised the young.

Adult birds of one species have been reported feeding fledglings of another species and this has been attributed to the strong instinct birds have to respond to begging calls and behavior.

As with all well-meaning parental behavior, the results may not be entirely beneficial. Nestlings being fed by a species other than their own may not develop the social skills needed for interaction with their own kind and face difficulty in finding mates.

For greater detail concerning interspecies feeding, please see: Muszalski Shy, M. 1982. Interspecific Feeding Among Birds: A Review. *Journal of Field Ornithology*. Vol. 53, # 4, pp. 370-393. (Available on the internet)

*Brenda Sens is a Volunteer Naturalist for NH Audubon since 1998, answering people's questions about birds and natural history once a week. She enjoys watching birds at her home in Gilmanton, especially the Osprey nesting on the nearby pond.*

# Birding While Kayaking – Hampton Harbor

by Scott Heron



*Whimbrel photographed by Scott Heron while kayaking in Hampton Harbor, 8/29/15.*

For those familiar with birding the New Hampshire seacoast, there's perhaps no better place to find great birds than Hampton Harbor. It's a prime stop for any coastal birding excursion. This large tidal area, surrounded by salt marsh to the west and seasonal vacation-goers to the east, rises and falls each day swallowing up every foot of mud and sand at high tide and revealing expansive mudflats at low tide. In addition to the veiny network of streams and channels draining the marsh, the harbor is principally formed by the Hampton River from the north and the Blackwater River from the south. These two rivers join in the center of the harbor and begin flowing eastward, under the Route 1A bridge in Hampton and out to the Atlantic Ocean.

While most birders experience this harbor from dry land with high-powered scopes from fixed vantage points, a perhaps more intimate means of enjoying the harbor is to place yourself on the water itself in either a canoe or kayak. This mode of transportation offers a fairly unique perspective not easily achieved otherwise. The slow and lazy travel style coupled with "low-post" sightlines can often promise spectacular looks at a wide variety of herons, shorebirds, and gulls.

I've found that the best time to paddle the harbor is any time in August during low tide when southbound migrants are drawn to the expansive mudflats. It's here and at this time that birds are plentiful and anything could show up!

## Access Points

There are various access points at which non-motorized watercraft like canoes and kayaks can enter the harbor and surrounding river network. Choosing which to launch from basically depends on a couple of factors: 1) The tide. It can be beneficial to use the tidal flow to your advantage. Launch

from where you can ride the tide as it goes out; and back when the tide comes in. 2) Time of day. I prefer to launch from the east (along Route 1A) in the morning to keep the sun at my back and on subject birds. If launching at mid-day or later, launching from the west can help keep harsh lighting at bay.

## Harborside Park, Seabrook (A)

Adjacent to the Yankee Fisherman's Coop pier, Harborside Park is a personal favorite point from which to put in my kayak. Just off of Route 1A, the entrance is on the west side of the road through a break in the chain link fence just north of the entrance to the Yankee Fisherman's Coop parking lot. Park down the driveway near the pier and unload your vessel. You can launch straight from the beach. Make sure to move your vehicle back on the Route 1A side of the fence before putting in to avoid ticketing.

It's best to start from here early in the morning to make full use of the morning sun. Launching from this spot puts you in close proximity to the main thoroughfare of the harbor. At low tide, terns and gulls will be on full display as well as multiple species of herons and shorebirds such as Great and Snowy Egrets, Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, and Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers. Occasionally, Arctic and Forster's Terns, American Golden-Plovers, American Oystercatchers and American Avocets may drop in during migration.

Paddle northward along the beach to the east, keeping an eye out for nesting Piping Plovers. You'll reach a bend in the beach which opens up to the harbor's inlet to the ocean. Sticking along the mudflats to the west, you'll find a long sliver of sandbar after which you will come to a channel between two large mudflat areas. On either side, you may find a spectacular showing of waders including Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons and possibly Yellow-crowned Night-Herons.

As you wrap around the sandbanks and begin to head south, continue to keep your eyes peeled for other species such as Short-billed Dowitchers, Whimbrels, and Least and Roseate Terns. Swallows such as Tree, Barn, and Bank can be spotted buzzing over the marsh and river channels. You may also find some of our local breeders including Willets, Ospreys with young perched on nesting platforms over the marsh, or perhaps one of our Purple Martins foraging away from their gourd nests on Cross Beach Road not far to the south.

While navigating the flats in this area during a falling tide, be mindful of water level as it is quite easy to "bottom out" and get stuck on the many sandbars below the surface. Though not dangerous, becoming hung up on such bars can be a minor annoyance and may require you to backtrack or even get out and relocate your kayak on foot to find deeper water.



*Greater Yellowlegs photographed by Scott Heron while kayaking in Hampton Harbor, 9/1/14.*

## Hampton Harbor State Marina, Hampton (B)

Just north of the Yankee Fisherman's Coop over the Rt. 1A bridge, the Hampton Harbor State Marina is also off of Route 1A. From the south, head north on Route 1A and turn left onto Harbor Road and take an immediate left toward the marina parking area. Turn right at the stop sign and head into the lot. The boat launch is on the north side of the marina. If visiting during the summer months, a fee is charged before entering the parking area.

From here, you can head north or south. During high tide, I recommend heading north of the marina to explore some of the salt marsh along the east edge of the Hampton River. This edge of the marsh can promise roosting shorebirds such as Black-bellied Plovers, Short-billed Dowitchers, and Greater Yellowlegs, and it can even bring in goodies such as a Hudsonian Godwit or American Avocet. At low tide, there are several mudflat areas to explore north of the marina which can offer night-herons and shorebirds such as Red Knots.

## Route 101 Boat Launch, Hampton (C)

Though marked with no signage, there is good boat access just along Route 101 in Hampton. From the west on Route 101, look for a lone dirt driveway on the right side of the road about 0.4 miles east of Landing Road. You will see a radio tower on the left just before a bridge leading into the marsh. The boat launch is directly across the road from the radio tower and just west of the bridge. If you've crossed the bridge and find yourself in the marsh toward Hampton Beach, you've gone too far. Park at the end of the driveway to put in.

From this point, you'll head south through a large tidal channel called Tide Mill Creek. This channel will eventually lead to the Hampton River and into the harbor to the south. Keep an eye out for night-herons, terns, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, and shorebirds on the muddy banks of the river channels.

## Depot Road, Hampton Falls (D)

From Route 95, take Exit 1 heading east on Route 107 toward Seabrook. Turn left onto Route 1 heading north toward Hampton Falls. After 1.7 miles, turn right onto Depot Road. Drive to the end of the road until it reaches the marsh. From here, you can launch and head east. You'll soon enter a large tributary, the Hampton Falls River, to the Hampton River. Turn right to reach the main branch of the Hampton River. Turn right and head south toward the harbor.

Note that traveling from this boat launch to the harbor area requires over two miles of paddling each way. For those determined enough, going this route is a great way to take in the scenic marsh and will potentially offer more views of nesting Ospreys as well as good diversity of foraging shorebirds all along the river banks.

## Beckman's Landing, Seabrook (E)

From Route 95, take Exit 1 heading east on Route 107 toward Seabrook. Turn right onto Route 1 heading south. After 0.3 miles, turn left onto Railroad Avenue. Railroad Avenue will become Farm Lane and then become Depot Road in Seabrook (not the same as Depot Road in Hampton, above). Drive to the end of the road until it reaches the marsh. From here, you can launch your vessel and head east along Mill Creek until it opens up to the harbor.

A word of caution: access from this boat launch is not possible during low tide. When the tide is at its lowest, the dredged channel that connects the boat launch area to the river system drains completely. If you do launch from here, plan your trip carefully. The channel won't flood again until at least an hour and a half after low tide.

## Tides and Current

The tides and the flow of current are always factors when enjoying saltwater paddling but they are sometimes tricky to pin down. My personal preference for the timing of the tide is to plan my trip around low tide. I'll take as much low tide as I can get, so I prefer to catch it on its way out after mid-tide at dawn. This will give me several hours with exposed flats and hungry birds. I use the following tide chart to plan my saltwater kayak trips:

<http://nh.us harbors.com/monthly-tides/New Hampshire/Hampton Harbor>

The current is something to be mindful of, though not generally something to be concerned with when in a protected harbor. In some cases, it may provide a mild struggle in areas where narrow channels are draining. As such, it may help to plan your trip so that when you begin your paddle, the tide is heading out, and when you're heading back, the tide is coming in.

One minor nuisance to also be mindful of when paddling as the tide is headed out, is “bottoming out.” As water level decreases, the chances of getting hung up on sandbars increases. This can be a little frustrating and require a bit of backtracking to find deeper water.



*Semipalmated Sandpiper photographed by Scott Heron while kayaking in Hampton Harbor, 8/3/14.*

## Cautions and Guidance

While a complete list of safety tips is beyond the scope of this article, it’s certainly worth stressing a few key points: 1) Be mindful of weather conditions, especially winds. If winds are forecast to kick up, I recommend avoiding the water and staying on foot. Conditions can turn bad quickly and in some cases prove to be a challenge when paddling back to

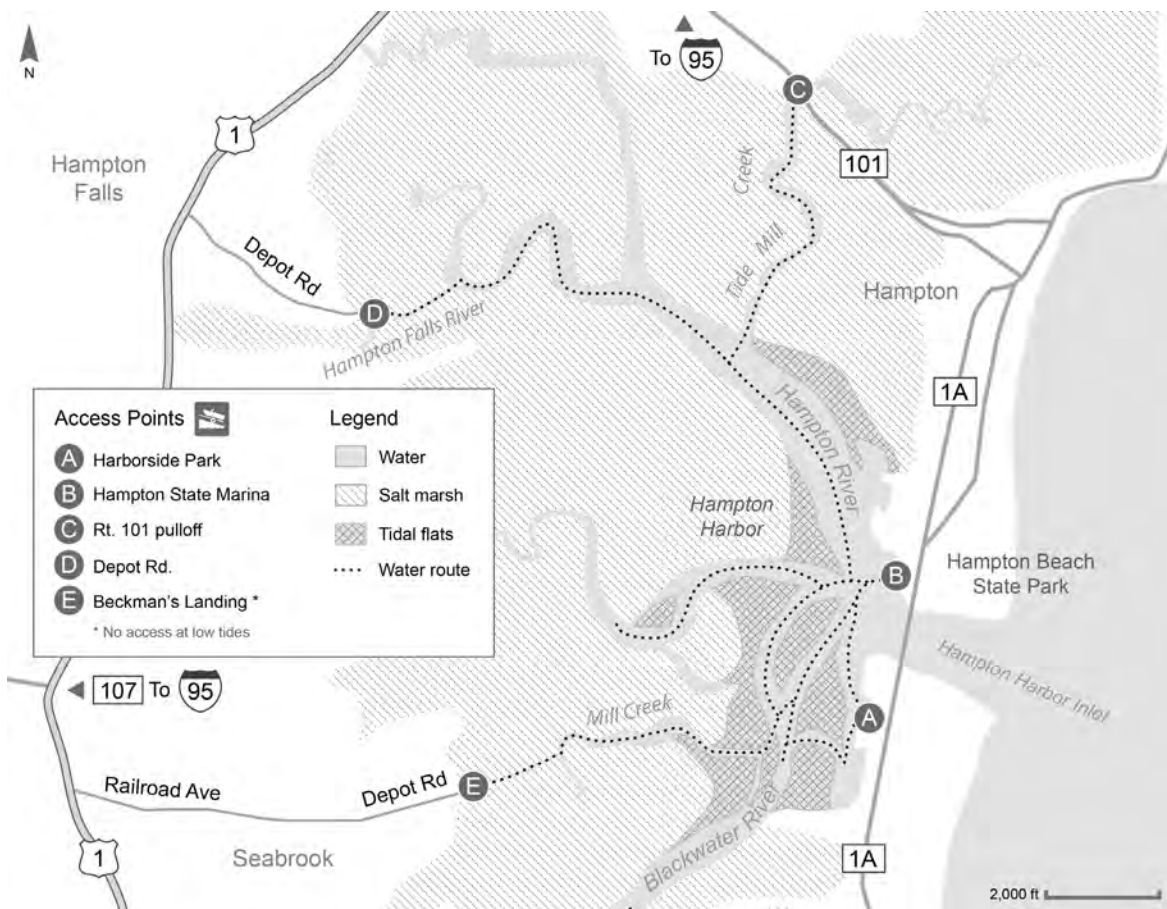
shore. 2) Be mindful of other boaters. Hampton Harbor is a busy place for boats, especially in summer. I often skirt the edges of the harbor or stick to shallow areas to avoid run-ins with large, motorized boats. 3) Always remember the three “F’s”: Floatation, Floatation, Floatation. Wear a comfortable personal floatation device (PFD) at all times.

As a general rule of thumb, in the event of a capsized, it helps to paddle with three or more boats in your birding party. If one vessel capsizes, there are two others to help right the third. You can read more safety tips at:

[http://www.oceankayak.com/kayaking\\_basics/basic\\_safety\\_rules/](http://www.oceankayak.com/kayaking_basics/basic_safety_rules/)

Biting insects are a certainty when kayaking around salt marshes. Two types to be concerned with are biting midges and greenheads. Both can be avoided for the most part if you stay out away from marsh edges, but when in narrow channels in close proximity to river banks, midges can become bothersome. Long sleeves and insect repellent might be enough to deter such nuisances.

My final word of caution: Protect your expensive gear! Speaking from personal experience, saltwater and digital cameras don’t get along. Always keep expensive equipment strapped to your person in a waterproof bag, or better yet at home, far away from the corrosive nature of saltwater. Of course, if you do happen to take an unexpected plunge with your 7DmkII and 400mm lens, my advice is: “don’t.”



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# Field Trip Report

## Birding in the Connecticut River's Upper Valley

by Blake Allison



*Belted Kingfishers by David Forsyth.*

Rivers often are thought of as boundaries, natural barriers that separate communities and peoples from one another, but in the Upper Valley, when it comes to birding, the Connecticut River helps bring communities together. NH Audubon's Mascoma Chapter is a textbook example. Its membership comes from both New Hampshire and Vermont, birders drawn together by a common passion. This conjunction creates a flow of talent and resources back and forth across the river and it does so to the benefit of both birding communities. A case in point is chapter Steering Committee member Dr. George Clark. The dean of Upper Valley birders, George, a resident of Norwich, VT, was named NH Audubon's 2013 "Volunteer of the Year" in recognition of his considerable contribution to birding on both sides of the river.

In the matter of resources, the Mascoma Chapter benefits not only from being part of NH Audubon and its network, it also can draw upon the assets of Vermont-based birding oriented organizations such as the Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS) and the Vermont Center for Ecostudies. Of course, another significant benefit the chapter gains from its geographic location is the ability to take field trips to an array of diverse and interesting locales in both states. This can include excursions along the Connecticut or going farther afield to celebrated birding destinations such as the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Addison, VT, famed for its grand, fall display of migrating snow geese.

On Saturday, July 25, a typical chapter outing began in Hanover as a dozen birders led by George Clark traveled north along the Connecticut River via River Road to a Lyme wetland that marks the outflow of Grant Brook into "the great river." That day, as often happens in the summer, dense, early morning fog restricted visibility. Just the same, the group recorded 29 species.

After forming carpools, the group moved out heading north on Rt. 10. The first stop was Wilson's Landing, Hanover's only public access boat ramp. It also is home to Friends of Hanover Crew whose facilities are a boon to birders. The club organization's dock affords observers an opportunity to get about six feet away from the shore. This provides unobstructed views both north and south, but given the conditions that morning, a better viewing point was not going to be much of an advantage. Just the same, highlights included four Eastern Kingbirds, a Red-eyed Vireo, four Cedar Waxwings and a Swamp Sparrow.

About a half mile beyond Wilson's Landing, River Road's southern entrance appears on the left. River Road is the Upper Valley's oldest byway, laid out in the late 1750s to facilitate moving troops and supplies north from Fort No. 4 in Charlestown, NH during the Seven Years War.

The first stop on River Road was just over the line into Lyme at an area known as "Hidden Valley." There the road is right at river level and it hugs the shore for about a half-mile. That topography provides excellent vantage points for looking up and down the river, but again, as at Wilson's Landing, the heavy mist restricted viewing.

Back in the cars, the party made its way north towards the Grant Brook outflow. Along the way, it made stops at Wilmot Farm's corn and hay fields, the Hewes Brook Car Top Boat Launch area and Wilder WMA before arriving at the morning's intended destination.

Grant Brook's varied habitats, riparian scrub, woods with deciduous and coniferous trees and extensive wetlands, provide the potential for viewing a diverse array of species. During migration, Ring-necked Ducks, American Black Ducks, and Hooded and Common Mergansers can be seen there. In the spring and summer months, a variety of warblers can be found in the woods and scrub. Bald Eagles have been seen on occasion perching in trees at the river's edge and walking a half-mile up into the woods along Grant Brook has rewarded observers with a view of a Northern Waterthrush.

The record for the morning was typical of the species diversity that a summer's day visit to Grant Brook can produce. Highlights included two Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, a Belted Kingfisher, a Willow Flycatcher, two Bank Swallows, a Common Yellowthroat, a Chestnut-sided Warbler, a Scarlet Tanager, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak and an Indigo Bunting.

*Blake Allison is Chair of the Mascoma Chapter's Steering Committee. He leads birding events for the Chapter and regularly posts his sighting activity to the Upper Valley Birders list-serv and NH Bird Digest. He also occasionally writes bird-related articles for local blogs.*



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# Common Nighthawk 2015 Nesting Season

by Rebecca Suomala



*American Redstart by David Forsyth.*

## Capital Area Chapter Walk in Concord, July 2015

by Robert A. Quinn

After leading local bird walks for decades and traditionally going to the known good birding places at the optimal times of the year, it is sometimes interesting and fun to try something different. So, on July 25, 2015, a NH Audubon Capital Chapter group joined me at the McLane Center in Concord to see what we might find during the heat of the summer. And it **was** hot, but also quite birdy. The star of the show was not a bird but a tree. A Black Cherry overflowing with ripe fruit was the attraction for a pleasingly high number and variety of birds. Not only were there a lot of birds in this tree, but they were relatively easy to see as they came back time and time again for the juicy berries. In late July, most of the local land birds have finished raising their young so we were treated to an assortment of individuals of different ages and in different stages of molt. The cherry tree acted as a giant bird feeder, thereby affording us repeated and lengthy chances to study the multiplicity of plumages and feeding behaviors.

Our first one and a half hours were spent at this one tree where we saw about 20 species. We had leisurely scope views of many birds that are more often heard than seen, such as Scarlet Tanager, Red-eyed Vireo, American Redstart, Veery, Pine Warbler, and Indigo Bunting. Plus, we saw a nice assortment of family groups including Eastern Wood-Pewees, Eastern Phoebes, Eastern Kingbirds, Eastern Bluebirds, Gray Catbirds, Cedar Waxwings, and Northern Cardinals. Nothing rare but certainly a colorful assembly of cooperative birds.

Many thanks to the 14 people who came out on a hot summer's day and especially to Rob Woodward for informally helping with this group and for sharing some of his vast knowledge about the Turkey Pond area birdlife.



*Two small Common Nighthawk chicks, 3-4 days old, on the White Mountain Imaging rooftop in Concord, 7/14/15. Photo by Rebecca Suomala.*

The Common Nighthawk nesting season started slowly, but activity picked up in the latter half of June, providing lots of excitement. We were able to confirm two successful nests, one in Concord and one in Franklin, both on buildings which granted access to Project Nighthawk personnel. The nest in Concord started with two chicks, but only one fledged. The other chick was found desiccated on the rooftop, presumably from heat exposure. Females typically shade chicks under their body on hot days, but this one was found by a pipe and may have wandered away from the female. The fledged juvenile at the Concord site stayed in the vicinity of the building, usually in the grassy edges of the parking lot, practicing flight and being fed in the evening. This allowed us a fantastic opportunity to monitor post-fledging activity for 20 days until the chick was last seen at 39 days old.

A nest in Franklin was the first there since Project Nighthawk started in 2007 and fledged two chicks. The building owner, Todd Workman, was very enthusiastic about this nest and helpful with monitoring. One chick decided to explore a little early and ended up on the sidewalk. Two great folks at a nearby building tried to pick up the bird, but it fluttered into the middle of Central Avenue. They stopped traffic and herded the bird into some evergreen shrubs on the edge of the sidewalk. I retrieved the chick and put it back up on the roof, where mom and a second chick were comfortably snuggled up to a beer bottle! Few nests are confirmed each year and many are not successful, especially on rooftops, so to have two successful rooftop nests was a first for Project Nighthawk.

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## Have You Seen a Twigger?

by Robert A. Quinn



*Chimney Swift by Len Medlock.*



*Common Nighthawk chick after being returned to the roof in Franklin, and the female with the other chick, 7/8/15. Photos by Rebecca Suomala.*

Phil Brown confirmed yet another nest, this one in a natural setting on Black Cap Mountain in Conway. When he was hiking with his son in late July, he heard some strange noises and upon investigating discovered a female nighthawk sitting on a rock near a nighthawk egg shell. The condition of the shell indicated hatch and not predation. Despite several attempts, we were not able to locate any chicks, but the male continued to display over the summit and there were many places those chicks could have been hiding.

Thanks to Sheridan and Deb Brown, we conducted the first ever coordinated nighthawk watch in Grantham in mid-July and had nine nighthawks, but no behavior that indicated nesting. Activity at other locations such as Keene and Ossipee was challenging to figure out, with potential nesting but no confirmation. In Keene, Brett Thelen and the Ashuelot Valley Environmental Observatory (a program of the Harris Center) volunteers conducted a number of watches and tallied four birds, similar to past years. In Ossipee, the total number of birds at our usual pine barren sites was down, but we also had two males in a new area in nearby Tamworth for a total of seven males and one or two females. We're fairly sure there was at least one nest, possibly a second late nest, and probably a nest that failed some time in June.

If you'd like to support or volunteer for Project Nighthawk, contact me (see inside front cover). The Project Nighthawk 2015 summary is available on-line at: <http://nhbirdrecords.org/bird-conservation/project-nighthawk/>.

Is your curiosity piqued? A “twigger” is what I call Chimney Swifts that are gathering twigs for their nests. They do this by flying by a tall tree that has some dead branches and grabbing twigs with their feet. The twigs are then glued together using their saliva as the adhesive, almost always inside a chimney. I know, calling them “twiggers” is not very original, but it is *lots* of fun to watch and I was fortunate enough to see this behavior three times during the summer of 2015.

Swifts have always fascinated me and my fascination has grown now that they are a species of conservation concern based on Breeding Bird Survey data which shows a continent-wide population decline. For years, I have been watching them, and counting them, in downtown Concord (see Field Notes: “Chimney Swift: The Fascinating Will-o-the-wisp of Urban Areas” in the Spring 2012 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*, Vol. 31, No. 1) but in 2015, I widened my geographic area. Between late May and late July, I tallied swifts in about 25 different places around the state. This was easier than it might seem because I also volunteer for “Project Nighthawk,” consequently, many observations were in the evening and frequently coincided with that project. I even saw some twiggling while making a normal visit to my Post Office.

## Twigging

Warner, June 18 (four birds with one bird twigging)

Contoocook, June 19 (15 birds with two or three twigging)

Concord, June 25 (12+ birds with two or three twigging)

Two of the three twigging events were serendipitous (Warner and Concord) and one was when I was actually looking for swifts (Contoocook).

## Robert A. Quinn's 2015 Swift Data

I recorded 50+ swifts at three sites (Concord, Franklin, and Laconia, with Suncook vying for that level with 43). Below is a table of my observations (some sites were visited more than once).

LOCATION	DATE	# OF BIRDS	NOTES
Contoocook village	May 28	17	A known roost
Concord	May 29	175+	A known site but not a roost
Morrill's Farm	May 30	5+	
Errol	June 10	4+	
Gorham	June 12	7+	
Tilton	June 13	23	
Franklin	June 13	75+	
New London	June 18	7	
Warner	June 18	4	One twigging
Contoocook village	June 19	15+	Two were twigging. No roost tonight
Belmont	June 21	8+	
Laconia	June 21	40+	A new roost discovered
Laconia	June 23	53+	A more accurate tally
Hopkinton village	June 24	6+	
Concord	June 25	20+	All at the same tree and several were twigging
Newport	June 29	10	
Loudon	July 4	8	
Suncook	July 8	43	No roost, just foraging birds
Concord	July 24	215	A known site but not a roost
Concord	July 24	12	A new site
Webster	July 25	18	At one house. Possibly several families
Gorham	July 29	25+	A foraging flock. No roost detected
Dummer	July 31	5	Over Pontook Reservoir

## Fun with Swifts

Here are just two examples of my summer of fun with swifts.

**Franklin, June 13, 2015.** While waiting for Common Nighthawk activity in Franklin, I noticed dozens of swifts over the city and eventually tracked most of them to one chimney a block off Main Street. Even though I did not see the first ones drop into the chimney to roost, the tally was at least 75 birds. There are several interesting points about this observation. It was well into the breeding season when you might think that all swifts have paired up and are nesting, but this turns out not to be true. Recent surveys in New Hampshire (and elsewhere) have shown that major roosts continue right through the breeding season (Pam Hunt, pers. com.). It is also known that up to three non-breeding adults can help at a nest site (especially feeding nestlings), and it is possible that these mid-summer roosts consist of these non-breeding helpers (Dexter 1981 in the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in New Hampshire*). Note the similar mid-June numbers (50+) for Laconia in the Table. The other interesting point is that the roost I found in Franklin was in *a different chimney* from similar sized roosts discovered by Pam Hunt in 2013 and 2014 in Franklin! We have known for hundreds of years that swifts roost communally during migration, yet roosts with large numbers of birds seem to also be a regular part of the nesting process/season too. Why? The numbers recorded going into mid-summer roosts are large enough to suggest a combination of non-breeders as well as "helpers," but we don't really know yet. As Pam said, "More questions than answers yet again!"

**Webster July, 2015.** My Webster site encapsulates the entire gamut of unpredictability, possibilities, and fun. Webster is somewhat atypical for swifts because it is rural and lacks the mill buildings/ chimneys of cities such as Concord, Franklin, Suncook, and Laconia. But swifts have found at least one old farmhouse to their liking, and it is less than one mile from where I live. Twice I watched the birds at this local farmhouse, once in the evening when I tallied 17 birds, but also once at noontime a few days later when the total was 18 birds with six going into the chimney (feeding young?). The mysteries continue as the roost site locations and numbers seem to ebb and flow from one chimney to another.

## More Fun Facts

While conducting research for this article, I came across some remarkable swift stories.

- Some have been known to nest in cisterns, old cabins, boat houses, and even inside occupied houses. One nest was found right next to a young child's bed.
- Another nest was built and successfully fledged young three years in a row in the most unlikely place of all, the inside surface of an outhouse door that was constantly in use!
- There is a breeding record from 1887 at an elevation of 3,840 feet along the Mount Washington Auto Road.
- They are the most aerial of all birds. Swifts in Europe have been documented to have mated in flight and even to sleep on the wing! Their spirited courtship flights are aerial and acrobatic masterpieces.
- They have become dependent on us because they have adapted to nesting in chimneys after the large dead trees they originally used disappeared as the forests were cut down.
- In the late spring, their salivary glands become enlarged because they use saliva to glue their stick nests together. In Asia, swift nests are boiled down to make bird nest soup!
- According to the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in New Hampshire*, they are single brooded, are known to forage through the night when feeding young, and most of their young fledge in late July.

## What You Can Do

Hopefully, it is now clear that **you** as a concerned birder can help add to what is known while having **fun** in the field with an intriguing, mysterious, and beguiling species. And you can do so wherever your birding takes you, even when running errands! Swifts are a classic example of a fairly common bird with much we still don't know about them. Also, they are now a species of conservation concern. Why not focus a little bit of your birding, help increase our knowledge, and have **fun** while you are doing it!

P.S. Many cities/sites in the state have little or no current swift data. Just a few places that come to mind are Nashua, most of Manchester, Portsmouth (and the rest of the heavily birded Seacoast for that matter), Rochester, Keene, and especially north of the Lakes Region.

*Bob Quinn has birded throughout New Hampshire (and the world) for almost 40 years. For 20 years, he was the New Hampshire Bird Records Summer Editor. He has a keen interest in the status of birds in New Hampshire and, in 2010, was honored with the Goodhue-Elkins award. Bob is*

*the proprietor of Merlin Enterprises, a natural history services business.*

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## Birding Notes from the 1930s

*by Sandy Turner*

*In 2006, Buddy Provost first contacted New Hampshire Audubon about his father Maurice Provost's journals which contained New Hampshire bird sightings from the 1930s. The observations were interesting and valuable, but they were written in long-hand, and the bird sightings were mixed in with many other observations. Old, hand written birding journals can provide unique and valuable information on historic bird distribution, but that information is not easy to extract from the paper copies. We contemplated computerizing the sightings, but we were missing both a suitable repository and an interested volunteer. With the advent of eBird, there is now a place where historic bird sightings can be entered and that will ensure that valuable information is not lost. It also makes it easily available to the public. This seemed a perfect place for the Provost sightings and after a few more years, a volunteer materialized. Sandy Turner began entering a friend's historic records into eBird and then tackled those from Ruby Emery in northern New Hampshire. For her next project, we finally connected Sandy with Buddy who loaned her his father's journals. Sandy read the journals and entered the bird sightings from New Hampshire, adding them to the eBird archive of data for the state. She found them enjoyable to read and here describes one of the interesting historical notes she came across. A special thank you to both Buddy Provost for making the journals available and to Sandy Turner for entering them into eBird. If you are interested in transcribing historical bird sightings into eBird, please contact me. Becky Suomala*

**M**aurice Provost birded the streets of Manchester and grounds of St. Anselm College during his young years. His detailed journals of those times in the 1930s as a budding ornithologist/naturalist were brought to the attention of New Hampshire Audubon by his son Buddy Provost. Maurice's mentor, Father Eugene, encouraged his interest by making him more aware of bird behavior, helping

him learn the intricacies of bird banding, and introducing him to ornithologists in both New Hampshire and Massachusetts. I had the pleasure of reading his journals and entering his data for August 8, 1933 through June 17, 1939 in eBird.

Maurice visited the north end of Lake Umbagog July 16-18, 1935 and was encouraged to climb a “tall pine” to examine the contents of a presumed Bald Eagle nest. In his words, “the nest was abandoned, but had been used that year.” In a later journal he wrote:

“Tuesday, Feb 21<sup>st</sup>, 1939

Weather: Cloudy and not very cold. Temp. 28 to 34. Light snow.

All afternoon at S.A.C. (St. Anselm College) Fr. Eugene and I spent a few hours together discussing things of mutual interest. He told me of the efforts presently being made to legislate protection for the Bald Eagle in New Hampshire.

It seems that Mr. Pough of the National Association of Audubon Societys (sic) finally got Mr. Atwell, my old friend of the N.H. Audubon Society to act in this matter. Mr. Atwell saw Mr. Stobie, the head of the Fish and Game Dept, and this gentleman agreed to push the matter in the legislature now sitting. Mr. Pough then wrote to the State Attorney, Mr. Cheney, to find out exactly what the law stated in respect to the eagle. The law protects all birds except “The English Sparrow, the Starling, Hawks, Owls, and Crows.” Mr. Cheney, however, was not sure whether the Eagle was a Hawk, as the term is generally understood, and opined that the only way to find out was to bring about a test case in order to give the Supreme Court of the State a chance to interpret the case. This sounds logical enough. But, such a procedure means the shooting of an eagle. It is ironical to sacrifice such a rare bird just to find out whether or not it is protected by law. There are so few Eagles in the State that this is tantamount to exterminating a species in order to prove it is protected by law.”

This comment was of particular interest to me because my husband Mark and I monitored the Lake Umbagog Bald Eagle nest from 1989 to 1993, after which it was watched by the biologists of Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge. In 1989, Bald Eagles returned to the same tree on a small island in the lake after 40 years, although there was no remnant of the original nest. Local residents and, in particular, local fishermen were very proud of “their” eagles. Over our years there, we had hundreds of visitors to our campsite on a different island, about one-quarter mile away from the nest tree, to look at these famous eagles. They were famous

because their history was reported in newspapers, magazines and even Voice of America in Europe.

The male, YT (for Yellow Tag), was hatched from an egg that was brought from Alaska and hatched (raised with minimum exposure to humans) in Upper New York State, where he was released. His mate Moll was tagged in a Maine nest. This was near the beginning of the recovery of bird species affected by DDT use. Hearing the joy in the voice of a 6-year-old as he looked through our telescope and saw “the Post Office bird” was our joy too.

### Note:

According to Bob Quinn, Mr. Pough was Richard Pough who was known, among other things, as the author of a mid-20th century field guide. Mr. Atwell was George Atwell, the driving force at New Hampshire Audubon in those years. Attorney Sheridan Brown did some initial research and found that a law, passed in 1939, amended New Hampshire's current bird protection statute. It specifically exempted Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles from its list of “unprotected birds”, which continued to include hawks, thus clarifying the question Maurice Provost related in his journal. The law also strengthened protection for Bald and Golden Eagles adding a provision that “No person shall hunt, capture, kill, take, or possess any golden or bald eagle and no person shall molest or disturb the nest or young of any of said birds.” Violations incurred a fine of not more than \$50 (\$850 in today's dollars).



*The Lake Umbagog Bald Eagle nest monitored by Sandy and Mark Turner, as it appeared in 2007 when Chris Martin took this photo.*

# Cuckoo Mysteries – A Partial Explanation

by Robert A. Quinn



*Black-billed Cuckoo by Siobhan Basile.*

**“This is the most mysterious bird in North America.”**

So wrote Gerald H. Thayer about the Black-billed Cuckoo in 1908/1909 in a series of articles in *“The Dublin News”* describing the status of all birds in Dublin, NH. During the last 100+ years, cuckoos have remained mysterious to birders, but researchers have come up with a few answers. Let’s see what made them so mysterious to Thayer before delving into some of the possible answers. Thayer goes on to write:

“If you spend much time outdoors on nights between May and September, you will grow to associate this voice of the Black-billed Cuckoo – the Black-billed Cuckoo of all birds! – with the star-sprinkled sky...you will hear his little gurgling cry come down from high overhead... there is no other overhead night sound one half so common...(furthermore) the cuckoo heard and seen by day is nowhere near so common as this night voice is...the little gurgle is their usual sky-note...”

I will get back to another quote of Thayer’s later, but for now let’s review what most birders over the decades know about the cuckoos. Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos are in a North American family of birds that includes the anis and Greater Roadrunner. Birders know them mostly as disembodied voices in dense vegetation uttering both identifiable and odd un-bird like sounds. They are so uncommon and unpredictable that it is almost impossible to

say “go here and you will hear and/or see a cuckoo.” Usually furtive and hard to see, sometimes they can be fairly common and even surprisingly easy to view. They favor a category of food item that most other birds cannot tolerate, “hairy” caterpillars. When there is a big outbreak of American Tent Caterpillar Moth or Gypsy Moth caterpillars, cuckoos are likely to appear, or at least be heard. And therein lies part of the mystery, and the answer.

We all “know” that caterpillar outbreaks equate to cuckoos, but does that mean an actual increase in the number of cuckoos or just the number of observations. Now thanks to some researchers, we have some tentative answers to the eternal question, “Which came first, the cuckoo or the caterpillar?” A study in 2008 proved that cuckoos follow the “hairy” critters. According to researcher Nick Barber:

“The cuckoo spike takes place during the (caterpillar) outbreak, which means the increase is not due to higher reproductive rates. If it was just more reproduction, we would see the spike in the year after an outbreak, when the chicks return.

The increase instead drops off after an outbreak.”

He and his fellow researchers even discovered that there was “...a ring of below-average abundance extending for nearly 100 miles in all directions.” The study went on to point out that after returning in the spring (usually mid-May in New Hampshire) “...the birds apparently enter a post-migration nomadic phase in late spring or early summer and stop when they find...places that are loaded with gypsy moths...”. The other interesting aspect of this study is that the Gypsy Moth is not a native species yet the cuckoos are benefiting from them.

The moral of this birding story is that to find lots of cuckoos find the caterpillars. A New Hampshire example comes in an email posted by Garth McElroy from 2005. He was taking photos at the Trout Pond Conservation Area in Freedom which, he noted: “...had a fairly heavy outbreak of caterpillars...I am totally amazed at the number of cuckoos that are present in this spot. The area is very large (several thousand acres) and I only covered less than a couple of hundred acres...I had at least 10+ Black-billed Cuckoos and four Yellow-billed Cuckoos.”

Another local example is a Yellow-billed Cuckoo found on Star Island at the Isles of Shoals on June 21, 1972 which could have been either a late spring migrant or “dispersing” in search of caterpillars. Quoting once again from Thayer:

“...(Black-billed) calling in flight at night as high as 3,000 feet. Certainly they are strange sprites – as yet quite unexplained...I will do one month’s hard labor, free of charge, for anybody who explains him to me...”.

So if you want to see a cuckoo, follow the caterpillars!

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*Bob Quinn has birded throughout New Hampshire (and the world) for almost 40 years. For 20 years, he was the New Hampshire Bird Records Summer Editor. He has a keen interest in the status of birds in New Hampshire and, in 2010, was honored with the Goodhue-Elkins award. Bob is the proprietor of Merlin Enterprises, a natural history services business.*

## Nest Finding in Concord

by Rob Woodward

Searching for bird nests is an exciting subset of birding. In 2008, I started keeping an annual list of all the bird species I confirm breeding in Concord. I also keep an all-time list for Concord compiled largely from my annual lists plus my notes and journal that pre-date 2008. Finding an actual nest is the first goal, but my list is broadened to include species that I have confirmed nesting according to the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in New Hampshire* protocol. I have confirmed breeding for 101 species within the city limits of Concord out of a possible 120 or so, many in my own backyard. I hope this project can make some contribution to our knowledge of the status and distribution of the birds of Concord and, by extension, the birds of New Hampshire. The following are highlights from my all-time list.

**Common Loon** – I observed two small brown chicks with an adult on Long Pond on July 2, 2011. Searches in prior years suggest they are not successful every year. The Loon Preservation Committee placed a nest raft on the pond some years ago that has either been moved or disappeared.

**Great Blue Heron** – Following up on a rumor of a hunter reporting a rookery at Broken Ground, I went up for a look and found the heronry with 12 of 13 nests occupied on April 19, 2008. This is the only known active heronry in Concord and is now much reduced in size. Possibly the first Concord record.

**Osprey** – A pair was discovered nesting in a Great Blue Heron nest in a pond at Rossvie Farm in 2013. On August 10, 2013, Bob Quinn and I observed the nest with two fledglings nearby, one of which went back to the nest for a while with one parent nearby. First Concord record.

**Cooper's Hawk** – I have several records from the wood lot along the railroad tracks at Horseshoe Pond: a pair calling to



*Concord Osprey nest with chicks by David Lipsy, 7/8/14.*

each other, flying back and forth, March 19, 1995; carrying prey June 24, 2006; one bird making loud hissing calls, probably a juvenile, July 24, 2006; two chicks heard calling, one chick seen well, July 14, 2007.

**Broad-winged Hawk** – Pairs used to nest in my backyard annually. A bird was on the nest directly behind my house on April 29, 1994, and a bird was visible on the nest on May 23, 1996. I found the tail of a Red Squirrel on the ground under the nest on June 28, 1997.

**Merlin** – On April 27, 2009, I visited a co-worker's home in Concord's south end to investigate a Merlin in his neighborhood. We saw the bird behave in a way that appeared to be territorial. Then in June, Robert Vallieres located the nest in a tall pine. On July 9, I saw three white fluffy chicks in the nest; they later successfully fledged. First Concord record.

**American Woodcock** – This is a difficult species to confirm nesting. In the early 1990s, NH Audubon conducted a Wetlands Wildlife Inventory. My assignment was Locke Road where, in the woods, I nearly stepped on a feathered chick as the adult executed a distraction display. Also, on May 19, 2013, a hen and three fledglings sprang out of the vegetation between the dirt road and the corn field off Iron Works Road. The female engaged in a protracted distraction display the rest of the way across the field.

**Eastern Screech-Owl** – On a mid-July evening in 2007, a jogger looked up and saw four juveniles perched shoulder-to-shoulder on a telephone wire on School Street. I later saw one of the chicks briefly. On July 15, 2008, I found a whole family group with at least three fledglings moving around the neighborhood a few blocks from the area of the year before (see Vol. 61, No. 4, 2008, *North American Birds*). These are believed to be the first known breeding records for Concord since 1905. Thorough searches of this area in each subsequent year have gone unrewarded.

Common Nighthawk – I discovered a nest with one egg in an improbable location in the woods at Broken Ground on July 16, 2011. For details and photographs, see the Summer 2011 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* (Vol. 30, No. 2).

Red-bellied Woodpecker – I found a nest 20 feet up in a live ash tree along the railroad tracks at Horseshoe Pond on May 4, 2014. Both parents brought food to the nest on June 14. Second known Concord record.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – I came across an active nest at Broken Ground on June 30, 2007 for the first known nest in Concord (see the Summer 2007 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*, Vol. 26, No. 2). Since then, I have had nests in my back yard in the years of 2010, 2011, and 2012, the last two in the same tree.

Fish Crow – Three years of searching at Rollins Park finally paid off when I located a nest high in a tall pine tree on May 15, 2008, for the first known nest for Concord (see Vol. 62, No. 3, 2008, *North American Birds*.)

Northern Rough-winged Swallow – A scarce nester in the township. The most interesting site is the tractor trailer parked at the Steeplegate Mall near the pond. The nest is visible on the underside of the trailer. I first discovered this site on June 22, 2008 and have seen them there in subsequent years.

Winter Wren - I found three fledglings perched together with obvious gape flanges getting fed by the female while the male sang nearby in St Paul's School woods along the Turkey River on July 26, 2014. This is my first record and possibly the first ever for Concord.

Blue-winged Warbler – After several hours of observation over several visits, I saw a male carry a caterpillar at Langley Parkway on June 9, 2012, where a male had been singing since at least May 13. While this technically meets the threshold of confirmation, it was not very satisfying and requires further follow-up.

Blackburnian Warbler - An adult male fed a fledgling on Oak Hill, this species' Concord breeding stronghold, on July 5, 2008.

Orchard Oriole – I watched a female carry nesting material multiple times and add them to a nest in a small maple at the eastern end of Horseshoe Pond with an adult male singing nearby on May 23, 2009. First Concord record.

Pine Siskin – Bob Quinn and I saw a probable juvenile at the Birch Street Community Gardens on May 30, 2009. On May 3, 2012, I saw one or two adults feed two or three fledglings in a tree in my front yard. While these records confirm breeding, the nests could have been across the town line and out of bounds.

Of the species that nest in Concord, I am still missing some easy ones such as Great Crested Flycatcher and Swamp Sparrow. There are several other species that we would like

to confirm breeding that have either never been confirmed or that have not been recorded in many years. I encourage Concord birders to search for nests of these species:

Turkey Vulture – I'll take this one. I have been working on this since I found a feather in a boulder cave in the old quarries on July 4, 2008. I know at least one pair nests there, I just haven't confirmed it yet.

Bald Eagle – It nests all around here and is bound to do so eventually in Concord, probably on the Merrimack River. When you find a nest, you will make ornithological history.

Sharp-shinned Hawk – E.B. White notes one record in his book *Birds at Concord* (1937) – any since? It seems likely a nesting pair is around. The closest I can get is a sighting of a bird carrying prey on June 10, 2007 at Turkey Pond. (Only two nests were found statewide for the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in New Hampshire*.)

Red-shouldered Hawk – One was present at Turkey Pond during the nesting season of 2012. This used to be a common nester and was Concord's most common raptor in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but now it is scarce and may not nest at all.

Northern Saw-whet Owl – Larry Denoncourt put up a box in his yard in Bow, right next door to Concord, and got a pair to nest, mostly successfully. I have an unhatched egg from that nest!



*Juvenile Peregrine Falcon at Horseshoe Pond in Concord, 8/23/13, by Debbie LaValley.*



Peregrine Falcon – In 2013, I had several sightings of what appeared to be a family group around Concord, but no one knew of a nest. In 2014, a nest box was placed in the steeple of the Christian Science church downtown. In 2015, NH Audubon documented three recently fledged young together at Horseshoe Pond on July 16, 2015 but the active nest has not yet been located. Be on the lookout for Concord’s first breeding record.

Other species that I need:

American Bittern – It probably historically nested at Turkey Pond, but I have never recorded a single bird on my Turkey Pond Bird Survey. For several years, I played a tape in the Locke Road marsh without a response. I used to hear them booming in Bela Brook behind my house, but not since May 31, 1995.

Sora – At least two birds were present in the South End Marsh in July of 2012 and 2013, but a tough one to confirm breeding.

Eastern Whip-poor-will – We know it must nest in Concord, especially at Broken Ground where it is numerous, and at least one nest has been found in Mast Yard State Forest just over the town line in Hopkinton. In 2012, one was in my backyard throughout the nesting season and was even joined by a female one evening on my roof! Despite diligent searching, no nest was ever found.

Cliff Swallow – A small colony nested at a farm on Little Pond Road, but not since more than 10 years ago. I have searched high and low throughout Concord and have concluded it no longer nests here.

Nesting season is now an even more exciting time of year for me than spring migration. The key to finding nests is to stop and become more aware of what the birds around you are doing. During nesting season, birds are either gathering nesting material for a nest or food for chicks. Watch where they go. When you see them go to and from the same spot carrying food or nesting material, you know you have found the nest. Bear in mind this is the most critical part of the bird’s life cycle and the well-being of the birds always comes before your interest in a close look or photograph. Over time, you will learn the tell-tale signs of nesting behavior that will lead you to many nests, some in your own back yard.

*Rob Woodward has been birding Concord for over 20 years with a particular interest in which species do or do not breed in Concord and how that list has changed over the years.*

## Old Bird Names – A Fun Quiz

by Robert A. Quinn



*In 1957 it was the Green Heron, then its name changed to the Green-backed Heron. What is it now? Drawing by Andrea Robbins.*

As most birders know, the names of our birds change from time to time. Over the decades, there have been major changes, which sometimes are puzzling or even outright confusing. These changes are made by the American Ornithologist Union (AOU) and are an attempt to clarify the taxonomic relationships among all birds. The following “quiz” is a fun way to get this point across. It is based on the names from the “5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the A.O.U. Checklist of North American Birds” (1957), which many of us grew up with as we learned our birds. The “interim” names are those announced in annual “supplements” to the “Checklist.” These reflect minor changes between updates of the entire “Checklist,” which is a monumental undertaking and only happens every 20 years or so. The “Current” name is what we are told is correct today, based on the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Checklist (1983) plus the annual supplements. Please realize, however, that our knowledge is ever changing, so don’t carve these new names in stone yet! Enjoy!

Example:

1957 Name	Interim Name	Current Name
Common Egret	American Egret	Great Egret
Yellow-shafted Flicker	Common Flicker	Northern Flicker

NOTE: My inspiration for this homemade quiz is the book “*The Bird Watcher’s Quiz Book*” by Henry Hill Collins Jr., published in 1961 by Harper and Brothers (NY).

## Part 1.

1957 Name	Interim Name	Current Name
Whistling Swan		
American Widgeon		
Common Scoter	American Scoter	
Oldsquaw		
Greater Shearwater		
Wilson's Petrel		
Common Egret	American Egret	
Green Heron	Green-backed Heron	
Common Gallinule	Common Moorhen	
Marsh Hawk		
Sparrow Hawk		
Pigeon Hawk		
Upland Plover		
Wilson's Snipe	Common Snipe	
Northern Phalarope		
Northern Three-Toed Woodpecker	Three-toed Woodpecker	
Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker		
Traill's Flycatcher		
Olive-backed Thrush		
Catbird		
Short-billed Marsh Wren		
Long-billed Marsh Wren		
Gray-cheeked Thrush		
Water Pipit		
Blue-headed Vireo	Solitary Vireo	
Rufous-sided Towhee		
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow	
Baltimore Oriole	Northern Oriole	

## Part 2.

For a real challenge (or if you have been birding for more than 60 years!), here are some truly old names to take a crack at:

Old Name	Current Name
Holboell's Grebe	
Summer Duck	
Pied Duck (extinct)	
Baldpate	
European Cormorant	
Great-footed Hawk	
Florida Gallinule	
Bartram's Sandpiper	
Hudsonian Curlew	
Purre or Red-backed Sandpiper	
Brunnich's Murre	
Richardson's Owl	
Acadian Chickadee	
Wilson's Thrush	
Canada Jay	
Chewink	
Bay-winged Bunting	
Purple/Bronzed Grackle	

*Bob Quinn has been birding for over 40 years and first learned bird names from those who started birding well before the 1957 AOU Checklist was published.*

See the Answers on page 38.

# Research

## Identifying Hybrid Saltmarsh-Nelson's Sparrows – Appearances Aren't Everything

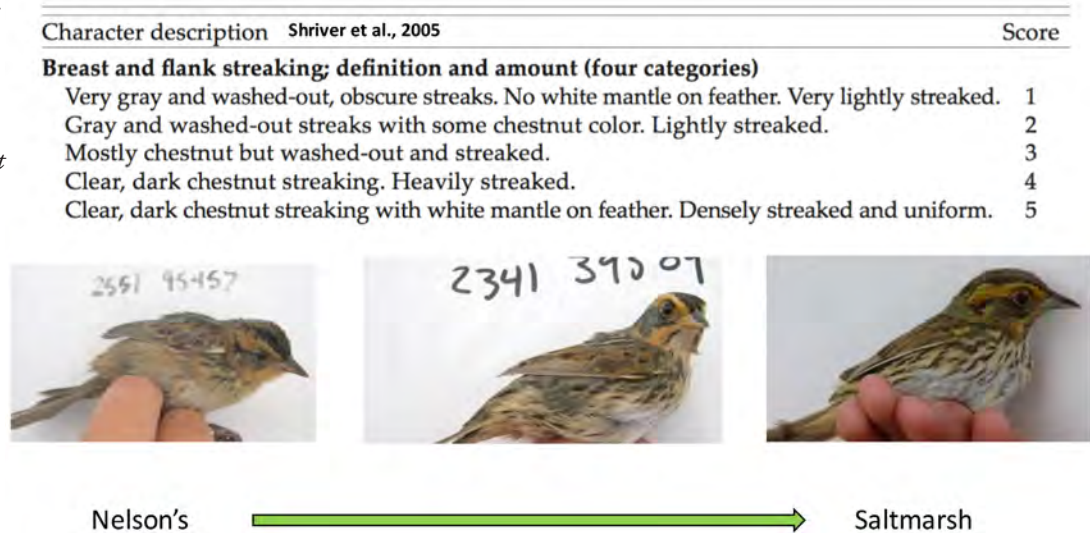
by Jennifer Walsh & Adrienne Kovach

Hybridization, the interbreeding of two separate species populations, is common in nature and thought to occur in roughly 10% of all birds (Grant and Grant 1992). When species interbreed, their hybrid offspring may be expected to express intermediate plumage or morphologies (structural features) relative to the two parental species. There are many reasons, however, including complex patterns of gene flow (genetic introgression) resulting from frequent backcrossing, which can lead to a lack of a clear intermediate morphology in mixed individuals. This scenario presents challenges for using morphology to distinguish hybrid from pure individuals in interbreeding populations.

Saltmarsh (*Ammodramus caudacutus caudacutus*) and Nelson's (*A. nelsoni subvirgatus*) Sparrows provide an example of hybridizing taxa for which hybrid identification has been challenging. The two species breed in coastal marshes of the northeastern US and Maritime Canada and their ranges overlap from Thomaston, Maine to Newburyport, Massachusetts (Greenlaw and Woolfenden 2007, Hodgman et al 2002). Hybridization is known to occur where the two species overlap, as confirmed by genetic studies (Shriver et al 2005, Walsh et al 2011). Until recently, however, the extent of hybridization between Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sparrows has been difficult to quantify and has therefore remained largely unknown.

There are slight, but consistent and observable, differences in plumage and morphology between the two species (Greenlaw 1993, Shriver et al. 2005), which have been used

Figure 1. Pictures of individuals that exhibit pure Nelson's, pure Saltmarsh, and intermediate plumage features for traits that were found to be most important in discriminating between the species. These traits include the definition and darkness of streaking on the breast and flanks (darker in Saltmarsh Sparrows and more washed out in Nelson's Sparrows) and the color of the face (dull yellow in Nelson's Sparrows and dark orange in Saltmarsh Sparrows).



by researchers to identify the species in the field. Shriver et al. (2005) developed an index to differentiate the species using 13 plumage and bill traits, with hybrids classified as those having an intermediate composite score of these traits. Further study revealed that plumage differences were subtle in the hybrid zone and that plumage intermediacies were not always apparent in sympatric populations (populations co-occurring in the same geographic area; Walsh et al. 2011). The realization that we had a limited understanding of hybrid morphology prompted us to investigate genetic and morphological variation across the hybrid zone. Specifically, we were interested in determining whether the key traits that are useful for differentiating between Nelson's and Saltmarsh Sparrows could be used to identify pure and hybrid individuals in the field.

To capture the full extent of morphological and genetic variation across the hybrid zone, it was important to sample a large number of individuals from numerous marshes throughout the hybrid zone and neighboring allopatric (pure) populations. To achieve this, we undertook a transect sampling approach, which included 34 marshes across approximately 800 km from Lubec, Maine to Madison, Connecticut. Within the documented overlap zone, we sampled 23 marshes at approximately 10 km intervals. We also sampled an additional four marshes to the north of the overlap zone (pure Nelson's Sparrow range) and seven marshes to the south (pure Saltmarsh Sparrow range).

At each marsh, we captured sparrows using mist nets during the breeding seasons of 2012 and 2013, resulting in a total of 290 captured individuals. We scored each sparrow for the 13 traits of the plumage index of Shriver et al. (2005, see Figure 1). Plumage traits included bill color, the color and definition of the face, the color of the back, the width and definition of the whisker line and crown, and the amount and definition of streaking on the breast and flanks (Table

1). Plumage scores for each individual trait ranged from 1 – 5, with lower numbers representative of Nelson’s Sparrows and higher numbers representative of Saltmarsh Sparrows. Thus, the final plumage scores ranged from 13 (pure Nelson’s Sparrow) to 65 (pure Saltmarsh Sparrow) (Shriver et al 2005). We also collected standard structural measurements, including: tarsus length; bill width, depth, and length; unflattened wing chord; and weight. In addition, we took a blood sample for genetic analyses.

We used DNA from blood samples to classify individuals as pure Nelson’s Sparrow, pure Saltmarsh Sparrow, backcrossed in the direction of Nelson’s Sparrow (offspring from mating between a hybrid and a pure Nelson’s Sparrow), backcrossed in the direction of Saltmarsh Sparrow (offspring from a mating between a hybrid and a pure Saltmarsh Sparrow), or first generation (F1) hybrid (offspring from a mating between a pure Saltmarsh and pure Nelson’s Sparrow). We compared the morphological data collected in the field to the genetic classification.

Our sampling of the Saltmarsh-Nelson’s Sparrow hybrid zone revealed that hybridization and backcrossing are frequent between Nelson’s and Saltmarsh Sparrows, with 52% of the sampled individuals identified as genetically mixed. However, 47% of these admixed individuals turned out to be descendants of hybrids and only 3% were first generation hybrids (a true 50-50 cross). This suggests that hybrids mate with pure individuals frequently and that at least some genes move freely and frequently across the hybrid zone.

Plumage and structural measurements varied substantially across hybrid populations, with genetically mixed individuals displaying a complex and unpredictable mosaic of traits from the parental species rather than a clear intermediate hybrid phenotype (physical appearance of an individual). These morphological patterns posed a challenge for accurate hybrid identification in the field. Backcrossed individuals were typically morphologically indistinguishable from the more genetically similar parental species. Our results indicate that hybrid identification in the absence of genetic data will not accurately distinguish pure from mixed individuals and will likely substantially overestimate genetically “pure” individuals within a population.

While the phenotypic traits could not distinguish pure and hybrid individuals, they proved highly reliable in separating birds with primarily Saltmarsh Sparrow gene pools (pure Saltmarsh and backcrossed-Saltmarsh Sparrows) from birds with primarily Nelson’s Sparrow gene pools (pure Nelson’s and backcrossed-Nelson’s Sparrows). This finding is promising for monitoring or other efforts that do not require consideration of hybrid status. Further, correlation with genetic data revealed that certain traits were more consistent in separating the pure species, perhaps because they introgress

*Table 1. Description of 13 plumage traits used to differentiate Saltmarsh and Nelson’s Sparrows. Pure parental individuals display these features, receiving a score of 1 for Nelson’s and 5 for Saltmarsh Sparrow, respectively. Hybrids have intermediate features and receive a score of 2-4, accordingly. Adapted from Shriver et al. (2005).*

Trait	Plumage Score	
	Nelson’s Sparrow (1)	Saltmarsh Sparrow (5)
Amount of Streaking on Breast	Obscure Streaks	Uniform and Densely Streaked
Definition of Streaking on Breast	Gray	Dark Chestnut
Amount of Streaking on Flanks	Obscure Streaks	Uniform and Densely Streaked
Definition of Streaking on Flanks	Gray	Dark Chestnut
Whisker Line Definition	Gray, Not Clearly Defined from Throat	Dark and Clearly Defined
Whisker Line Width	Thick	Very thin
Face Color	Face is Washed-Out Orange to Yellow	Bright Orange Face
Face Definition	No Separation from Face Patch	Clear Definition from White Throat by Thin Whisker Strip
Back Color	Gray, No Different from Nape	Chestnut, Dark Brown
Back Streaking	No Streaking	White Streaking on Outer Side of Back
Crown Width	5 mm Wide	Almost Identical to Lateral Stripes
Crown Definition	Gray	Chestnut
Bill Color	Entire lower mandible and bottom of upper mandible is blue	Lower mandible and bottom of upper mandible is yellow

(movement of genes from one species into another) less freely between them. These traits, including darkness, uniformity and clearness of the streaking found on the breast and flanks and the definition of the crown and face (Figure 1), may play an important adaptive ecological role or function in sexual selection. From a practical perspective, focusing on these key traits may assist future species identification efforts. We caution, however, that care is needed when identifying these species in the field, given our finding that reliance purely on morphological data may lead to misidentification because of the complexities of hybrid plumage. While using song may assist with identification, we currently lack knowledge about characteristics of song in hybrids. Future studies of hybrid song may provide additional insights for field identification.

The inability to distinguish between pure and hybrid sparrows based on their appearance may pose conservation challenges. Although we are still unsure of the impacts of extensive hybridization between Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sparrows, hybridization can lead to a number of negative consequences in natural populations. For this reason, effective monitoring of hybridizing populations of Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sparrows will be important in the future. Both species are a high conservation priority in the northeastern United States (United States Department of Interior 2008) and the Saltmarsh Sparrow is considered globally vulnerable to extinction (International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List criteria, Birdlife International 2004). Continued monitoring within the hybrid zone will aid in defining management priorities for these species.

Within New Hampshire, we have sampled numerous sites both in Great Bay (Chapman's Landing and Lubberland Creek), along the Squamscott River, and near the coast (Hampton and Rye). Patterns of hybridization tend to be variable among sites, however we have identified a few F1 (50:50) hybrids at Lubberland Creek in Newmarket, NH.

For more details on this study: The research is presented in the journal *The Auk: Ornithological Advances* in the article "Relationship of phenotypic variation and genetic admixture in the Saltmarsh–Nelson's sparrow hybrid zone." (Walsh et al., 2015).

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*Both authors are collaborators in the Saltmarsh Habitat and Avian Research Program, a group of academic, governmental and nonprofit collaborators gathering information for the conservation of tidal-marsh birds.*

# Photo Gallery

## Nesting Least Terns and Piping Plovers

In 2015, New Hampshire had its first pair of nesting Least Terns since 1960. It was in one of the roped off areas on Hampton Beach State Park and was much photographed as it successfully raised one chick. The other denizens of this beach habitat are Piping Plovers. Like Least Terns they were absent from New Hampshire beaches for more than 20 years but successfully returned in 1997 after last nesting successfully in the 1970s. Both species need management in the form of fenced areas and human monitors to successfully nest on New Hampshire's limited and highly coveted beaches. – Ed.

*All photos taken at Hampton Beach State Park.*

## Least Terns



*Adult incubating two eggs on 6/30/15. Photo by Steve Mirick, who also reported that on the morning of July 5 the terns had made it through the night despite spent fireworks just outside the rope fence by their nest. Two days later there was one chick in the nest (Catherine Fisher, NH Birds post, 7/7/15)!*



*No sharing of the beach! Least Tern chasing an adult Piping Plover away from the nest area, as observed and photographed by Len Medlock, 7/1/16.*



*Adult with one chick and the second egg (under the adult's tail) which never hatched. Photo by Nathan Purmort, 7/11/15.*



*A sand lance for the five or six day old chick. Photo by Nathan Purmort, 7/11/15.*



*An independent teen at 15-16 days old. Photo by Amanda Altena, 7/21/15.*

## Least Terns



*Just about ready to go! Chicks fledge around 20 days old but continue to be fed by their parents and may stay in the area for several weeks. Photo by Steve Mirick, 7/25/15.*



*Feeling pretty grown up! Photo by Donna Ellis, 7/31/15.*

## Piping Plover photos by Nathan Purmort.



*Adult Piping Plover, 7/11/15.*



*Young chicks, 6/20/15.*



*Count the legs and divide by two! How do all four chicks fit under one adult? 6/21/15.*



*Getting bigger but still huddling under the adult, 6/25/15.*

# Old Bird Names - Answers

## Part 1.

1957 Name	Interim Name	Current Name
Whistling Swan		Tundra Swan
American Widgeon		American Wigeon
Common Scoter	American Scoter	Black Scoter
Oldsquaw		Long-tailed Duck
Greater Shearwater		Great Shearwater
Wilson's Petrel		Wilson's Storm-Petrel
Common Egret	American Egret	Great Egret
Green Heron	Green-backed Heron	Green Heron
Common Gallinule	Common Moorhen	Common Gallinule
Marsh Hawk		Northern Harrier
Sparrow Hawk		American Kestrel
Pigeon Hawk		Merlin
Upland Plover		Upland Sandpiper
Wilson's Snipe	Common Snipe	Wilson's Snipe
Northern Phalarope		Red-necked Phalarope
Northern Three-Toed Woodpecker	Three-toed Woodpecker	American Three-toed Woodpecker
Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker		Black-backed Woodpecker
Traill's Flycatcher		Alder Flycatcher and Willow Flycatcher
Olive-backed Thrush		Swainson's Thrush
Catbird		Gray Catbird
Short-billed Marsh Wren		Sedge Wren
Long-billed Marsh Wren		Marsh Wren
Gray-checked Thrush		Bicknell's Thrush and Gray-checked Thrush
Water Pipit		American Pipit
Blue-headed Vireo	Solitary Vireo	Blue-headed Vireo
Rufous-sided Towhee		Eastern Towhee

Sharp-tailed Sparrow	Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow	Saltmarsh Sparrow and Nelson's Sparrow
Baltimore Oriole	Northern Oriole	Baltimore Oriole



Once known as the "Chewink" and the Rufous-sided Towhee, now called the Eastern Towhee. Drawing by Andrea Robbins.

## Part 2.

Old Name	Current Name
Holboell's Grebe	Red-necked Grebe
Summer Duck	Wood Duck
Pied Duck (extinct)	Labrador Duck
Baldpate	American Wigeon
European Cormorant	Great Cormorant
Great-footed Hawk	Peregrine Falcon
Florida Gallinule	Common Gallinule
Bartram's Sandpiper	Upland Sandpiper
Hudsonian Curlew	Whimbrel
Purre or Red-backed Sandpiper	Dunlin
Brunnich's Murre	Thick-billed Murre
Richardson's Owl	Boreal Owl
Acadian Chickadee	Boreal Chickadee
Wilson's Thrush	Veery
Canada Jay	Gray Jay
Chewink	Eastern Towhee
Bay-winged Bunting	Vesper Sparrow
Purple/Bronzed Grackle	Common Grackle



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# Answer to the Photo Quiz

by David B. Donsker

The subject of the Photo Quiz for this issue is, indeed, a strange looking bird. It has a stout, short, conical bill, heavily streaked underparts, relatively unmarked head and a very long, dark tail with a large amount of white on the ends of the outer tail feathers. Other than the fact that it is on the ground in a pile of wood chips, we can get no clues about its habitat from the photograph.

The front half of the bird recalls any number of our heavily streaked, conical billed finches or sparrows. The conical bill easily eliminates other streak-breasted birds that can be confused with sparrows and finches, such as pipits, waterthrushes, and some other warblers in fall plumage, and female Red-winged Blackbird. All of these species have proportionally longer, pointed or thinner bills.

The true finches in New Hampshire include a somewhat diverse group of birds which includes the small-billed goldfinches, siskins and redpolls, and large-billed forms including our grosbeaks, crossbills, and Purple and House Finches. Since this bird has a large conical bill, the small-billed species are not considerations here. Of the large-billed members of this family, only the crossbills in juvenile plumage, female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Purple and House Finches in immature and female plumage are heavily streaked below. This bird lacks the bill structure of the crossbills. The grosbeak has finer breast streaking, a massive, pale bill and a strong facial pattern. Purple Finch, unlike this bird, also has a strong facial pattern – a large dark patch on the ear coverts, which is set off by white linear stripes above and below. In addition, Purple Finch females and immatures have fairly conspicuous dark malar or lateral throat stripe regions. This bird, however, has a rather featureless face. This lack of a strong facial pattern does recall female or first-year male House Finch, which also have a heavily streaked breast, but what about that tail? None of our finches are long-tailed species.

So, we're limited to sparrows, but which ones? Many of our sparrows are very heavily streaked on the underparts, especially on the breast, just like our featured bird. However, of the heavily streak-breasted group of sparrows many, including Lincoln's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow and immature birds of a number of other species, have finer, less extensive streaking than the bird in the photograph. White-throated Sparrow in juvenile plumage is streaked below, but it has a contrasting pale throat and eyebrow quite unlike this bird.

Three sparrows, Savannah, Song and Fox Sparrows, are quite heavily streaked below. But the first two of these species have a well-defined, sharp malar, which is especially distinct in Song Sparrow. Fox Sparrow has a somewhat different facial

pattern than either of the first two birds, but it also has a dark malar region not seen in this individual. None of these sparrows mentioned has a tail as long as the bird featured in the photograph and although the tail of Fox Sparrow and Song Sparrow are relatively long compared to the others, in neither species is the tail remotely this long, nor does it have white outer tail feathers.

So, what sparrows do have long tails with white tail feathers? Vesper Sparrow is well known for its white outer tail feathers, which can be conspicuous in flight, but it is not particularly long-tailed, has a much more complex facial pattern than this bird, and a distinctive, thin white eye-ring. As mentioned earlier, it has a more finely streaked breast.

Lark Sparrow, much like this bird, has a fairly long tail with conspicuous white corners on its outer tail feathers. Although the adult has a distinctive, strongly marked, harlequin facial pattern, and unstreaked underparts with a central breast spot, juveniles of this species are streaked below. For this reason, it might be tempting to conclude that this is a juvenile Lark Sparrow. Although juvenile Lark Sparrow lacks the strong facial pattern of the adult, it does have a rather subdued facial pattern reminiscent of the adult, which includes a strong malar stripe and dark cheek patch. This is quite unlike the rather plain face of this individual. In addition, the length of the tail of Lark Sparrow would still not approach that of our featured bird.

It would seem that we have run out of sparrows to consider, but we have not done so quite yet. Two other closely related species are sparrows in the larger sense, but their common English names do not tell us that they are. These are the two rufous-sided towhees: Eastern Towhee, a common breeding bird in New Hampshire, and Spotted Towhee, a vagrant from the western United States that has been recorded several times in New Hampshire. Although we don't think of them as sparrows, towhees are in the same family as our more familiar sparrows and are closely related to some southwest and Middle American sparrow species unfamiliar to many New Hampshire birders. Both towhees have long tails with an extensive amount of white in the outer tail feathers that is especially conspicuous in flight or if the tail is seen from below.

The adults of both towhees are quite distinctive with their dark hoods and backs and rufous sides and are seemingly quite unlike our featured bird. But this individual is a juvenile towhee, which, like many of its sparrow cousins, is quite heavily streaked below. The juvenile plumage is unfamiliar to most of us since it is an ephemeral plumage seen only in the summer from the time the bird is fledged until it moults into its first adult plumage in August. It's a good reminder to all of us to consider juvenile plumage when an unfamiliar bird is seen during the summer months. Behavior and structure are good hints at establishing a

correct identification of these more unfamiliar individuals.

Okay, we've established that this is a juvenile towhee, but can we go one step further and determine if this is a young Eastern Towhee or a juvenile Spotted Towhee? We actually can. The adults of these two closely related species are similar, but can be separated fairly easily based on the pattern of white on the back and wings. Spotted Towhee, as its name suggests, has variably prominent white spots on its back and scapular ("shoulder") feathers and strong white wing bars. In contrast, Eastern Towhee has a plain back and scapulars and lacks the wing bars. Instead, it has a white patch at the base of the primary wing feathers. Juveniles of both birds are less conspicuously distinctive. Both are heavily streaked and both species have interrupted wing bars, but the wing bars of Spotted Towhee are more distinctive. Unlike Spotted Towhee, Eastern Towhee juveniles have the same small white patch at the base of the primaries as the adults. If you look closely, you can see that feature in the photograph of this individual.

This juvenile Eastern Towhee was photographed by Wendy Chatel in her yard in Wolfeboro, NH on 7/24/15.

#### References

- Dunn, J. and J. Alderfer, eds. 2011. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Sixth Edition. National Geographic Society. Washington, D.C.
- Sibley, D. 2014. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Second Edition. Alfred A. Knopf. New York, NY.

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## Corrections

The following corrections were found after the issue was published. Minor typos are not included. Please let us know of any inaccuracies you find in any issue so we can correct the data.

### Fall 2011

- Inside Front Cover The Cover Photo was taken on 9/4/11, not 4/27/11.
- p. 1 In This Issue – Fall Season: August 1 through November 30, 2011, not 2012; Hurricane Irene, August 2011, not 2012.
- p. 11 The Leach's Storm-Petrel on 09/12 was seen by L. Seitz & D. Lovitch, not by J. Woolf, S. Mirick, NHA FT.
- p. 21 The location of the 08/30 Whimbrel sighting should be Bradley Field NH49 not Rt. 49 field.
- p. 48 Article Title: Hurricane Irene, August 2011, not 2012.
- p. 50 "Two Amazing Fall-outs" introduction, second line: "birding during Irene on 8/28/11" not

8/28/12, and "(posted 8/29/11)" not 8/29/12.

- p. 54 Last line of article, "observer coverage of 2011!" not 2012.

### Winter 2011-12

No corrections noted.

### Spring 2012

- p. 1 In This Issue: Far Hills Landfill should be Four Hills Landfill.
- p. 6 Sandhill Crane photo caption should read Mike Thompson, not Mikie.
- p. 12 113 Hooded Mergansers observed by R. Quinn at Turtle Pond in Concord on 3/16 was accidentally omitted.

### Summer 2012

- p. 2 Photo answer should be page 58 not page 62.
- p. 33 Map locations with x boxes should read, clockwise from top: Old Winslow Road (off Rt. 11), Barlow Trail and Winslow Trail (in Winslow SP), and North Road (parallel to Rt. 89).
- p. 53 Figure 2 legend, "vg." should be "avg."
- p. 54 Figure 3, vertical axis should read "parts per billion wet weight."
- p. 57 Spring 2010, the Leach's Storm Petrel on 5/23/2010 was observed at Jeffreys Ledge.

### Fall 2012

- p. 2 In the donors list Katie Palfy should be Kathie Palfy.
- p. 12 A Tricolored Heron sighting on 10/31 by Rich Blair on Slab City Rd., Grafton was accidentally omitted.
- p. 13 In the Diurnal Raptors through Shorebirds summary, second paragraph, second line should read "photographed on September 8" not "September 9."
- p. 18 A Dunlin sighting on 11/13 by Robert Quinn at Northwood Lake was accidentally omitted.
- p. 19 In the Gulls through Falcons summary, third line should read " Hurricane Sandy deposited four (not five) at various locations in Cheshire County, and one in Hillsborough County."
- p. 31 There was only one sighting of a Blue-winged Warbler on 09/01; the sightings from 08/24 through 10/07 are Black-and-white Warbler – the heading was omitted.
- p. 46 The first paragraph of the article is the photo caption for the right photo, not the first line of the article.

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## Abbreviations Used

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
PMRO	Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory
PO	Post Office
R.	River
Rd.	Road
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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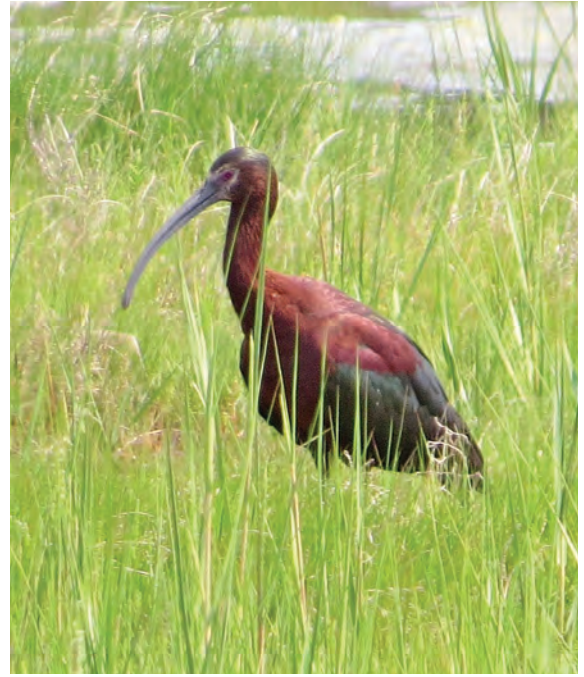
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# Summer 2015 Highlights



*American Avocet by Steve Mirick, 7/26/15, Seabrook, NH.*



*White-faced Ibis by Steve Mirick, 7/5/15, Hampton, NH.*



*Bay-breasted Warbler by Lauren Kras, 6/19/15, Pittsburg, NH.*



*Eastern Kingbird showing the red crown patch that is usually concealed except during courtship display.*

*Photo by David Forsyth, 6/21/15, Shelburne, NH.*



*This Northern Gannet on Hampton Beach allowed close views of its beautiful plumage, but it's rare to see one sitting on land outside a nesting colony and the bird was not well. Read the story in Field Notes. Photo by Steve Mirick, 7/11/15.*

*Hudsonian Godwit by Len Medlock, 6/7/15, Seabrook, NH.*

