

# New Hampshire BIRD RECORDS



# Birds of Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood

This site was one of the birding hotspots in Spring 2020 and we share some of the many great photos taken here. See also the rarities (on the back cover) and the article inside on how to bird this great location.



*Black-throated Green Warbler by Scott Heron, 5-12-20.*



*Bay-breasted Warbler by Steve Mirick, 5-17-20.*



*Blue-winged Warbler by Len Medlock, 5-18-20.*



*Orchard Oriole by Jim Sparrell, 5-20-20.*



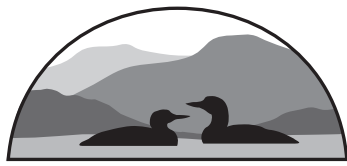
*Cape May Warbler by Len Medlock, 5-17-20.*

## Photo Quiz



### Can You Identify This Bird?

Photo by Jon Woolf.  
Answer on page 35.



**NH AUDUBON**

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**NEW HAMPSHIRE BIRD RECORDS**

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**IN HONOR OF  
ANN KIMBALL**

This issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* with its color cover is sponsored in appreciation of Ann Kimball by her birding friends. Ann, an avid birder, has shared many birding adventures with friends and in the past, with her dear husband Bill. The birding community is grateful for her volunteer work, and her warmth, caring, friendliness, and positive attitude (see page 2).



Photo by Sue Bickford.

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# From the Editor

SPRING 2020

by Rebecca Suomala

## Volunteer Update

**Thank You Gail Coffey** for serving as the Coordinator of the Field Trip Reports. This feature is on hold during the pandemic and we will re-evaluate once field trips are being offered again.

**Thank You Scott Heron** for making maps for our Where to Bird features. These maps are a great addition to the articles. **Welcome Steven Lamonde** who will be taking on this role. We are delighted to welcome him to the team.

**Welcome Back Eric Masterson** from a terrible accident. While Eric never really left as Spring Season Editor, on Sunday August 9, 2020, he suffered multiple injuries during a hang gliding accident at Hedgehog Ridge in Hillsborough, NH. He was air-lifted to Mass General Hospital in Boston and began a long healing process that will continue through

2021. His recovery has been nothing short of remarkable and we are all grateful to see him walking and birding again. Amazingly, he was able to complete the Spring 2020 summary as he recovered and he didn't miss an Editorial Team meeting. Both Eric and his wife Tricia have appreciated the well wishes from the birding community.

**Welcome New Subscribers** and **Thank You** to those who have renewed their subscription. A reminder that the *New Hampshire Bird Records* archives are open to the public during the pandemic to provide local birding information. The archives are under "The Journal" tab on the web site.

## Birding During COVID-19

Many of us turned to birding during the pandemic as the perfect activity to help us through these uncertain times. It's safe, socially-distant, outdoors, and full of beauty and surprises. Of course the pandemic has also impacted birding activities from closures all along the New Hampshire coast to crowded trails mobbed by birders and dog walkers at popular places such as Pickering Ponds in Rochester. Fortunately there's always local and backyard birding. In the next few issues we'll bring you articles from birders on their experiences during the pandemic. We hope you enjoy them.

## Ann Kimball

Ann volunteered for the Seacoast Chapter of NH Audubon including many years on the Executive Board and a stint as Vice President. She also led field trips and has been a hawkwatcher on Blue Job Mountain. But it is Ann's companionship on birding adventures that generated the most comments. Although birding trips are few these days, Ann still welcomes birding friends. Dan Hubbard wrote, "I birded a lot with Ann, including the Lee-Durham Christmas Bird Count, and considered her 'my birding girlfriend'."

Sandy Turner shared these reflections on time spent birding with Ann:

*We often canoed the rivers in southeastern New Hampshire, finding Great-crested Flycatcher nest holes overhanging the water, or a Belted Kingfisher throwing dirt out of their nest holes in a riverbank, or perhaps being horrified as a Snapping Turtle pulled down a duckling. She was very active with me searching for proof that a bird was actually nesting for the NH Breeding Bird Atlas. We climbed Blue Job Mt. in the fall and counted hawks (when it was more active than recent years). We birded fields*



Ann Kimball with Steve Mirick in 2014. Ann would often make lunch for Steve on birding trips that he led.

*for Eastern Meadowlarks (when there actually were some) and did not get covered with ticks! Many a woods road was trod for woodlands birds. Ann's joy in life and the outdoors always made our adventures wonderful.*

**March 1 through May 31, 2020**

by Eric Masterson



*Eric Masterson surrounded by fellow hawkwatchers on Pack Monadnock (9-19-20) as he underwent birding therapy to recover from an accident (see page 2).*

COVID-19 was the dominant factor in the spring of 2020, if not for birds, then certainly for birding. Steve Mirick reported that the entire length of the coast was effectively closed

to parking (including Odiorne Point State Park in Rye) and therefore to birding, with birders forced to venture inland.

*Secondary birding spots which previously had seen very little coverage in the past were now covered with birders. For example, little known Deer Hill Wildlife Management Area (Brentwood, NH) was a rarely visited birding spot that had received a total of 168 complete eBird checklists during all seasons for the 14 years between 2006 and 2019. During May alone of 2020, 210 complete eBird checklists were submitted and 145 species were recorded making it the most active and productive birding site in the entire State for that month! (S. Mirick, pers. comm.)*

There were no organized field trips in the spring and birders were solo on events like NH Audubon's Birdathon. People flocked to birding as a safe hobby during the pandemic and eBird checklists hit a record high in May 2020, up 33% from the previous year. In New Hampshire alone, there were 280,933 reports during the spring season, up from 196,872 in spring of 2019. eBird also experienced a global surge of Hotspot suggestions from birders forced to find sites closer to home, with many opting to go birding in the backyard. Instead of finding rarities on the coast or Star Island (Isles of Shoals, NH), birders were finding them at home: a **Cerulean Warbler** in Durham, a **Blue Grosbeak** in Peterborough, and a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** in Manchester.

I experienced spring migration through my nocturnal recording station in Hancock, which operated nearly every night, dusk to dawn, from mid-March through early June. A Song Sparrow fired the starting gun on March 22 when it punctuated eight hours of recorded silence with a single solitary call note. Thereafter, the traffic was fairly modest, with no more

than 10 calls per night, until April 4 (21 calls) and April 5 (75 calls). The nightly volume continued within that general range through the end of May. Numbers ranged from single digits to more than a hundred calls per night depending on weather, with the notable exception of several outliers in May, most particularly May 24-26, when I recorded 350, 522, and 458 calls respectively. These exceptional numbers reflected big thrush nights, with huge numbers of **Swainson's Thrush** recorded, especially in the hour before dawn.



*Swainson's Thrush by Kyle Wilmarth, 5-26-20, Hawkin's Farm, Salem, NH.*

My personal experience and COVID-19 considerations aside, migration was generally underwhelming. North winds and wet conditions through much of late April and May suppressed significant movement into the area and storm fronts to the south stalled or diverted migration. This was apparent in the arrival times of nearly all neotropical migrants, which at best were on time. May 16, which was preceded by warm southwesterly winds, provided a notable exception. Heavy migration was noted across the region during the night of May 15 depositing waves of passerines at coastal traps, most especially on Cape Cod, MA but also in New Hampshire (for a more in-depth discussion of the event, consult Sean Williams' article on Birdcast (<https://birdcast.info/news/major-fallout-and-morning-flight-event-on-cape-cod-massachusetts-on-may-16th-2020/>)). Another significant flight occurred on May 3, this time during the day and involving raptors, with Bob Quinn observing that "this is only the second time in decades of birding that I have seen a spring flight like this." In between those two flights was a rare storm with appreciable snowfall on May 9, especially in the northern part of the state, thanks to cold air brought by the polar vortex. See the Field Notes and Birdathon article in this issue for stories on birding in the snow.

Waterfowl migration too was underwhelming, especially along the Connecticut River Valley. With little snowpack in southern New Hampshire, the majority of geese opted to overfly the state (see *New Hampshire Bird Records*, Vol 35, No.

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1, page 5), with peak Canada Goose numbers occurring the week of March 9. The low snowpack and record heat on May 31 contributed to the beginning of drought conditions that continued into the summer.



*Loggerhead Shrike by Robin Feustel, 5-24-20, River Rd., Antrim, NH.*

Highlights included New Hampshire's second **Pink-footed Goose**, very rare spring records of **Marbled Godwit** and **Long-billed Dowitcher**, a fantastic showing of **Red-headed Woodpecker**, and the first **Loggerhead Shrike** since 1997, the latter being my pick for bird of the season. **Green-tailed Towhee**, **Bullock's Oriole**, **Western Tanager** and **Painted Bunting** continued from the winter season.

## Waterfowl to Grebes

The Exeter Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP) was closed for parts of the season due to construction so there were fewer reports from this waterfowl hot spot. There were only single reports of **Greater White-fronted Goose** and **Cackling Goose**. Befitting the season, both birds were observed on the wing: a Greater White-fronted Goose over "Moore" fields on Rt. 155A in Durham on March 30, and a possible Cackling Goose flying over Pease International Airport on April 5. The possible Cackling Goose was seen in a migrating flock of Canadas and described as a "tiny goose in the flock," but the observer was unable to see other confirming field marks.

New Hampshire's second **Pink-footed Goose** took up residence with a flock of Canada Geese in the cornfields adjacent to Horseshoe Pond in Concord, where it remained from March 21-29. The **Brant** migration was unremarkable save for a flock of 37 birds seen flying north along the Connecticut River Valley on May 15.

**Redhead** passed north through the state during the first half of March, with eight birds on the Connecticut River in Hinsdale and a single at the Exeter WTP. **Ring-necked Ducks** were reported in noteworthy numbers from Horseshoe Pond in Concord (171), Mile Long Pond in Errol (300), and Magill Bay

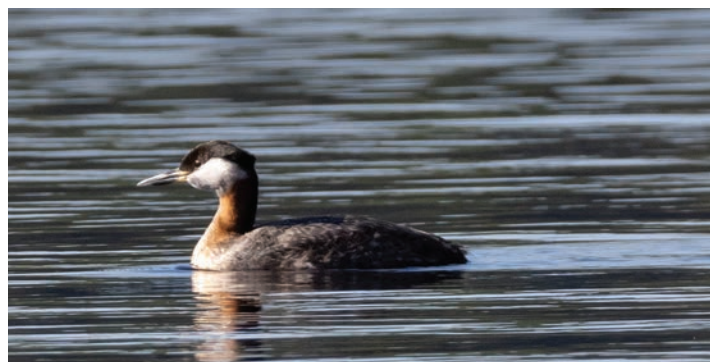
in Dummer (130). A hybrid **Tufted Duck x Lesser Scaup** was seen on Massabesic Lake in March.



*Redhead with Lesser Scaup by Len Medlock, 3-1-20, Exeter, NH.*

The only inland **Black Scoter** report was of six on Lake Sunapee, while **White-winged Scoter** inland reports included high counts from Lake Waukegan (38) and Spofford Lake (17), all in May. There were scattered reports of **Long-tailed Duck** from interior waterbodies throughout the spring, with a big flight on the night of April 25, when I picked up multiple flocks passing over my Hancock house between 8:30 and 11:30 pm. A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** lingered in Errol until the late date of May 12 while individuals that had wintered in the south were gone by the third week of March. A hybrid **Common x Barrow's Goldeneye**, presumably the same bird that was first reported in 2016, was seen again in Errol.

**Red-breasted Mergansers** were reported in good numbers from the interior, with maximum counts from Spofford Lake (2), Hinsdale Setbacks (6), Wilder Dam (4), and Sunapee Lake (3), and scattered individuals elsewhere. We typically have only a few spring sightings inland, usually along the Connecticut River corridor. There was a single report of **Ruddy Duck**, a bird on Webster Lake on April 9. Sunapee Lake hosted 24 **Horned Grebes** and 34 **Red-necked Grebes** on April 28, but there were few other inland reports of these two grebes.



*Red-necked Grebe by Leo McKillop, 5-7-20, Lake Massabesic, Auburn, NH.*

## Chimney Swift to Sandhill Crane

An impressive high count of 150 **Chimney Swifts** was recorded from Concord on May 26. The study of nocturnal migration is a terrific way to get a sense of the relative abundance and timing of secretive birds like cuckoos and rails. Even though it would prove to be an excellent summer for **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, I recorded only five birds, all in the last few days of May, compared to 19 **Black-billed Cuckoo** across the latter half of May. How much more common is Virginia Rail compared to Sora? This spring, 35 **Virginia Rail** and two **Sora** flew north over my house. Assuming that each species is equally vocal during nocturnal migration (and this is an assumption), this provides a pretty compelling data point. Total eBird sighting data echoes this with 231 Virginia Rail reports and 45 Soras.



*Black-billed Cuckoo by JoAnn O' Shaughnessy, 5-26-20, Hampton, NH.*

You don't need to study nocturnal migration to know that **Common Gallinule** is rarer still and this spring they provided an excellent showing. Individuals were seen at Deer Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Brentwood, Hoit Road Marsh WMA in Concord, Dillant-Hopkins Airport in Swanzey, Unsworth Preserve in Sandwich, and Brookford Farm in Canterbury. Likely others went undetected given their secretive habits. The relative abundance of Common Gallinule contrasts with the scarcity of **American Coot**. More regular in fall, there was a single record this spring, a bird on the Connecticut River in Hinsdale. At least 15 records of **Sandhill Crane** involving nearly 30 birds was on par with recent seasons.



*Sora by Steve Mirick, 5-3-20, Portsmouth, NH.*

## Shorebirds



*American Oystercatcher by Dan Prima, 5-24-20, Hampton, NH.*

Two **American Oystercatcher** at Great Boars Head in Hampton on May 24 were perhaps the same birds seen three days later at Plaice Cove just to the north. A **Black-bellied Plover** in Hampton on March 13 was undoubtedly a winter holdover, perhaps the bird last seen in Hampton on February 1. The first spring migrants did not arrive until May 9. A Black-bellied migrating north over Hinsdale on May 25 was the sole record away from the coast. Not to be outdone by the Black-bellied Plover, the overwintering **Semipalmated Plover** at Rye Harbor continued until at least April 30, with the first migrants not arriving until May 4. I am tempted to think that the two plovers were not the only holdover shorebirds that braved the New England winter. A **Least Sandpiper** that was photographed in Hampton on March 13 was more than a month ahead of schedule, suggesting that it wintered locally.



*The Semipalmated Plover that overwintered at Rye Harbor State Park, NH. Photos by Steve Mirick.*

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Twenty **Ruddy Turnstone** in Hampton on May 15 was a high count for spring. A **Red Knot** at the same location ten days later was the only record of the season. **Purple Sandpiper** lingered until at least May 27, with four seen at Rye Ledge. **Pectoral Sandpiper** is at least as likely to be seen inland as on the coast. Four this spring, all inland, included an early bird on March 21 at Woodmont Orchard in Hollis.

Holly Bauer recorded high counts of **Semipalmated Sandpiper** (400) and **Least Sandpiper** (650), and best of all, very rare spring records of **Long-billed Dowitcher** and **Marbled Godwit**, all from Meadow Pond. Marbled Godwit migrates north primarily through the interior and west coast, with only four prior spring records for New Hampshire. Long-billed Dowitcher is even rarer, this being only the second spring record ever. **Short-billed Dowitcher** is the default species in New Hampshire at any time of year, though the 153 birds seen in Hampton on May 23 was a noteworthy high count. Fifteen **Greater Yellowlegs** at Dillant-Hopkins Airport in Swanzey on May 14 and eight **Lesser Yellowlegs** in Sandwich on May 12 were season high counts away from the coast. **Willet** is normally strictly coastal, so a bird on Great Bay in early May was an unusual sighting.

## Alcids through Raptors

COVID-19 impacted the availability of offshore fishing boats resulting in only one pelagic trip report in spring on May 24 and almost no alcid reports for the season. An injured **Thick-billed Murre** was found at Hampton Beach State Park on March 1 and taken to the Center for Wildlife in Cape Neddick, ME.

**Caspian Terns** moved north both coastally (one in Exeter on May 2 and five in Rye on May 23) and inland beginning with one bird in Hinsdale on April 25 and then two on May 16 flying north along the Connecticut River in Orford that were likely the same two reported from Monroe almost two hours later. The only inland report of **Common Tern** was on May 4 in Hinsdale, a regular location for inland spring reports in recent years. The only shearwater of the season was a **Manx Shearwater** seen from Hampton on May 24.



*Tricolored Heron by Jim Sparrell, 4-28-20, NH coast.*

A **Least Bittern** at World's End Pond in Salem (a known breeding location) on May 19 was the only spring report. There were at least eight records of **Great Egret** from interior New Hampshire and a high count of nine birds at the coast on April 30. Singles of **Little Blue Heron** and **Tricolored Heron** were seen in Newmarket and Rye respectively. **Glossy Ibis** was reported from Dillant-Hopkins Airport in Swanzey on April 8 and Horseshoe Pond in Concord on April 25 and a high count of 21 birds was reported from the coast on April 29.

**Black Vulture** is now too numerous to mention individual sightings in spring, with more than a dozen reports this year. The only way to make the news these days is to find one north of the Lakes Region, where they remain a rarity. The report from Pittsburg on May 18 is the news this season. Steve Mirick witnessed a remarkable movement of 207 **Turkey Vultures** in Portsmouth on April 5.



*Mississippi Kite by Zeke Cornell, 5-17-20, Durham, NH.*

The only **Golden Eagle** report was of an immature in the Errol region in April. **Mississippi Kites** returned on May 17 to Newmarket and Durham, with at least two birds noted from each location later in May. Levi Burford recorded 381 **Broad-winged Hawks** from Pitcher Mountain in Stoddard on April 29 and several good flights were recorded on May 3, including 96 in Canterbury and 80 over Portsmouth during what the observer, Steve Mirick, described as a "huge hawk flight." Steve's report to the NHBirds email list (5-3-20) included a possible but unconfirmed **Swainson's Hawk**. He also reported 76 **Sharp-shinned Hawks** the same morning. Five **Rough-legged Hawks** were noted, including a very late bird at Deer Hill WMA in Brentwood on May 3.

## Woodpeckers through Waxwings

**Red-headed Woodpecker**, which is known to be an unpredictable and erratic migrant near the edge of its range, had the best showing for at least ten years, with reports from eight locations, including a bird far north in Jackson. With changing forest dynamics in New Hampshire, especially relating to the increasing prevalence of Emerald Ash Borer, it will be interesting





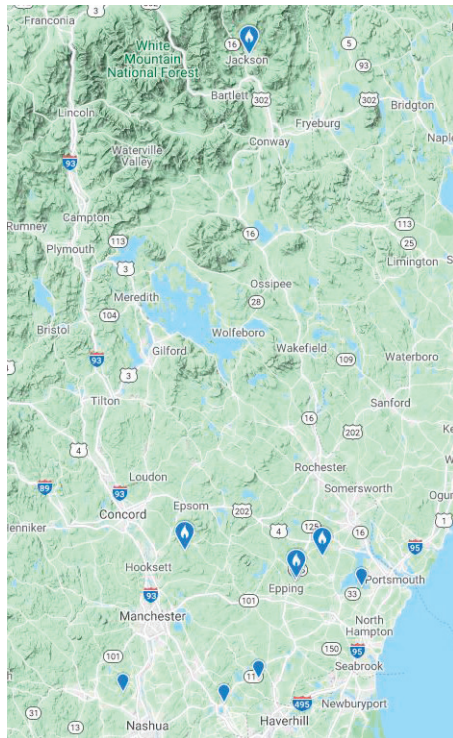
*Red-headed Woodpecker by Judd Nathan, 3-31-20, Epping, NH. See the inside back cover for the transformation of this bird from immature to adult plumage.*

to see what happens with this species in the near future. A **White-eyed Vireo** was seen at Deer Hill WMA in early May. This southern species is more often seen in fall than spring in our state.

It was an excellent season for **Northern Shrike**, with about 20 reported from around the state. It was an even better season for **Loggerhead Shrike**, with a bird photographed by Robin Feustal in Antrim providing the first state record since 1997 for this former breeder. Greg Tillman provided the following:

*In the late 1800s, the Loggerhead Shrike's range expanded northward into New Hampshire, probably driven by forest clearing, but the expansion was short-lived, and by the 1940s the bird had retreated as forest reclaimed field. It is now "extirpated" as a breeder and quite rare even as a migrant; the previous record was in 1997 in Newington, NH.*

The **Purple Martin** colony in Seabrook hosted as many as 25 birds in late May. The only report away from the coast was of a single bird in Keene. Ten **Cliff Swallows** counted at World End Pond in Salem on May 13 was a noteworthy record away from



*Red-headed Woodpecker reports in eBird for spring 2020. Image provided by eBird ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)) and created 4-7-21.*

the few known breeding colonies.

Lori Charron found a **House Wren** on April 19 in Errol, not long after the first House Wren was reported for the state on April 17. The snow storm on May 9 brought high numbers of **Hermit Thrush** to feed on the open ground along roadsides in parts of Grafton County where there were 2-3 inches of snow (see the Field Notes for more). Single **Bohemian Waxwings** were seen on March 22 and April 10 in Concord and Cornish respectively, the only two reports of the season. Steve Mirick recorded 260 **Cedar Waxwings** migrating from the coast on May 31.

## Evening Grosbeak through Blackbirds

**Evening Grosbeaks**, which experienced a mini boom 12 months previously, returned to pre-boom levels, widespread but in small numbers. It was an off year for **Pine Grosbeak** and **Common Redpoll** and both species were confined to a very few reports from Coos County. By contrast, **Red Crossbills**, with several birds identified to type 10 (from call recordings), were widespread in western New Hampshire and the North Country, doubtless in response to the plentiful supply of white pine and spruce cones. **White-winged Crossbills** were largely confined to the White Mountains and the North Country and **Pine Siskin** too, though somewhat less so, with scattered reports in the southern half of the state.



*Red Crossbill by Len Medlock, 3-1-20, Errol, NH.*

There were only two **Lapland Longspur** reports for the spring, one in March in Durham and one in April in Exeter. A couple of very late **Snow Buntings** were recorded on two separate days in mid-May from the top of Mount Monadnock. Sky islands are perhaps the least understood and definitely the least studied transient habitat used by migrant birds, so if you want to make your name, make a mountain top your local study site in spring and fall.

A **Grasshopper Sparrow** in Durham on May 17 was the only one seen away from known breeding sites. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** in Andover was an unusual spring report;

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this Midwestern species is more typically seen in fall in New Hampshire. Franconia Notch State Park was a remarkable location for a **Vesper Sparrow** in late April (or at any time of year) where its habitat is absent. This species is uncommon and local in the state, especially north of the White Mountains. The **Green-tailed Towhee**, found during the winter, continued in Chichester, with the last confirmed sighting on March 14 after being unreported since February 21.



*A Bullock's x Baltimore Oriole hybrid showing the distinct black throat pattern and light lower belly of a Bullock's but the dusky cheek and thinner white wing bar of a Baltimore. Photo by Linda Raby, 5-4-20, Epsom, NH.*

Jenna Pettipas scored an excellent new yard bird on May 18 when a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** flew over her home in Manchester. The **Bullock's Oriole** that frequented a Stratham feeder since December 2019 was last seen on April 21. A **Baltimore Oriole** in North Hampton in March was also a holdover of a wintering bird with the first migrants not arriving until April 30. A **Bullock's x Baltimore Oriole** hybrid was photographed in Epsom. There are no other New Hampshire reports in eBird for this hybrid.

A common question this spring was whether there were greater numbers of popular feeder birds such as orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks than usual. A quick look at numbers of Baltimore Orioles provided some insight into the question. There were 2,125 Baltimore reports in spring 2020 versus 1,442 in 2019, but with the exception of a remarkable count of 28 at the Deer Hill WMA, high counts were typical and at commonly birded locations with more reports from those locations not more birds. Migrant **Rusty Blackbirds** were well represented across the state, but in low numbers, with a high count of 25 from Powwow Pond in Kingston on April 10.

### Warblers through Dickcissel

A remarkable number and diversity of warblers was enjoyed by many birders at the Deer Hill WMA in Brentwood on the weekend of May 16-17 (see the article on birding this

location in this issue). With COVID-19 restricting access to the coast, this location became the nearest migration hotspot, but only time will tell whether this was an undiscovered regular phenomenon or the coincidence of perfect migration timing.



*Blackpoll Warbler was one of the many species at Deer Hill WMA in Brentwood on May 17, 2020. Photo by Len Medlock.*

Two **Golden-winged x Blue-winged Warbler** hybrids were documented: an individual from Exeter (**Brewster's Warbler**) and the other in Claremont (**Lawrence's Warbler**). Always uncommon in spring, three **Orange-crowned Warblers**, one each in Amherst, Laconia, and Gilsum, were noteworthy.

A **Common Yellowthroat** in Concord on March 31 was suspiciously early for a migrant, more suggestive of a bird that successfully overwintered in the region. The next earliest, a bird in Rye on April 12, was also exceptionally early, in itself a noteworthy event in a season when birds arrived more or less on the expected schedule. A **Hooded Warbler** in Hinsdale on May 14 was an exceptional record. This southern species occasionally wanders into New Hampshire during migration and in the past few years there have been single sightings in spring and fall. Kurk Dorsey's Durham yard hosted a **Cerulean Warbler** on May 27.

There were several reports of the Western subspecies of **Palm Warbler**, *Setophaga palmarum palmarum*, including individuals in Bartlett, Jackson, and Portsmouth. This form typically arrives later than "Yellow" Palm Warbler, which is the subspecies more commonly encountered in New Hampshire in spring.



*Blue Grosbeak by Richard Frechette, 5-25-20, Peterborough, NH.*

One **Summer Tanager** and three **Blue Grosbeaks**, compared to five tanagers and one grosbeak in spring 2019, shows just how dynamic and variable spring vagrants are from year to year. The **Western Tanager** that spent the winter in Plaistow continued to March 5 and the **Painted Bunting** at Tin Mountain Conservation Center in Albany continued to March 13. There was only one record of **Dickcissel**, a bird on March 15 in Epping.

### Sighting Details

The following listings provide details for the specific sightings mentioned in the summaries. Note that all sightings from the season are viewable in eBird. To view the reports of a species, go to the Explore tab and select Species Maps. Fill in the species and when the map appears, you can choose which season you want to see by selecting the Date tab and clicking the appropriate month button and selecting the year. Zoom in to see the New Hampshire reports until you see blue pins, or check off "Show Points Sooner." Click on any pin to see the sighting details.

*Date # Location Observer*

#### Greater White-fronted Goose

03-30 1 Rt. 155A fields, Durham R. Prieto



*Pink-footed Goose by Steve Bennett, 3-22-20, Concord, NH*

#### Pink-footed Goose

03-21 1 Horseshoe Pond, Concord D. Lipsy, R. Suomala, et al.

#### Brant

05-15 37 Rivendell Academy, Orford J. MacQueen

#### Cackling/Canada Goose

04-05 1 Portsmouth Int'l. Airport at Pease S.& J. Mirick

#### Redhead

03-01 1 Exeter WTP S. Spangenberg, et al.  
03-07 8 Hinsdale Setbacks E. Masterson, G. Tillman

#### Ring-necked Duck

03-20 171 Horseshoe Pond, Concord D. Lipsy  
04-12 300 Mile Long Pond, Androscoggin R., Errol  
L.& P. Charron  
04-19 130 Magill Bay, Androscoggin R., Dummer  
L.& P. Charron

*Date # Location Observer*

#### Tufted Duck x Lesser Scaup (hybrid)

03-13 1 Claire's Landing, Lake Massabesic, Auburn  
L. McKillop

#### Black Scoter

05-01 6 Lake Sunapee M. Chadwick, J. Gamble

#### Barrow's Goldeneye

05-12 1 Androscoggin R. at Errol dam L. Charron,  
D.& G. Dionne

#### Common x Barrow's Goldeneye (hybrid)

03-04 1 Androscoggin R. at Errol dam L. Charron

#### Red-breasted Merganser

03-17 4 Wilder Dam Reservoir, Lebanon J. MacQueen,  
W. Scott  
04-17 2 Spofford Lake, Chesterfield C. Ross  
04-22 6 Hinsdale Setbacks B. Krampetz  
04-28 3 Lake Sunapee J. Gamble, M. Chadwick

#### Ruddy Duck

04-09 1 Lake Winnepocket, Webster R. Quinn

#### Horned Grebe

04-28 24 Lake Sunapee J. Gamble, M. Chadwick

#### Red-necked Grebe

04-28 34 Lake Sunapee J. Gamble, M. Chadwick

#### Chimney Swift

05-26 150 Durgin Block parking garage, School St., Concord  
K. Klapper

#### Common Gallinule

05-06 1 Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood C. Duffy,  
C. Guindon, et al.  
05-10 1 Hoit Road Marsh WMA, Concord P. Hunt,  
U. Dienes  
05-10 1 Airport Rd., Swanzey S. Spangenberg  
05-15 1 Unsworth (Koenig) Preserve, Moultonborough  
R.& W. Van de Poll  
05-20 1 Brookford Farm, Canterbury R. Suomala, Z. Cornell

#### American Coot

04-23 1 Hinsdale Setbacks C. Witko

#### American Oystercatcher

05-24 2 Great Boars Head, Hampton R. Suomala,  
Z. Cornell  
05-27 2 Plaice Cove, Hampton T. McCreery

#### Black-bellied Plover

03-13 1 Hampton Beach SP L. McKillop  
05-25 1 Hinsdale Setbacks K. Rosenberg

#### Semipalmated Plover

04-30 1 Rye Harbor S. Mirick  
05-04 1 Meadow Pond, Hampton H. Bauer

#### Marbled Godwit

05-22 1 Meadow Pond, Hampton H. Bauer

# SPRING SEASON

Date	#	Location	Observer	Date	#	Location	Observer				
<b>Ruddy Turnstone</b>											
05-15	20	Yankee Fisherman's Coop., Seabrook	L. McKillop	<b>Lesser Yellowlegs</b>							
<b>Red Knot</b>											
05-24	1	Yankee Fisherman's Coop., Seabrook	R. Suomala, Z. Cornell, et al.	05-12	8	Ambrose Gravel Pit, Sandwich	K. Klapper				
<b>Purple Sandpiper</b>											
05-27	4	Rye Ledge	M. Sabatine	<b>Thick-billed Murre</b>							
<b>Least Sandpiper</b>											
03-13	1	Hampton Beach SP	L. McKillop	03-01	1	Hampton Beach SP	R. Chretien				
05-18	650	Meadow Pond, Hampton	H. Bauer	<b>Caspian Tern</b>							
<b>Common Tern</b>											
05-04	1	Hinsdale Setbacks	C. Witko, K. Lauer	04-25	1	Hinsdale Setbacks	Z. Coeman				
<b>Manx Shearwater</b>											
05-24	1	Great Boars Head, Hampton	S. Mirick	05-02	1	Powder House Pond, Exeter	J. Nealon				
<b>Least Bittern</b>											
05-19	1	World End Pond, Salem	K. Wilmarth	05-16	2	McIndoes Reservoir, Monroe	W. Scott				
<b>Great Egret</b>											
04-13	1	Horseshoe Pond, Concord	J. Landry	05-16	2	Richmond Conservation Land, Orford	A. Cooley, E. Marie				
04-19	1	Great Meadow, Charlestown	D. Jackson	05-23	5	Rt. 1A pullout by stone angel, Rye	L.& L. Medlock				
04-22	1	Ogilvie Rd., Marlborough	M. Legru	<b>Manx Shearwater</b>							
04-22	1	Reed's Marsh, Orford	W. Scott	05-24	1	Great Boars Head, Hampton	S. Mirick				
04-24	1	Rt. 93, Sanbornton	S. Francesco	<b>Least Bittern</b>							
04-30	9	NH coast	S. Mirick	05-19	1	World End Pond, Salem	K. Wilmarth				
05-02	1	Krif Rd., Keene	S. Jaffe	<b>Great Egret</b>							
05-07	1	Dillant-Hopkins Airport, Swanzey	P. Kirkhart	04-13	1	Horseshoe Pond, Concord	J. Landry				
05-16	1	Walcott CA, Hancock	P. Brown	04-19	1	Great Meadow, Charlestown	D. Jackson				
<b>Little Blue Heron</b>											
05-14	1	Lubberland Creek Preserve, Newmarket	K. Dorsey	04-22	1	Ogilvie Rd., Marlborough	M. Legru				
<b>Tricolored Heron</b>											
04-22	1	salt marshes s. of Rye Harbor	S. Varney	04-22	1	Reed's Marsh, Orford	W. Scott				



Least Sandpiper by Leo McKillop 3-13-20 Hampton Beach SP, NH



Pectoral Sandpiper by Christopher McPherson, 3-31-20, Hollis, NH.

<b>Pectoral Sandpiper</b>											
03-21	1	Woodmont Orchard, Hollis	C. McPherson	<b>Semipalmated Sandpiper</b>							
05-24	400	Meadow Pond, Hampton	H. Bauer	<b>Short-billed Dowitcher</b>							
05-23	153	Yankee Fisherman's Coop., Seabrook	P. Hunt, U. Dienes	<b>Long-billed Dowitcher</b>							
05-09	1	Hampton Salt Marsh CA	H. Bauer	<b>Greater Yellowlegs</b>							
05-14	15	Airport Rd., Swanzey	S. Lamonde, K. Snyder	<b>Willet</b>							
05-07	1	Adams Point WMA, Durham	D. Hubbard								



Glossy Ibis by Leo McKillop, 4-30-20, Hampton, NH.

<b>Glossy Ibis</b>							
04-08	1	Dillant-Hopkins Airport, Swanzey	S. Jaffe				
04-24	1	Horseshoe Pond, Concord	J. Rosset				

# SPRING SEASON

Date	#	Location	Observer	Date	#	Location	Observer
04-29	21	NH coast	J. Maher	05-09	25	Cape Moonshine Rd., Piermont	E. Marie
<b>Black Vulture</b>				05-09	35	Beech Hill Rd., Warren	E. Marie
05-18	1	Scott Bog Rd., Pittsburg	K. Fenton	<b>Bohemian Waxwing</b>			
<b>Turkey Vulture</b>				03-22	1	NHA McLane Ctr., Concord	S. Spangenberg
04-05	207	Portsmouth Int'l. Airport at Pease	S.& J. Mirick	04-10	1	Connecticut Valley Hwy., Cornish	C. Heath
<b>Golden Eagle</b>				<b>Cedar Waxwing</b>			
04-19	1	Magalloway River, Errol	Anon.	05-31	260	Odiorne Pt. SP, Rye	S. Mirick
<b>Mississippi Kite</b>				<b>Pine Grosbeak</b>			
05-17	1	Madbury Rd. at Edgewood Rd., Durham	R. Suomala, Z. Cornell	03-02	3	North Rd., Shelburne	W. O'Brien
05-17	1	Maple St., Newmarket	E. Norton	03-17	40	Clay Brook Rd., Gorham	W. O'Brien
<b>Sharp-shinned Hawk</b>				04-22	8	Mt. Carter St., Gorham	W. O'Brien
05-03	76	Portsmouth City Park, Harvard St.	S.& J. Mirick	<b>Common Redpoll</b>			
<b>Broad-winged Hawk</b>				04-14	1	Airport Marsh, Whitefield	M. Hammon
04-29	381	Pitcher Mt., Stoddard	L. Burford	05-12	1	Groveton WTP	A. Passer
05-03	96	Muchyedo Banks WMA, Canterbury	R. Quinn, J. Kolias	<b>Lapland Longspur</b>			
05-03	80	Portsmouth City Park, Harvard St.	S.& J. Mirick	03-08	1	Rt. 155A fields, Durham	K. Dorsey
<b>Rough-legged Hawk</b>				04-26	1	Holland Way, Exeter	P. Wood
03-01	1	River Rd., Walpole	R. Burnett	<b>Snow Bunting</b>			
03-08	1	Dillant-Hopkins Airport, Swanzy	S. Jaffe, et al.	05-10	1	Mt. Monadnock	V. Ialenti, A. Wrocklage
03-27	1	Blackberry Way, Manchester	D. Audy	05-13	1	Mt. Monadnock	H. Dansereau
04-05	1	Tigola Trail, Stoddard	J. Anderson	<b>Grasshopper Sparrow</b>			
05-03	1	Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood	C. Duffy	05-17	1	Rt. 155A fields, Durham	K. Dorsey
<b>Red-headed Woodpecker</b>				<b>Clay-colored Sparrow</b>			
03-01	1	Burley Farms, Epping	G. Tillman, E. Norton	05-17	1	Valley Rd., Andover	P. Newbern
03-06	1	Thompson Forest, Durham	K. Dorsey	<b>Vesper Sparrow</b>			
03-23	1	Sawmill Swamp, Hampstead	A. Abraham	04-28	1	Franconia Notch SP	T. McShane, R. Quinn
03-28	1	White Pine Swamp, Merrimack	J. LiPetri	<b>Green-tailed Towhee</b>			
04-17	2	Bear Brook SP, Allenstown	M. Suomala, S.& P. Dionne	03-14	1	Millican Nurseries, Chichester	J. Lambert
04-25	1	Meloon Rd., Greenland	A. Passer	<b>Yellow-headed Blackbird</b>			
05-23	1	Range Rd., Windham	S. Horton	05-18	1	Kennard Rd., Manchester	J. Pettipas
05-28	1	Valley Cross Rd., Jackson	W. Broussard, et al.	<b>White-eyed Vireo</b>			
05-02	1	Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood	S. Heron, B. Green, et al.	<b>Loggerhead Shrike</b>			
05-24	1	River Rd., Antrim	R. Feustel	<b>Purple Martin</b>			
04-20	1	Green Wagon Farm, Keene	H. Walters	<b>Cliff Swallow</b>			
05-23	25	Cross Beach Rd., Seabrook	P. Hunt, U. Dienes	05-13	10	World End Pond, Salem	K. Wilmarth
<b>House Wren</b>				<b>Hermit Thrush</b>			
04-17	1	Autumn Ln., Nottingham	R. Prieto	05-09	20	Oliverian Rd., Benton	E. Marie
04-19	1	Umbagog Snowmobile Assn. trails, Errol	L. Charron	05-09	32	W. Farms Rd. at Tunis Rd., Canaan	L. Bunten



*Bullock's Oriole fueling on 4-20-20 just before departing. Photo by Mary Weismann, Stratham, NH.*

<b>Bullock's Oriole</b>			
04-21	1	Butterfield Ln., Stratham	M. Weismann
<b>Baltimore Oriole</b>			
03-24	1	Landing Rd., Hampton	S. Mirick

# SPRING SEASON

*Date # Location Observer*

## **Baltimore Oriole (con't)**

05-19 28 Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood J. Maher

## **Bullock's x Baltimore Oriole (hybrid)**

05-04 1 Kings Towne Retirement Village, Epsom L. Raby

## **Rusty Blackbird**

04-10 25 Powwow Pond, Kingston S. Heron

## **Lawrence's Warbler (hybrid)**

05-23 1 Moody Park, Claremont D. Jackson

## **Brewster's Warbler (hybrid)**

05-17 1 Oaklands Rd., Exeter S. Mirick

## **Orange-crowned Warbler**

05-11 1 Pond Parish Trail, Amherst C. Wennerth

05-13 1 Plantation Beach neighborhood, Laconia B. Hillman

05-14 1 Hammond Hollow, Gilsum M. Wright

## **Common Yellowthroat**

03-31 1 Horseshoe Pond, Concord J. Rosset

04-12 1 Parsons Creek saltmarsh, Rye R. Suomala

## **Hooded Warbler**

05-14 1 Hinsdale Setbacks S. Lamonde

## **Cerulean Warbler**

05-27 1 Woodridge Park, Durham K. Dorsey

## **Palm Warbler - Western subsp.**

05-10 1 Thorne Pond CA, Bartlett C. Nims

05-14 1 Valley Cross Rd., Jackson K. Pfeil, W. Broussard,  
R. Steber, L. Smith

05-16 1 Portsmouth City Park, Harvard St. S.& J. Mirick

## **Summer Tanager**

05-26 1 Mockingbird Ln., Newmarket D. McCoy

## **Western Tanager**

03-05 1 Palmer Ave., Plaistow A. Carifio

## **Blue Grosbeak**

05-12 1 Corporation Hill Rd., Sutton Mills R. Werme

05-20 1 2nd NH Tpk., Lyndeborough Y. Neskey

05-26 1 Peterborough S. Spangenberg

## **Painted Bunting**

03-13 1 Tin Mt. Conservation Ctr., Albany J. Longo

## **Dickcissel**

03-15 1 Mill St., Epping K. Essigmann



*Dickcissel by Katie Essigmann, 3-15-20, Mill St., Epping, NH.*

# Birding Deer Hill Wildlife Management Area

*by Terry Bronson and Greg Tillman*

*This article was originally written by Terry Bronson in 2006 and updated by Greg Tillman in 2021 with assistance from Chris Duffy and Rebecca Suomala.*

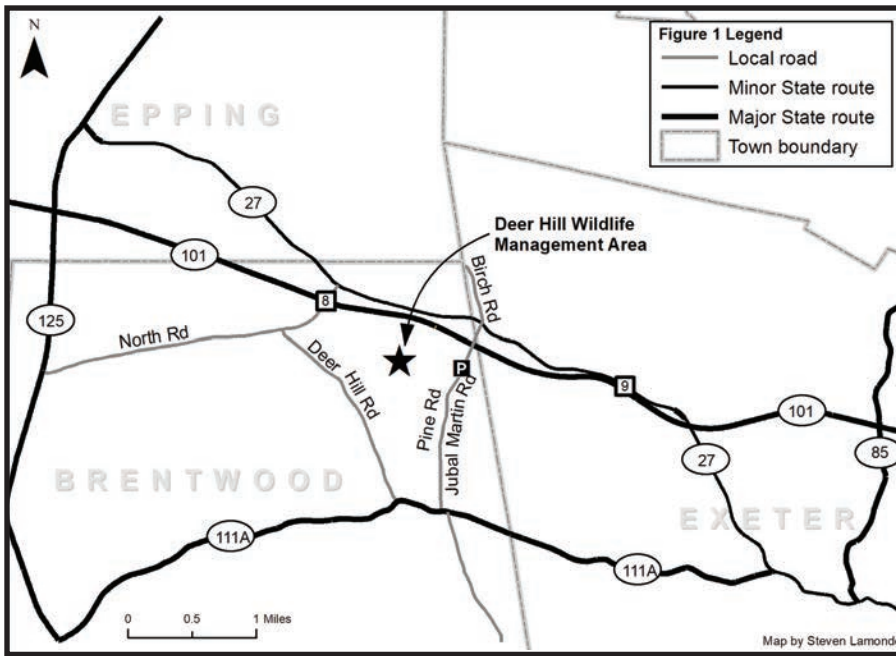
The Deer Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Brentwood, NH (formerly called the Brentwood mitigation area) hosts nesting Pied-billed Grebes, a few Great Blue Heron nests, and at least 30 other species of breeding birds. Its eBird history as of December 2020 (see <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L304161>) records more than 180 species overall! Birding is best here from mid-April through mid-May, when spring migration is in full swing and the shrubs and trees have not fully leafed out. Good birding opportunities are also present in summer and fall and, if the birds are quiet, the beaver activity can be fascinating.



*Pied-billed Grebe by Jim Sparrell, 5-20-20, Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood, NH.*

A few precautions should be taken. Because the grass is not mowed, ticks are abundant in the spring and summer, so take all due precautions and run a self-check after you visit. Mosquitoes and flies are common, and there is virtually no shade, so insect repellent and sunscreen are necessities. Long trousers, a long-sleeved shirt or jacket, and a hat are highly recommended. New Hampshire Fish and Game releases Ring-necked Pheasants at Brentwood just before October 1, so in the fall hunters are common (sometimes dozens of them). If you do visit the property in the fall, wear orange! The area lacks "creature comforts:" there are no restrooms, water fountains, or coffee shops.

Also, wear old socks and sneakers that can get wet or knee-high waterproof boots, as about 100 feet of a low spot in the trail is regularly flooded up to eight inches deep. Other areas, especially the field near Route 101, can also flood after very heavy rains.



## Brentwood Basics

The property is about 350 acres of ponds, marsh, forest, and grassland. It was formerly a gravel pit used during the construction of Route 101 and the Department of Transportation restored it in the 1990s as part of the required process to “mitigate” the wetland impacts of the Route 101 expansion. Over time the water levels in the ponds have dropped so that some are now more shrub wetlands than open ponds. The site is now managed by New Hampshire Fish and Game. See <https://wildlife.state.nh.us/maps/wma/deer-hill.html> for more general information.

Located in the northeast corner of the town of Brentwood, this WMA is easily accessible from Route 101 (Figure 1). If you approach from the west, take Exit 8 from Route 101, go north 0.3 miles to Route 27, then turn right and go 1.1 miles to Jubal Martin Road (aka Pine Road) by Squires Auto Body, opposite Birch Road. From the east, take Exit 9 and go west 1.8 miles on Route 27 to Jubal Martin Road. The street sign on Route 27 says Jubal Martin Road but there’s a sign for Pine Road almost immediately after you turn onto the road and that’s the name many people use. Go south on Pine/Jubal Martin Road for 0.4 miles passing under Route 101 and, just beyond Seacoast Mills Building Supply lumber yard, turn into the gated entrance and small unsigned parking area along the road on the right. Many large trucks travel this road so be sure to pull all the way off to the side. There is also a pull-off area under the power lines a short distance beyond the gate.

The terrain is basically flat, with three or four miles of old roads replanted with grass and now serving as trails. The grass is not mowed and can get over seven feet high in spots late in the summer (and get quite wet after heavy dew and rains). Figure 2 will help guide you through the area. It takes

over four hours to traverse all the trails but if you’re short of time, you can do it in less than two hours by skipping some of the ponds. Binoculars will suffice for most of the ponds, but the swamp and the larger ponds can best be appreciated with a scope.

Brentwood can sometimes be noisy. Route 101 traffic, an industrial operation south of the power line, an occasional jet flying over, the Sigarms shooting range across Route 101, the roar from the New England Dragway at Exit 8 on Friday afternoons and weekends during warm weather, and practice sessions of the marching band of nearby Exeter High School all contribute to the ambiance!

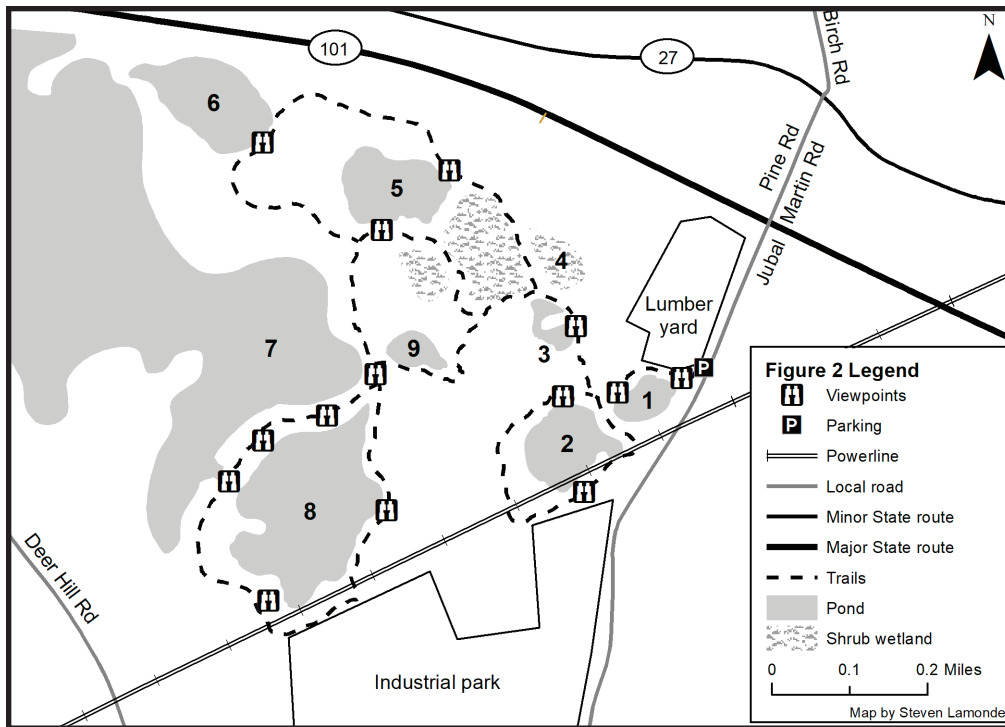
## Birding Highlights

Regardless of where you are, check the sky from time to time. Raptor, heron, and gull flyovers occur occasionally with Red-tailed, Broad-winged, and Sharp-shinned Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Great Blue Heron, and Herring and Ring-billed Gull being the most common. Spring and fall can be excellent for warbler migration with occasional rarities such as Connecticut Warbler. During the warmer months, Tree Swallow, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Song Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Eastern Kingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Gray Catbird can be found in most areas of Brentwood. Orchard Orioles are more regular than they were historically. Even in winter you can find Barred Owls and bluebirds or perhaps a lingering Hermit Thrush. There are many birch trees which may attract redpolls and siskins in invasion years.

If you have four hours, the following route will guide you through the entire area. If you have less time, only go partway around Ponds 2 and 8 (Figure 2), or if it’s peak spring warbler migration concentrate on Ponds 4, 5 and 6. On mornings when the grass is wet from rain or heavy dew, you can keep drier by skipping Pond 2 and the powerline loop, leaving this area until the end of your tour.



*Prairie Warbler by Len Medlock, 5-7-20, Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood, NH.*



**Pond 1:** Pied-billed Grebes may still breed in this pond and can sometimes be seen from just inside the entrance, but a better view is from the last thin spot in the vegetation about 100 feet before the first trail junction. Green Herons also breed here and American Coot and Common Gallinule have been seen. The trail from the entrance is bordered mostly by small pine trees and can flood briefly after heavy rains. This area can be hopping with small birds such as American Robin, sparrows, Dark-eyed Junco, Gray Catbird, kinglets, and warblers. Where the pine trees are replaced by low shrubs on the left and medium-sized trees on the right, be alert for American Goldfinch, Purple Finch, Blue-winged and Palm Warbler, Warbling Vireo, and other passerines. In the winter, watch for birds such as robins coming to any unfrozen edges of the water.

**Pond 2 and power line:** At the first trail junction, go left between Ponds 1 and 2. The trail completely loops around Pond 2 and rejoins the main trail less than 100 feet beyond where you first turned off. Check the shrubs along this trail and under the power line between Pond 2 and Pine Road, where Prairie Warbler, Field Sparrow, and Common Yellowthroat are often found. Look down the power line for perching American Kestrel, Belted Kingfisher, Mourning Dove, and others. You cannot walk under the power line beyond the point where the trail veers right around the backside of the pond because it gets very wet. Pond 2 is the easiest place to see Pied-billed Grebes because of the good views from under the power line. Hooded Merganser during migration and Mallard have also been seen in this pond, and the dead trees on the small island in the middle are

good places to check for Northern Flicker. As you make your way around the pond, check the tall trees on the left as well as the shrubs on the right for Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, and other forest-edge birds.

**Pond 3:** Return to the main trail, turn left and follow it past a small pond on the left (which appears to be two small ponds separated by shrubs) and trees on the right. Look especially for Yellow and Prairie Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Song and White-throated Sparrow, House Wren, Baltimore Oriole, and Red-eyed Vireo. The trail is almost permanently flooded several inches deep at this pond because beaver activity and debris have created a dam that prevents rapid draining

after heavy rains. You can often skirt through the small shrubs and trees on the right side, but you may just have to wade through.

**Pond 4:** You will soon come to a split in the trail. The trail to the left goes to Ponds 7, 8, and 9, which is the way to go if you are short on time. The trail to the right leads between two shrubby wetlands which can be good for spring warblers. Most of the birds, generally sparrows, Gray Catbird, and warblers, will be in the shrubs and small trees bordering the trail.

**Pond 5:** After you pass Pond 4, the next pond you will see on the left, Pond 5, is quite large. Pied-billed Grebe, Mallard, and Ring-necked Duck may be seen and Spotted Sandpiper might also be there. As you walk along, a small field will open up on the right between the pond and Route 101. (This is another area that can flood almost a foot deep after heavy rains and take weeks to dry up.) The trees on the far side of this field may reward you with Least Flycatcher and Baltimore Oriole. Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow, and Eastern Kingbird will probably be in the shrubs along the pond. American Woodcock have been flushed from those shrubs and Orchard Oriole has also been seen. Look on the snags and overhead for American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk, and Turkey Vulture.

**Pond 6:** The trail will curve left and pass between Ponds 5 (shrubby at that end) and 6. Pied-billed Grebe and Canada Geese have bred there. Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and Mallard are also possible. Orchard Oriole and Willow Flycatcher have been seen on the Pond 5 side of the trail and Spotted Sandpiper and Herring Gull on the rocks in the pond.



As you leave Pond 6 behind, the shrubs on the left can yield warblers (Canada and Nashville), Eastern Phoebe, Indigo Bunting, and other small birds. Check the trees on the right for birds such as Black-and-white Warbler and Baltimore Oriole. When you come to a trail junction, bear left and continue for about 100 yards to get a view from the backside of Pond 5, then retrace your steps and turn left at the junction.

**Pond 7 (the swamp):** As you follow the trail, check the shrubs and trees on both sides for passerines. You will come to an open gate and see a large swamp on the right with many tall dead trees.

This swamp still contains a few Great Blue Heron nests, remnants of a once-sizeable rookery that has disappeared as the dead trees have decayed and broken off. Ospreys and a Great Horned Owl have been seen in this swamp. Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Ring-necked Duck, and Hooded and Common Merganser have been present. You might hear and see a Belted Kingfisher, Green Heron, or Double-crested Cormorant as well. Keep an ear out for Virginia Rail.

Shortly after you pass the gate take the trail to the right, which follows the edge of the swamp. This path offers several more places where you can get good views of parts of the rookery.



*Veery by Len Medlock, 5-14-20, Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood, NH.*

**Pond 8:** To the left of this trail behind the small pine trees and shrubs is Pond 8, the largest pond in Brentwood, where you can find more nesting Pied-billed Grebes and Mallards and sometimes Canada Goose and Ring-necked Duck. The trees and shrubs on both sides of the trail can be a good place for passerines: Warbling Vireo; Nashville, Palm, and Yellow-rumped Warbler; White-throated Sparrow; Baltimore and Orchard Oriole; Cedar Waxwing; and Willow Flycatcher. This is also a good place to find Barn and occasionally Bank and Northern Rough-winged Swallow, and also Chimney Swift.

Just before the trail bears left, there is a tiny pond on the right (not shown on map) that is connected to the swamp. It

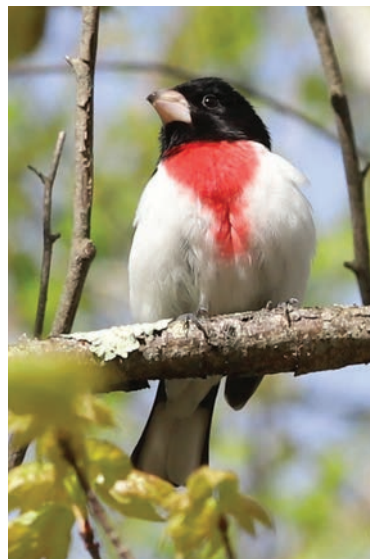
is worthwhile to check for Green Heron, American Kestrel, and Veery in the trees bordering this pond.

Continue along the trail, looking for woodpeckers (Pileated and Hairy) and Blue Jays in the trees and small passerines in the understory. Eventually, the trail will go under the power line and turn left, following the pond, and returning to the gate where the heron nests were first visible. A short distance after you leave the power line, there is a good open spot to view Pied-billed Grebe and Mallard. Veery, Willow Flycatcher, Cedar Waxwing, and other passerines may be in the trees on the right or the shrubs alongside the pond. This stretch is an especially good place to find warblers; a Connecticut Warbler has even been seen here.

**Pond 9:** To reach this pond, take the trail that goes off to the right just past the gate. You'll pass a small pond on the left that is more of a marsh than a pond. Look for Red-winged Blackbird and Common Yellowthroat and check the trees for Great Crested Flycatcher. Just past that pond is a small dirt and grass area where you might see Mourning Dove and sparrows. The trail to the left, just past the dirt area and through the shrubs, would bring you to the spot on the south edge of Pond 5 that you visited earlier. Instead bear right, which brings you back to the split before Pond 4, bear right again to go through the flood area at Pond 3, then bear left to return to the parking area. Pond 1 will be on your right, and you can check it again as you exit.

Brentwood is a place you can go back to again and again during the year to enjoy the ever-changing cast of avian species. All serious New Hampshire birders should put it on their lists of places to visit.

*Terry Bronson is an avid birder formerly of Fremont, NH. When he wrote this article he was a volunteer for New Hampshire Bird Records, led field trips for NH Audubon and its chapters, and served as an officer of the Seacoast Chapter and as Secretary to the NH Rare Birds Committee.*



**Turn the page to read about May 16, 2020 at Deer Hill WMA – an amazing birding morning with warblers everywhere and many stunning birds, like this Rose-breasted Grosbeak photographed that day by Zeke Cornell.**

## Warbler Wonderland at Brentwood

by Rebecca Suomala

May 16, 2020

Zeke Cornell and I had a fantastic morning at the Deer Hill WMA (formerly Brentwood Mitigation Area) topped by 22 species of warbler!!! We were on the trail by 5:15 am and the wall of warbler song was phenomenal. It was amazing and a bit overwhelming



*Chestnut-sided Warbler (top) and Baltimore Oriole (below) by Zeke Cornell, 5-16-20, Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood, NH.*

but such fun. There were warblers everywhere all making some kind of noise. It was like being on an island during a spring fallout but with birds singing. We had Bay-breasted, Cape May, and Tennessee all singing, Blue-winged and Blackburnian (the

only warblers with just single individuals), Canada, and Blackpoll Warblers. Northern Parulas were everywhere and there were gazillions of Yellow-rumped Warblers. I think the only warbler we missed that could have been there was Magnolia.

We spent four hours on the trails and a few of the non-warbler highlights were a Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush, Orchard Oriole pair, loads of Baltimore Orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and calling Pied-billed Grebe. The majority of the activity was in the area of Pond 4 and Pond 5. It was great fun! The full eBird checklist is here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S69184920>.



## Using Birdsong to Study Migratory Connectivity in Mourning Warblers

by Dr. Jay Pitocchelli and Dr. Donald H. Rhodes

Migratory connectivity is an exciting area of research where biologists study the degree to which members of the same breeding population over-winter together during their non-breeding period (Marra et al. 2018). Strong connectivity occurs when members of the same breeding population overwinter together in the same area and are segregated from members of other breeding populations. Weak connectivity happens when members of the same breeding population are dispersed randomly and over broad regions of the wintering range, mixing with individuals from other breeding populations (Marra et al. 2006). An important reason for studying connectivity is that most migratory species spend about three months on the breeding grounds versus nine months of the year either on the winter grounds or in fall and spring migrations (Webster and Marra 2005). Studying connectivity may uncover factors during non-breeding periods that could influence survival and reproductive success (Reudink et al. 2015). It may also provide important information for developing conservation plans for declining species whose greatest problems exist during the non-breeding season (Trierweiler et al. 2015).

Migratory connectivity also extends to the migratory pathways taken by different breeding populations to and from their winter ranges (Briedis & Bauer 2018). Migration routes of different breeding populations may exhibit weak or strong connectivity depending on the degree to which these populations overlap. Our current research project focuses on this second aspect of migratory connectivity to better understand how the migratory pathways of different breeding populations of Mourning Warblers (*Geothlypis philadelphia*) overlap during spring migration. Birdsong has rarely been used in migratory connectivity studies, but Mourning Warbler song types provided an excellent tool for our research.

The extensive breeding range of the Mourning Warbler contains four different song populations that have their own unique song types or regiolects: Western, Eastern, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland (Pitocchelli 2011). Each regiolect has distinct geographic boundaries (Figure 1). The Western regiolect extends from northeastern British Columbia to central Ontario and parts of Minnesota and Wisconsin. The Eastern song type is the most expansive, ranging from central Ontario, Wisconsin, and Michigan to New Brunswick and south through the Appalachian Mountains to West Virginia. The Eastern and Western regiolects overlap in central Ontario

in a zone of admixture. Some birds there sing hybrid songs that contain a mix of Eastern and Western syllables. The smallest regiolect is restricted to Nova Scotia. Newfoundland has its own song type that spills over into southern Labrador.

Since the regiolects and their geographic distribution are well known, the songs of a migrating male could be considered the equivalent of a geographic fingerprint. The song identifies the general region of the breeding range from which individuals learned their song and where they will probably breed. Songs of migrating males leave behind a trail of breadcrumbs that marks the migratory pathways of different song populations.

We have two examples from spring 2020 in New Hampshire. Peter Paul recorded a male singing in Ahern State Park in Laconia on May 26, 2020 and Jim Sparrell sent us a song from Odiorne Point State Park in Rye on May 28, 2020. The two songs (Figure 2. A, B) are nearly identical to a breeder's song from Burgeo, Newfoundland made on June 17, 2017 (Figure 2. C). For comparison we added a sonogram of a breeding male recorded in Franconia, NH on July 13, 2009 (Figure 2. D). This last song is typical of birds singing the Eastern regiolect and is very different from the Newfoundland regiolect.

We can draw two conclusions from these recordings. The 2020 recordings were from migrants headed to their breeding grounds in Newfoundland and not New Hampshire breeders. Mourning Warblers breeding in Newfoundland migrate along the coast but they also travel as far inland as Laconia. The New Hampshire examples are two of 356 migrants' songs we have studied over the past seven years to better understand migratory connectivity within this species. We plotted the geographic positions of these songs from over 30 states using Google maps (Figure 3). The Figure 3 legend contains sonograms of songs similar to the ones recorded from each migrant.

We still need to collect more data, but the preliminary results are beginning to show an interesting pattern of moderate to low connectivity. Birds from the Western regiolect show the least overlap with song populations of the other regiolects. They appear to migrate primarily along or west of the Mississippi River with at least one western

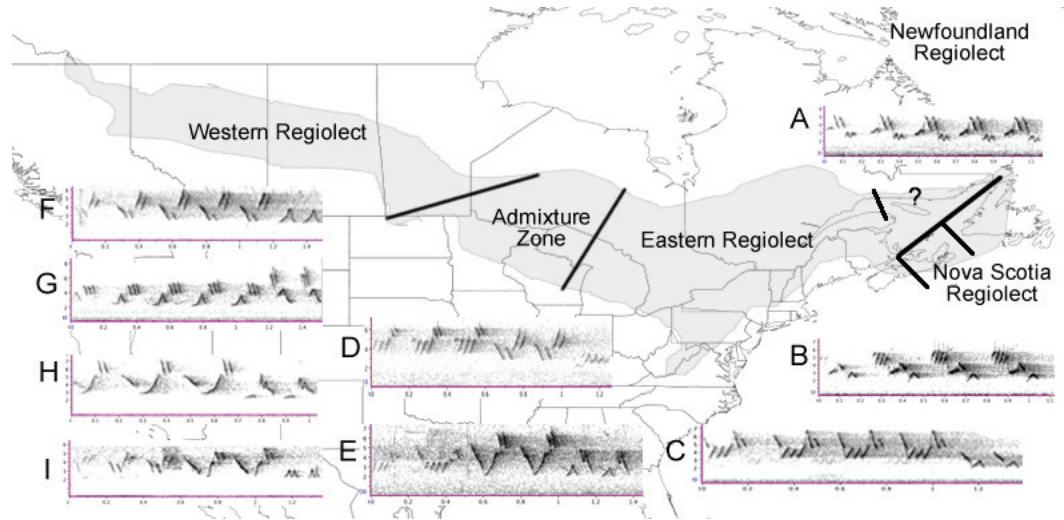


Figure 1. Song populations and regiolects from the breeding range of the Mourning Warbler (modified after Figure 4 in Pitocchelli 2011): A – Newfoundland, B – Nova Scotia, C – Eastern regiolect, D – hybrid song with Eastern and Western syllables, E – hybrid song with different Eastern and Western syllables, F, G, H – Western regiolects with different syllables, I – hybrid song with two Western syllables.

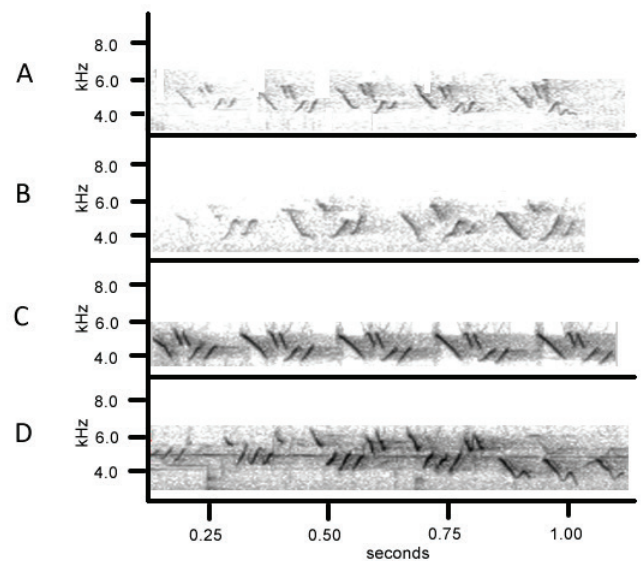


Figure 2. Sonograms of recordings from New Hampshire and Newfoundland. A) Newfoundland migrant from Laconia, NH, 5-26-20, P. Paul; B) Newfoundland migrant from Rye, NH, 5-28-20, J. Sparrell; C) Breeding male from Burgeo, Newfoundland; D) Breeding male from Franconia, NH, 6-17-17.

male making it as far east as central Ohio. Males singing the Eastern, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland regiolects show extensive overlap migrating east of the Mississippi River, along the Appalachians from Georgia to Maine. Newfoundland and Nova Scotia males are found inland as far north as central Massachusetts and New Hampshire but most recordings come from the east coast beginning in Delaware and north to Maine.

We hope to have enough data to complete the study in 2023; however, we still need data to fill in some of the gaps in our sampling from some western states (e.g., Colorado,



Figure 3. Map of Mourning Warblers singing different regiolects during spring migration.

Texas) and coastal New England, especially New Hampshire. We send our annual request for recordings in May. Please consider donating a recording so that we can complete this study and better understand migratory connectivity in this and other species. It is relatively easy to make the field recording with a smartphone. There are many free recording apps for iPhones (e.g., Awesome Voice Recorder, Rev Voice Recorder Voice Memos, Voice Record Pro), Android (e.g., Android Voice Recorder, Audio Recorder, Easy Voice Recorder, Sound Recorder, Titanium Recorder), and Windows (Mini Recorder, Perfect Recorder, Phone Recording, Record Audio) smartphones. We can also use sounds from videos. The best way to send us recordings is via e-mail (jpitocch@anselm.edu) or we can also work something out for larger files using DropBox.

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# The Song of the Cerulean Warbler (Or Not)

compiled by Kathryn Frieden and Rebecca Suomala

Identifying a Cerulean Warbler by song alone can be problematic in New Hampshire. Black-throated Blue Warblers have a regional song variation that is extremely similar to Cerulean. In Spring 2020, there were quite a few comments about this situation, so here's a summary of this issue.



*Black-throated Blue Warblers in New England can sing a song that sounds just like a Cerulean Warbler. Photo by Leo McKillop.*

Cerulean Warbler is currently listed as "threatened" in New Hampshire. They bred reliably at Pawtuckaway State Park (Nottingham/Deerfield) for 20 years starting in the early 1990s, but they have not been regular there since at least 2015.

Pam Hunt conducted Cerulean Warbler surveys statewide from 2017-19 and during that time there were only two isolated sightings at Pawtuckaway State Park and two at Mount Wantastiquet (Hinsdale/Chesterfield). Birders usually search for Ceruleans in New Hampshire at these two locations. The difficulty is that Black-throated Blue Warblers can sound like Ceruleans and Ceruleans themselves can be variable.

Mark Suomala posted the following typical observation (NHBirds email list, 5-26-20):

*During the past weekend, I heard what sounded like a Cerulean Warbler singing. It was in a forested area and sang a fast song persistently from high up in the trees. It took about one hour to see the bird and it turned out to be a Black-throated Blue Warbler (I got a picture). This is not too surprising to me, as I have chased a number of birds with Cerulean Warbler songs only to have them turn out to be Black-throated Blue Warblers. Also of note,*

*when Pawtuckaway State Park used to have a few Cerulean Warblers nesting regularly near Middle Mountain, the Cerulean Warblers sometimes sang atypical songs. There was one bird that sang a song that sounded like a Hooded Warbler and another bird that sounded like a Mourning Warbler.*

David Sibley has posted an article online which states:

*A local variation of Black-throated Blue Warbler, however, is extremely similar to the typical song of Cerulean Warbler. This variant is common in birds breeding across southern New England: from Connecticut north to Vermont and east to Maine. It can be heard from spring migrants south of those areas as well.*

(<https://www.sibleyguides.com/2020/05/a-cerulean-like-song-variant-of-black-throated-blue-warbler/>)

During Pam Hunt's surveys in 2017-19, she reported hearing this song variant from Black-throated Blues in Pawtuckaway State Park, Tower Hill Pond (Candia), and Mount Wantastiquet. Steve Mirick's eBird report from Mt. Wantastiquet NA (6/6/20, S70113574) states that he tracked down every Cerulean/Black-throated Blue Warbler type song and they were all Black-throated Blue Warblers. Of the six males along the trail leading to the top, only one of them sang a typical Black-throated Blue Warbler song. The rest were Cerulean type.

It is clear that using song alone to identify a Cerulean Warbler in New Hampshire is not adequate. A visual confirmation is critical, and ideally a photo also. This isn't easy given the Cerulean's preference for being high in the forest canopy but please take the time to track down any suspect songs.

Chris McPherson posted the following links to NHBirds (5-26-20)

A visual of Black-throated Blue Warbler songs (category 1 and 2) with a Cerulean Warbler for comparison:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/127251358@N05/49931747587/in/dateposted/>

A series of recordings of Black-throated Blue Warbler songs (category 1 and 2) with a Cerulean Warbler (the third song series); each series is separated by an Eastern Wood-Pewee song:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-269114033/black-throated-blue-warbler-category-1-2-songs-with-cerulean-warbler>

# Spring 2020 Field Notes

Diana Stephens, Editor

## Hermit Thrush in the Snow

Compiled by Diana Stephens



*This Hermit Thrush was spotted by Lloyd Bunten along with 31 other Hermit Thrushes on May 9, 2020. Photo by Lloyd Bunten.*

Elaine Faletra and Lloyd Bunten reported an amazing number of Hermit Thrush feeding on roadsides in an unusual May snowfall. Altogether, these two birders observed a combined 136 Hermit Thrushes on May 9, 2020. Hermit Thrush are usually found in mixed woodland and conifer forest and normally forage for insects on the ground. The snow on May 9 had accumulated in the woods, but the roadsides were clear and the thrushes had gathered here to feed. While the Hermit Thrush that breed in the area had most likely returned by this time in May, migrants headed farther north may have added to local birds on the roadsides. Elaine also noted, “There were several Veerys and Ovenbirds around as well. I should have known something was up when I saw a Veery foraging around my woodshed that morning!”

Here is Elaine Faletra’s account from Warren, NH (NHBirds email list, 5-9-20):

*I drove out around 10:00 am today and was immediately stopped by a lot of “tame” thrushes on my road. I counted 35 Hermits here as I drove two and half miles of dirt road. I decided to drive on other similar roads in my area in search of thrushes – dirt, higher elevations, ditched, quiet, drenched and clear of snow, unlike the woods that were covered by 2-6 inches of heavy, wind-driven snow. By 5:00 pm, my conservative tally was 104. They seemed so focused on getting nourishment, they hardly knew I was there. They were all so quiet – no calls or songs. One Ovenbird in particular refused to let me drive by. I got out of the car and tried to shoo it aside but it kept me stranded for a while.*



*The Ovenbird that wouldn’t let Elaine go by, with its substantial bounty. Photo by Elaine Faletra, 5-9-20.*

Here is Lloyd R. Bunten’s account from Hanover, NH (UV-Birders listserv, 5-9-20):

*This unseasonable snowfall, a solid two inches here at 1,200 feet, produced a remarkable displacement of thrushes from their usual habitat to uncovered roadside edges. In the two and half miles of dirt road between my house and a junction known locally as “Tunis,” there were 32 Hermit Thrushes and 11 American Robins foraging along the edges. In 50 years of birding, I have never seen anything like this.*



*This Veery was foraging along the edge of the snow on the open roadside along with the Hermit Thrush. Photo by Elaine Faletra, 5-9-20.*

## White-breasted Nuthatches Protect Their Nest with Insects

by Kathryn Frieden

This spring, my friend Karen Rydeen asked me about some strange behavior she had noticed in White-breasted Nuthatches. She was enjoying watching them in her yard in New Hampton, as a pair of nuthatches had chosen a large tree in close proximity to her living room window for their nesting site. She could see one carrying an insect in its beak to the tree and rubbing it along the bark around the nest cavity, often for minutes at a time. She was able to watch this being done many times over several weeks. Eventually,



*Tree cavity used for nesting by the White-breasted Nuthatches in New Hampton. Photo by Kathryn Frieden.*

young nuthatches were hatched, and then fledged.

What were the nuthatches doing? All nuthatches are cavity-nesters, and although most species excavate their own holes, White-breasted Nuthatches use existing cavities, commonly old woodpecker holes or rotted knotholes. The behavior that Karen was curious about is called “bill-sweeping” and appears to be unique to White-breasted Nuthatches. It is thought to be a form of nest defense. The bird does this usually with a crushed insect, which releases chemicals that deter predators from entering the nest cavity. The only other species known to do something similar is the Red-breasted Nuthatch, which applies sticky conifer resin about the entrance to its nest cavity.

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### Hummingbird on Snow-Covered Feeder



*After an extraordinary day of birding, Warren resident Elaine Faletra was able to capture this hummingbird drinking from a snow-laden feeder, 5-9-20.*

## Color-banded Peregrine Falcon on Star Island

*by Diana Stephens*

*Photos by Alex de Steigeur, 04-16-20, Star Island, NH.*



*This adult Peregrine Falcon took down a duck on Star Island and is feeding on the carcass.*



*The adult Peregrine Falcon seen here again without the dark, beautiful streaking of the younger, banded falcon.*



*This immature, color-banded falcon (61/BU) also fed on the carcass. It was banded on May 29, 2019 in Quincy, Massachusetts. Note the vibrant streaking on its chest.*

On April 16, 2020, Alexandra de Steigeur, the winter caretaker of Star Island, observed and photographed one adult and one immature Peregrine Falcon feeding at the same

carcass. Alex watched the adult catch a duck and eat it on the lawn and then a short time later, observed the immature eating the duck (the adult was nowhere in sight). The immature was banded and Alex reported it to Chris Martin, raptor specialist at New Hampshire Audubon. Chris said it was unclear whether these two birds were working together or whether the immature bird was just taking advantage of an opportunity.

Chris learned from Andrew Vitz at Mass Wildlife that the immature Peregrine (61/BU) was banded along with two siblings at the MWRA Pelletizer Plant in Quincy, MA on May 29, 2019. There has been one other re-sighting of this bird in South Berwick, Maine on October 29, 2019.

Alex de Steigeur also videotaped both birds feasting on the duck. On the video, she says that the adult bird first took the duck “out of mid-air” and about 20 minutes later, the younger bird arrived to feast on the kill. You can watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnxB6Hn8Szg>

## Banded Baltimore Oriole

by Rebecca Suomala

In May of 2020, Scott Young had two pairs of orioles at his feeder and one of the males was banded. US bird bands have nine digits and on small bands the digits are tiny. It’s just about impossible to read all nine on a live small bird. That’s why there are color bands with unique combinations that make it easier to identify a bird without capturing it. Most band returns are from dead birds, but digital photography is helping. Thanks to Scott’s persistence with the camera, he was able to figure out all nine numbers on the band. This usually requires multiple photos, even on large birds such as Snow Geese, as I discovered when I tried unsuccessfully to get the band on one in Hopkinton, NH. The band always seems to be facing the same way so you get the same few numbers each time.

Scott reported the band to the US Bird Banding Lab and received this data:

Date banded: 05/19/2017

Banding Location: NEAR APPLIEDORE ISLAND,  
YORK COUNTY, MAINE, USA

Age: HATCHED IN 2016

Sex: MALE

That location actually means it was banded on Appledore Island at the Isles of Shoals. I was the volunteer bander of record that day at the Appledore Island Migration Banding Station! When I banded it in 2017, it was a “second year” bird, meaning it was hatched in the summer of 2016. Second year birds often have plumage characteristics that allow them to be aged in the spring. Once they go through a full molt in the fall the plumage is more uniform from year to year and they cannot be aged more specifically.



*Banded Baltimore Oriole by Scott Young, 5-18-20, Strafford, NH. Reading the band is even more complicated when the band is on upside-down requiring the photo to be rotated as Scott did here. On small birds, the bands are usually upside-down to make them easier to read in the band where they appear right side up.*

By the time I banded it, the oriole had already made a round trip to and from its wintering grounds in Florida, the Caribbean, Central America, or the northern tip of South America. As Scott mentioned, this male oriole was in its fourth breeding season and he learned that only about 1% of Baltimore Orioles survive this long! Orioles have strong site fidelity to their breeding location so maybe Scott will see it again in 2021 – by which time it will have made ten one-way trips in migration.

The head bander (for Appledore it’s Dr. Sara Morris, Canisius College, Buffalo, NY) also receives the same data and it’s always exciting to find out where “our” birds have been found. Thanks to Scott for not only getting the band numbers but reporting it so the crew on Appledore would have that information.

## White-crowned Sparrow Spring Songfest

Text and Photos by Jim Sparrell

When we were all sent home to quarantine in March, I had the opportunity to spend time birding my yard in Portsmouth more intently. By the end of 2020, we had added eight new species to the yard list including a Great Horned



Owl at dusk, Field and Swamp Sparrow, Eastern Wood-Pewee and an Orchard Oriole. On April 8, we had a beefy White-crowned Sparrow appear under the feeder. Typically, we see them a bit later in May or in the fall. That bird stayed around for about four days and then moved on.



*This beauty, a White-crowned Sparrow, was singing outside of the author's window offering this birder a wonderful diversion from quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic, 5-11-20, Portsmouth, NH.*



*The White-crowned Sparrow seen here on a Rhododendron in the backyard was singing amongst a mixed flock of Song, White-throated and House Sparrows.*

Having back-to-back Zoom meetings on many work days made birding challenging. My typical spot for Zoom meetings has no view of the backyard, but I did keep a pair of binoculars by my desk so I could lean out of the Zoom frame in case any interesting ducks showed up on South Mill Pond, which I could glimpse out my window. As the weather warmed up in early May, I was able to keep the window open and hope for some bird song while I worked. One day in early May, as the yard warmed in the sun, I heard a song that I didn't immediately recognize, but I couldn't run out of the office to get my eyes on the bird because I was in a meeting. The song started with a clear whistle, almost like a White-throated Sparrow, but then quickly veered into a kind of buzzy trill with different pitches. The bird kept singing right outside the window while I was on the call. After an hour of torment, I was able to run downstairs and locate the singing bird, a White-crowned Sparrow. Eventually, the solo bird was joined

by three others and we sometimes had at least two singing and responding to each other in the yard. This small crew of White-crowns stayed in the yard for two weeks, until May 17 when they all left. It was a bit of a "Where's Waldo" situation when we tried to get a total count on them, as we had to pick them out from a hyperactive mixed flock that included Song Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows and way too many House Sparrows.

White-crowned Sparrows learn their songs in the first few months of life and both males and females may sing, although female song is less common. Their migration tends to be individual or in small groups of less than eight birds and they seem to be able to navigate using night skies and perhaps magnetically with magnetite embedded in the fascia of their head and neck muscles (Chilton et al, 2020). The Koyukon people tell the story that a man walking along a river carried a band of prized, white shells found in the Pacific Northwest (dentalium). He was weak and without food. Before he could make it back to camp, he died in the snow. As he died, he was transformed into a White-crowned Sparrow who flew on to camp. The song is described as a melancholy reminder, I am here, but it's too late, while the white bands on the head are reminiscent of the white shells he carried.

For us, the White-crowned Sparrows were a fascinating diversion from quarantine and welcome stopover guests on their brief visits with us.

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## Fledgling Great Horned Owl in Manchester



*How many of us actually get to see a Great Horned Owl in our front yards? Manchester resident Lynn Makere was lucky to have spotted this young Great Horned Owl that sat quietly (and called a few times) in a bush right outside of her window on May 15, 2020.*

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# What Pandemic Birding Taught Me—and It Isn't Pretty....

by *Kurk Dorsey*



*Kurk Dorsey by Paul Hackett.*

I am an overly-competitive snob, and probably not in a good sense. The pandemic has forced many of us to re-examine ourselves and I have concluded that, when it comes to birds, I probably have my beak just a little too high in the air (and not just to see warblers).

Many readers will remember the White Wagtail that showed up on the coast in the fall of 2016. It was a spectacular find by Josh Gahagan and dozens of birders had the pleasure of seeing it during its short visit. I recall that bird in part, though, because a fellow birder joked that it must be a rare bird if I came all the way from Durham to the coast to see it. No offense meant (maybe) or taken (OK, I'm lying); I bird the coast a lot less in the last decade or so than before. With small kids in the house and some chances to travel overseas or to distant corners of the US, my New Hampshire birding had been almost all in my Durham patch.

I tried not to be a snob. One day outside Budapest in 2011, a Hungarian birding pal told me not to bother with local fieldtrips because most of the people who go on them were happy to appreciate a robin. In retrospect I should have confirmed that he meant a European Robin. I understood what he meant, even though I still think European Robins are pretty cool. Perhaps, I had been too quickly passing by our common birds in search of something shinier. And in any case, I had found solitary birding when I could grab an hour or two here or there wonderfully relaxing, therapeutic in a sense.

So, when the pandemic sent us into lockdown, solo birding was mostly what I had been doing anyway. I was

ready to bird my local patch even harder than normal. I resolved to relax in the woods and fields and enjoy the robins and other common birds as if I were new to the country.

But what can I say? I failed. The shinier object is so... shiny! I was happier chasing my own somewhat rare birds than chasing the really rare stuff that other people found. There were some good things around too. A Cerulean Warbler popped up in our yard precisely four years after another one had done the same. A Grasshopper Sparrow was singing (or perhaps leaking) at Moore fields (Rt. 155A). An Acadian Flycatcher made an unexpected appearance in Lee at the Gile Road Marsh. A Glossy Ibis showed up on Surrey Lane. A Little Blue Heron came into Lubberland Creek (Newmarket). But I didn't chase any of the rare birds that showed up outside of my patch, except for the Swallow-tailed Kite in Webster and I don't think I need to explain why that would be an exception.

On a completely unrelated note, I was mildly (I swear!) annoyed when someone reported a rare bird in my patch that I had missed. Michelle Ward found an Olive-sided Flycatcher at Oyster River Forest, just around the corner from my house; Pam Hunt found a Short-billed Dowitcher on Surrey Lane, which is close enough that I can hear the bitterns and Canada Geese at night; Chris McPherson found 10 Red Crossbills at Gile Road. Maybe instead of birding being a form of therapy, I needed therapy because of birding?

So I followed that old adage: when you find yourself in a hole, keep digging harder! Instead of enjoying the robins, I dove into the 5MR (five mile radius) challenge to find the most species for any of the months or even the year in the state. That had me regularly checking the eBird patch data to see how other people were doing. Having no other outlet for my competitive instinct, and used to rooting for losing teams pretty much all my life, I really wanted to win something and robins weren't going to help me very much.

But it wasn't all bad. My "focus" (perhaps that qualifies as a euphemism) led me to some special places that were not yet eBird hotspots, like Maud Jones Forest and the Five Corners Reserve in Lee, and it even got me on my bike on roads that I thought no sane person should ride on—what was I doing riding on Rt. 4 to get from Old Mill Road to Moore fields? As of today's writing (9-15-2020), my streak of daily eBirding is up to 236 days and I've added all sorts of mostly accurate data to more than a dozen locations. Most important, I actually have stopped and appreciated robins on a regular basis—you never know when one might turn into a Redwing!

# A Socially-Distant Christmas-in-May Birdathon 2020

compiled by Rebecca Suomala and Kathryn Frieden

NH Audubon's Birdathon took place on World Migratory Bird Day, May 9, 2020 but expanded to include May 10 thanks to a snowstorm. In keeping with the COVID-19 times, it had a local and socially-distant twist! Pam Hunt, who coordinated the event described it this way:



Ken Klapper took this photo of his very snowy yard on May 9, the first day of Birdathon 2020.

*Birdathon 2020 is a celebration of local birding, whether it occurs in your yard, your town, or within walking range. Instead of teams competing against each other for high species totals and bragging rights, we're all in this one together. The contest is only against ourselves, and the more people we have the better we'll do, and perhaps set a bar we can try to overcome in a future year. The goal is simple; how many species we can collectively find within New Hampshire on May 9 [May 10 added].*

Participants were restricted to local birding options (not mutually exclusive):

- Your own property, whether a small yard or 20 acre lot
- Your town or perhaps a couple of adjoining towns
- An area within a 5 mile radius of your house (measured as the crow flies!)
- One or more nearby conservation properties
- Human-powered, walking or biking (or paddling if you live on water)

The concept turned out to be very popular with 124 people participating and many sending email comments about the fun they had despite the weather. On Birdathon weekend, May 9 and 10, there were record low temperatures (even the high temperature of 42 degrees F. in Concord on May 9 was the lowest high in 150 years of data collection), up to a foot of snow, and winds gusting almost to 50 miles per hour.

We present excerpts from Pam's summary and highlights from individuals who took part.



Phil Brown's binoculars filling up with snow on his human-powered Birdathon, 5-9-20.

## Pam Hunt

The theme of Birdathon 2020 was of course "local birding," and only a handful actually left their home (or adjacent) town, and at least 55 never even left their yards. We collectively reported 161 species between Saturday and Sunday. Of those, a handful were reported by over 100 participants.

As one might

expect, these were the common backyard birds like Black-capped Chickadee, Blue Jay, American Robin, and Northern Cardinal. Less common, but still widely reported were many of the colorful migrants that had only just begun to return to New Hampshire for the summer. Having only recently returned from warmer climes, species like Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Baltimore Orioles were probably caught a little off guard by the cold and snow, and as a result many ended up visiting feeders – much to the enjoyment of many observers. At the other extreme, 26 species were reported only once, with over half of these from Great Bay or the coast. Three species stand out: Horned Lark and Common Gallinule in Concord and a Long-billed Dowitcher in Hampton.

Birdathon is also about people and our enjoyment of birds (no matter the weather!) so I thought it worthwhile to provide some highlights from individual participants. Without a doubt, top honors go to NH Audubon's Phil Brown for finding 92 species in Hancock on Saturday. Not only did he accomplish this on the worse of the two days, but he also did it entirely on foot and bicycle (he even got a flat tire near the end). The next day, Becky Suomala and Zeke Cornell also found 92 species in Concord, but they had slightly better weather and used a car. A few other folks had good success in car-based local birding, usually restricted to either a town or within a five-mile radius of their homes. Two deserve "runner-up" status for finding at least 80 species: Kurk Dorsey with 85 species in the Durham area and Ken Klapper with 81 in Sandwich.

It's not surprising that people choosing the ultimate local birding experience – watching in their yards – generally found far fewer species. In such restricted spaces, a lot can vary based on the amount of habitat, size of your yard,

weather (have I mentioned the weather?), or simply how long you watch. The average number of species reported from participants' yards was 18, with most tallies between 10 and 25. Two yards far surpassed this range, however, and it's no coincidence that both are the homes of highly-accomplished birders with a wide variety of habitat. Don and Lillian Stokes tallied 54 species on their property in Hancock, which conveniently looks out over a large pond, but top honors go to George and Andrea Robbins of Pittsfield. They found a remarkable 71 species in (or over) their six acre property in Pittsfield, which is also blessed with diverse habitats and a wetland.

As of the end of May, we received over \$6,000 in donations, thanks to so many who made contributions to this event. Remember though, that Birdathon is not all about the numbers! Participants with far more typical yards related stories of life birds, or species they hadn't seen for many years and this is what it's really about. It's about enjoying the birds we have, where we find them, and retaining the strong connection to birds, and nature in general, that is arguably an important part of staying healthy.

### **Kurk Dorsey – Durham, 5/9\***

The first (and hopefully not annual) Lee/Durham/Newmarket Christmas-in-May Bird Count was highly successful, with just a few cases of frostbite and hardly a polar bear in sight.

A few highlights:

- Gile Road Marsh, Lee: two Common Mergansers
- Old Mill Rd., Lee: Sora, Yellow Warbler in the snow (that has to be a first for me)
- Adam's Point, Durham: three Common Terns, but who could blame me for entering them as Arctics? 19 Greater Yellowlegs, continuing Common Loon
- Durham Point Rd. pond: two Ring-necked Ducks, Cliff Swallow in with the hordes (not hoards, but that would seem appropriate too) of Tree Swallows
- Long Marsh Rd., Durham: Winter Wren feeding on the ground with two Pine Warblers
- Lamprey River Preserve, Durham: kestrel harassing a Cooper's Hawk
- Piscassic Greenway/Neal Mill Rd., Newmarket: Veery, Hooded Mergansers, Osprey on the wetland expressing its opinion of my presence

My total count was around 85 species, which was pretty good given that my fingers are too cold to actually count anything right now. But at least the ticks weren't much of a problem!



*A snowy Birdathon, 5-9-20, by Phil Brown.*

### **Phil Brown – Hancock, 5/9\***

I conducted my human-powered NH Audubon Birdathon in cold, windy and often, snowy conditions. I biked 13 miles and walked six in search of birds within 2.5 miles of my house, staying completely within the boundaries of Hancock. Considering the fairly miserable birding conditions and it being a delayed migration year for some species, I was quite pleased to find 92 species between 5:00 am and 5:00 pm.

All the pre-dawn birds cooperated in short order, American Bittern, Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock, and a Barred Owl, which flew past me on my second hoot as I set foot out my door at around 5:00. As the snow was blowing across the Valley Farm around sunrise, I picked up Eastern Meadowlark and Solitary Sandpiper as I trekked across the field. The dawn chorus was impacted by blowing snow, which also made detectability challenging at times. I warmed up and enjoyed breakfast at home as I watched the feeders (success on hummingbird, although it looked miserable dodging the snowflakes!).

I spent the middle part of the day at Powder Mill Pond and was rewarded with an excellent showing of birds. It was windy, but most of the raptors showed, as did several waterbirds and even some migrant landbirds working a sunny edge that was out of the wind. I met up with Donald and Lillian Stokes and we tracked down a few species of swallows and a surprise Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

One of the good things about conducting such a small radius human-powered big day is that the distances to bike and hike aren't vast (much lower mileage than county-wide

or town-wide efforts) and this allows you to bird places a bit more thoroughly. Another is that it isn't much of a problem to walk home when one's bike tire blows out. Luckily, when this happened to me, I had already birded Powder Mill Pond and had only the home stretch to walk. The walk rewarded me with several new species in the mid-afternoon hours including a Northern Goshawk carrying food that I flushed from the roadside, a couple of unidentified gulls, and the anticipated Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, and Rock Pigeon that were hunkered down in a large field.

As I walked home, I reflected on how grateful I was to have had an excellent day of birding, enjoying fine scenery and even some company of friends, the support from many Birdathon donors, and the knowledge that birds are still there, bringing us joy and hope, especially now.

### **David Govatski – Pondicherry NWR, 5/9\***

Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge (NWR): Saturday May 9, 2020 was an ideal training day for being in the Aleutians, six inches of fresh snow, winds northwest 10 mph, gusting over 20 mph, temperature 28 degrees F, and visibility that ranged from 300 feet to 1,200 feet in the



*Killdeer in the snow on 5-9-20 in Whitefield, NH by Dave Govatski during his Birdathon.*

blowing snow. Even my dog did not want to go with me. I saw no one else at Pondicherry from 0600-1100 and that was a first for a Saturday in May at Pondicherry. None of the other trailheads had any cars either.

Total Time: five hours.

Total Distance Walked: six miles in the snow, and it was great, reminded me of a previous life humping a ruck.

I started at Airport Road and walked to Cherry Pond and planned to get there as the snow ended and before the strong winds from the cold front kicked in. I waited about twenty minutes and the snow sort of let up and I could see half way across Cherry Pond. I noted some Tree Swallows and felt bad for any insectivore knowing it was too cold for any insects

to be flying around. After this, I went to Moorhen Marsh and added a few species. Then I backtracked to the platform and on to Little Cherry Pond. The winds picked up and the falling snow from the branches dropped visibility to 50 feet at times. I only saw two species at Little Cherry and they were seven Ring-necked Ducks and two Hermit Thrush. I could not see the far side of Little Cherry Pond. I walked back to the car and saw seven Yellow-rumped Warblers, the only warblers of the day.

I then walked the Localizer Road by the Airport and did not add anything new. I saw turkey tracks but did not count them. I only made it part way down the road because it was flooded by the beavers. I then went to Airport Marsh and added a Greater Yellowlegs, Savannah Sparrow, Common Merganser, and a female Northern Harrier.

The combined results:

24 Species: Record low Count

137 Total Birds: Record low number

The numbers are actually pretty decent for the adverse weather conditions.

### **Molly Jacobson – Merrimack, 5/10\***

I'm not sure if the birds got the memo that we were all looking for them today! The wind must have had them all hunkered down. I stayed within the Merrimack town limits and visited four places (three are hotspots): Grater Woods, Wildcat Falls, Watson Park, and Horseshoe Pond. The day was entirely devoid of thrushes and wrens, only one vireo, and woodpeckers were surprisingly scarce. Things started pretty slowly, with only 24 species at Grater Woods for a three hour hike (last year at this time I was getting ~45), 26 species at Wildcat Falls, 13 at Watson Park, and finally 26 at Horseshoe Pond, which is average for these three sites despite the weather. There were not nearly as many warblers as I was hoping, seven species total. In all, I had 53 species for the day, most of which came in the late afternoon. Highlights included Prairie Warbler, Spotted Sandpiper, Chimney Swift, and Green Heron(!).

### **Susan Wrisley – Hollis, 5/10\***

All in all, I had a great Birdathon day, but cold morning temps and high winds made things more challenging. I opted for 5-mile radius birding, but most of my stops were in Hollis, or just across the town line into Nashua and Amherst. My circle extends into Massachusetts, but I stayed in New Hampshire.

Stop #1 (5:00 am) – Home: I started my day at home where I picked up both Louisiana and Northern Waterthrush, Ovenbird, Black-and-white Warbler, and Pine Warbler.

Stop #2 (7:15) – Beaver Brook Great Meadow, Hollis: My

plan was to arrive before the winds picked up too much and, although I succeeded, I still didn't see/hear the American Bittern I'd been hoping for. Common Yellowthroats that were non-existent a couple days earlier, were abundant today, but Eastern Kingbirds must have decided to take the day off. Notable additions to my list were a drumming Ruffed Grouse, Warbling Vireo and an Osprey, which saved me a trip to another spot. I spent too much time there waiting for grackles to turn into bitterns and before I knew it the wind had picked up considerably.

Stop #3 (9:35) – Lovewell Pond, Nashua: I had two targets at Lovewell Pond, Green Heron and Virginia Rail. The pond was devoid of Green Herons, but the marsh down the path was generous with four Virginia Rails. I planned to walk Yuddicky Farm afterward to see if I could find a Nashville, Blue-winged or any other Warbler, but the place was infested with a swarm of mountain bikers, who seemed hell bent on running over anyone foolish enough to get in their way.

Stop #4 (1:17pm) – Hollis-Brookline High School: I didn't think the high school would add anything unique to my list, so it wasn't part of my original plan, but after skipping Yuddicky, I decided to take a look. It turns out the Green Heron I didn't find at Lovewell Pond was waiting for me at the high school, along with Yellow Warblers and Mockingbirds.

Stop #5 (2:45) – Woodmont Orchard: Woodmont was a blast, but not the "fun" kind of blast. More like a jet engine blast. The wind was so strong it literally almost blew me over. I still managed to pick up a kestrel, clinging to its perch for dear life, and a few pipits and Savannah Sparrows as they blew past me.

Stop #6 (4:15) – Hayden's Reservoir/Federal Hill Rd.: My targets here were the ever present Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Winter Wren...except neither was there. I walked my usual route, not finding much to add to the day's tally, then returned to my starting point and found the sapsucker and Winter Wren in their usual spots. A Pileated Woodpecker also joined the party, as did a pair of Wood Ducks.

Stop #7 (7:00) – Beaver Brook Great Meadow (again): It was getting late, but the wind was finally calming down and I had just enough time to get back over to Great Meadow to try again for the American Bittern. I hadn't even made it all the way to the marsh before I started hearing the classic kerplunk! Success! A Northern Rough-winged Swallow was a nice bonus, but still no Eastern Kingbird or Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

Stop #8 (8:00) Dinner Break – Home: My often reliable Barred Owl spot had been a bust earlier in the day, so when I arrived home at 8:00 pm, I decided to stop at the end of my long driveway and try just one Barred Owl call. No sooner had I finished than a large bird came right down the

driveway, flying straight at me! As the owl sailed directly over my head, I looked up at it and thought "please don't poop on me." I also thought it was an incredibly amazing experience... especially since I didn't get pooped on.

Stop #9 (9:15) – Howe Drive, Nashua: At 9:00 pm I set off for the final stop of the day, just over the Hollis line into Amherst. The moon hadn't risen yet, but I figured I'd try for whip-poor-wills and woodcocks anyway. An early-bird whip-poor-will was happily singing, but not a single peent was heard.



Rebecca Suomala photographed this White-crowned Sparrow feeding on scattered seed during snow showers on the first day of the Birdathon, 5-9-20.

## Rebecca Suomala – Concord, 5/10

A few of us decided to convert our Birdathon into a May "Concord Challenge," spending the entire day in Concord, NH. We wanted to see how many species we could find in a single day (something we do annually in November with Pam Hunt) while also contributing to the statewide Birdathon total. Zeke Cornell and I were ready to go on Saturday, May 9, but it was snowing in the morning so I opted to just scatter some bird seed in my yard and wait for Sunday. Check out the video: [https://youtu.be/6CPJu37yP\\_g](https://youtu.be/6CPJu37yP_g).

On May 10, the skies were clear and we were ready to go. We started at 4:45 am with an Eastern Whip-poor-will and ended 16 hours later with a displaying American Woodcock. Although it wasn't snowing, it was only 38 degrees at sunrise, but that didn't stop an American Bittern and four Virginia Rails from calling. We had no rarities, but a Greater Yellowlegs was another nice highlight. Although the sun was out, the cold and windy conditions were challenging, combined with the late spring migration this year. In the end, we were excited to tally 92 species just in the town of Concord. A video with snippets from the day is here: <https://youtu.be/4VqiRzbXnD4>

\* excerpted from posts to the NHBirds email list.

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# Backyard Birder

## A Fledgling Robin Learns to Fly

by Diana Stephens

*Photos taken by the author at her home in Derry, NH.*

Spring is the time for American Robin nests and eggs and, yes, baby robins! Well, I didn't find a nest or eggs, but one day, as I was about to get into my car in mid-May, I noticed a strange looking bird on my grassy, unpaved driveway to the left of my lawn. Hopping tentatively around on the grass, I realized it must be a very young robin that was just beginning to walk and not yet able to fly. I immediately became very protective of this young bird, as I stood far away from it on my front steps ... watching.



*This baby robin was spotted on a grassy driveway in Derry as it was learning how to hop and testing its wings, 5-10-20.*



*The young robin was hiding from predators in a bush as it waited to grow up, 5-12-20.*

All of a sudden, two adult robins began to sound an alarm call. A stray cat had appeared at the other end of the driveway. Slowly ... slowly I made my way around the flower bed on the right side of the lawn and made a bee-line for

the cat, yelling, "Get Out of Here!" The poor cat was scared out of its wits and ran up the street in the opposite direction from the baby robin. I don't normally go around yelling at cats, but I was going to protect this fledgling robin as much as humanly possible to give it a better chance at life.

When I returned, I noticed that the robin chick was completely frozen in place! It is amazing that a two-week-old bird knows how to do this. The action of freezing in place reduces the chances of being spotted by a predator. Somehow, it just knows that it is a life or death situation. It possesses this innate instinct at a very tender age. That afternoon, I decided to leave well enough alone, go back into my house (the chick was standing behind my car so I couldn't get out of my driveway) and hoped the bird would find shelter for the night. I had done what I could.

The next morning, as I was leaving, I noticed something hop/fly from the flower bed into a small bush on the left side of my front steps. Could it be the baby bird, I wondered? Again, very slowly, I moved down the steps and peered around into the bush. The baby robin had found shelter in the bush. I placed some spring water beneath the small bush in case it needed to drink. It stayed there for at least 24 hours and was pooping a lot, so I think it was being fed. Ha ha! Maybe it was just waiting there in the bush to grow up so that one day it could fly. A few days later, I happened to see it fly away into another bush and I was so excited. I felt like a proud Robin Mama!

*From NH Audubon –*

It's common for young birds to leave the nest before they can fly. The parents will continue to feed the youngster, locating it by its loud calls. If you see a baby bird with feathers, even if it can't fly, do just what Diana did. Give it space to find its way to a more protected spot and do your best to keep predators away. Humans do not make good bird parents and the fledgling's best chance of surviving is to remain with its parents so it can learn how to find food and survive on its own. If necessary, move the fledgling off the ground so that cats or other animals don't get it. A shallow box or a shoe box with an open side can be used to hold the bird. Place the box in a nearby tree or a dense bush. Even a picnic table or house eave may work well as a safer location for the bird, although as Diana's story shows, they will usually find their way on their own. If you must move the fledgling, try to keep it in close proximity to where it was originally discovered. Baby birds that have no feathers need to be returned to the nest as soon as possible, or brought to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

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# New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report

## Spring 2019 through Winter 2019-20 and Selected Historical Records

*Hector Galbraith, Chair*

*Michael Resch, Secretary*

This report from the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) contains the decisions for records voted on by the Committee for four seasons: Spring 2019, Summer 2019, Fall 2019, and Winter 2019-20. Additionally, votes were recorded for three historical records. These 2019 seasons included three New Hampshire state records that were accepted by the Committee:

- Gull-billed Tern – photographed on 5-2-19 by Andrea and George Robbins at Pulpit Rocks in Rye. This species was formerly on the Hypothetical List based on a 1998 sight record. Interestingly, the second accepted New Hampshire record for this species occurred just four months later in September 2019.
- Cassin's Sparrow – discovered and eventually photographed by Eric Masterson at Star Island at the Isles of Shoals on 9-21-19.
- Brambling - photographed by Scott Young at his feeder in Northwood on 12-4-19. This species was formerly on the Hypothetical List based on a 1987 sight record.

With these additions to the state list, as of February 2020, the official New Hampshire list totals 423 fully substantiated species, with an additional five species on the Hypothetical List.



*Gull-billed Tern by Andrea Robbins, 5-2-19, Pulpit Rocks, Rye, NH.*

Additionally, the NHRBC accepted records of the Trumpeter Swan seen from April through November 2019 at Abe Emerson Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary in Candia. This was the first modern New Hampshire record of this species. The only prior reference for this species in New Hampshire

is from Jeremy Belknap's *The History of New Hampshire* (1812); "It is certain that our swan is heard to make a sound resembling that of a trumpet, both when in the water and on the wing." Glover Allen stated in his 1903 book, *A List of the Birds of New Hampshire*, that he believed that Belknap was referring to the Trumpeter Swan based on his account of the vocalizations. Plus Trumpeter Swan is believed to have been more widespread in the central and eastern US at that time.

The members of the Committee voting on the 2019 records were: David Donsker, Kurk Dorsey, Jason Lambert, Iain MacLeod, Jeanne-Marie Maher, Eric Masterson, Mike Resch, and Hector Galbraith (Chair). Mike Resch served as the Committee Secretary.

### NHRBC Background

The NHRBC reviews rare and unusual bird sightings in New Hampshire in an effort to maintain the accuracy and scientific integrity of rare bird records in the state. It is independent of *New Hampshire Bird Records (NHBR)* and New Hampshire Audubon. Per the NHRBC Bylaws, the purpose of the Committee includes the following:

- To review reports of unusual occurrences of birds within the state of New Hampshire and adjacent ocean waters.
- To accept or reject such reports based upon the adequacy of documentation.
- To establish and maintain an official state list of the birds of New Hampshire.
- To permanently maintain copies of evaluated records and their associated documentation and all Committee votes, comments, and pertinent outside expert information regarding those records.
- To respond to a request from the observer of the result of the evaluation of his/her records and to educate the birding community in general of the results of those deliberations.
- To work closely with the editors and staff of *NHBR* toward our common goals.
- To function as an independent technical advisory committee to *NHBR*.

One of the most important functions of the NHRBC is the evaluation of records of rarities found in New Hampshire. The typical process used to evaluate these records is as follows:

- Species to be reviewed are those listed in the NHRBC Review List, which can be found here: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/all-articles/NHRBC%20Review%20List%201-1-17.pdf>
- Records of these Review List species come to the Committee from eBird checklists, some of which may be entered from information submitted directly to *NHBR*.



- The NHRBC will request additional information on those records where key details are not provided or limited.
- Records are compiled once a year, generally in early Spring, by the Committee Secretary, to include four consecutive seasons: Spring (March-May), Summer (June-July), Fall (August-November), and Winter (December-February).
- The members of the Committee review each of the records and submit their votes to the Secretary, who then compiles all the votes.
- The Committee typically meets once per year in early summer, often by phone, to discuss any vote that is not unanimous, and finalize the votes for all records.
- The Committee requires a vote with not more than one dissension for acceptance of a record, except for potential first state records, which require a unanimous vote. A first state record also requires at least one of the following: photograph, specimen, video recording, audio recording, or separate documentation from three or more observers. If none of these criteria is met, the record may still be accepted by the Committee and placed on the Hypothetical State List.

Note that the Committee's rejection of a record is not necessarily an indication that the identification was incorrect, but more likely, that the information received was not sufficient to allow its acceptance as a state record. In other words, adequate documentation is key to whether a report is accepted or not. A reminder that the best way to ensure your sighting is accepted by the NHRBC is to prepare and submit adequate documentation of the sighting using the New Hampshire Bird Sighting Documentation form. Even if you have a photo, a supplemental documentation form can be invaluable in gaining acceptance of the record, especially with photos of limited quality, but not to worry, if you don't have a photograph, it doesn't mean the record can't be accepted by the Committee.

The Review List, documentation form, and additional details on the NHRBC can be found here: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/NHRBC/>

## Spring 2019

### Records accepted by the Committee

Pacific Loon	5/5/19	Pulpit Rocks, Rye
Trumpeter Swan (1st modern NH record)	4/13,14/19	Candia
Ross's Goose	3/19/19	Walpole
Ross's Goose	3/21/19	Walpole
Franklin's Gull	5/14/19	Rye

Gull-billed Tern (1st NH state record)	5/2/19	Pulpit Rocks, Rye
Long-eared Owl	3/12/19	Keene
Yellow-throated Warbler	4/26/19	Sunapee Lake
Yellow-throated Warbler	4/27/19	South Hampton
Yellow-throated Warbler	5/1/19	Hampton Meadow
Yellow-throated Warbler	5/20/19	Enfield
Cerulean Warbler	5/14/19	Bradford
Cerulean Warbler	5/25/19	Mt. Wantastiquet
Prothonotary Warbler	5/18/19	Exeter
Hooded Warbler	5/17/19	Hollis
Summer Tanager	4/29/19	Nashua
Summer Tanager	5/4/19	Keene
Summer Tanager	5/6/19	Swanzey
Summer Tanager	5/11/19	Hampton
Painted Bunting	4/29/19	Dover
Painted Bunting	5/24/19	Middleton
Yellow-headed Blackbird	5/28/19	Rye

### Records not accepted by the Committee

Tufted Duck	3/15/19	Great Bay, Greenland
A hybrid with a Scaup could not be eliminated.		
Gray-cheeked Thrush	5/26/19	Mine Falls Park, Nashua
No details provided on this nocturnal flight call.		
Gray-cheeked Thrush	5/27/19	Plaistow
Insufficient details provided on this nocturnal flight call which can be difficult to discern from other species.		
Bicknell's Thrush	5/23/19	Penacook
Description was insufficient to eliminate the very similar Gray-cheeked Thrush. Accepted as "Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush".		
Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler	5/3/19	Errol
Limited description could not eliminate other more common species.		
Yellow-throated Warbler	5/19/19	Merrimack
Description did not include several key field marks necessary to confirm identification.		
Worm-eating Warbler	5/20/19	Exeter
Description of the song of this heard-only bird could not eliminate other trilling species like Chipping Sparrow and Pine Warbler.		
Dark-eyed ( <i>cismontanus</i> ) Junco	5/19/19	Jaffrey
"Slate-colored" Junco could not be eliminated.		

## Summer 2019

### Records accepted by the Committee

Brown Booby	7/26/19	Offshore Waters
Little Egret	6/8/19	Rye
Tufted Duck	7/27/19	Exeter

### Records not accepted by the Committee

Cerulean Warbler	6/19/19	Lincoln
Description of the song of this heard-only bird could not eliminate Black-throated Blue Warbler.		

## Fall 2019

### Records accepted by the Committee

Brown Pelican	9/9/19	Offshore Waters
Tundra Swan	11/15/19	Suncook

Tundra Swan	11/15/19	Greenland
Tundra Swan	11/16/19	Connecticut River, Plainfield
American Avocet	8/17/19	Rye Harbor
American Avocet	8/22/19	Hampton
Gull-billed Tern	9/28/19	Odiorne Point SP, Rye
Black Skimmer	9/14/19	Hampton
Black Skimmer	9/21/19	Odiorne Point SP, Rye
Black Skimmer	9/29/19	Rye Harbor
Cassin's Sparrow (1st NH state record)	9/21/19	Star Island, Isles of Shoals
Hooded Warbler	8/25/19	Penacook
Lazuli Bunting	10/22/19	Bow

### Records not accepted by the Committee – None

### Winter 2019-20

#### Records accepted by the Committee

American White Pelican	12-11-18	Odiorne Point SP, Rye
Western Tanager	12/6/19	Plaistow
Western Tanager	12/14/19	North Hampton
Painted Bunting	2/6/20	Albany
Green-tailed Towhee	12/4/19	Chichester
Bullock's Oriole	1/1/20	New Castle
Bullock's Oriole	1/3/20	Stratham
Brambling (1st NH state record)	12/4/19	Northwood

### Records not accepted by the Committee – None

### Selected Historical Records

#### Records not accepted by the Committee

Long-eared Owl	5/31/17	East Kingston
Description of the calls of this heard-only bird was insufficient to confirm the ID.		
Greater White-fronted (Western) Goose	9/30/18	Dover
The more likely Greenland race cannot be eliminated.		
Hammond's Flycatcher	10/14/18	Pondicherry NWR
Description and photo cannot eliminate Least Flycatcher, particularly as a potential first state record. Accepted as " <i>Empidonax</i> , species".		



Little Egret by Warren Trested, 6-14-19, Wallis Marsh, Rye, NH.

## NH Rare Birds Committee Update

by Mike Resch

Mike Resch is the Chair and Secretary for the NH Rare Birds Committee.

### New Website

I am happy to announce that the NH Rare Birds Committee (NHRBC) has a new website. Many thanks to volunteer Kathy Barnes who developed the site. The NHRBC website can be reached at: <https://nhbirdrecords.org/NHRBC/>

Features of the website include –

- Purposes and Bylaws of the NHRBC
- Official state list of the birds of New Hampshire
- NHRBC review list
- Process used to evaluate records of rare birds
- Documentation form for rarities
- Past reports of the NHRBC

Each page also has a photo of a recently-approved rarity for a bit of “eye candy.”

*New Hampshire Bird Records* is providing space for the NHRBC web page, but neither *New Hampshire Bird Records* nor NH Audubon is affiliated with the NHRBC. The NHRBC is totally independent and unrelated to either entity. The NHRBC is solely responsible for the content on their web page(s). A list of members is on the site.

Feel free to contact me with thoughts or comments on the website: [reschmike1@gmail.com](mailto:reschmike1@gmail.com)

### New Hampshire State List Update

The NHRBC has updated the “official” New Hampshire State Bird List as of 2/28/20. This updated list not only incorporates new records approved by the NHRBC through 2/28/20, but also lists the species in their taxonomic order per the ABA Checklist, Version 8.0.8, dated March 2021.

The list is not meant to include all records for each of the rare birds, but rather to assure that there is at least one credible record for each species that is included on the list. The list is on the NHRBC website.

### NHRBC Review List

The NHRBC has also updated the list of species that are of sufficient rarity in the state to require a review of reports. Any species not on the New Hampshire State List also requires review. Additionally, any species observed outside its regular range (e.g., Northern Gannet observed inland), or regular seasons (e.g., Swainson's Thrush observed in winter), could be considered to be of sufficient rarity to be reviewed by the NHRBC. The list will be updated by the NHRBC as warranted.

Observers are encouraged to document their sightings with a description of all pertinent details in their eBird report. Photographs (even poor ones) are extremely helpful in documenting a species. Documentation may also be submitted via *New Hampshire Bird Records* (forms available on the NHRBC and *New Hampshire Bird Records* websites).

## NH Rare Birds Committee Review List as of 2-28-20

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	South Polar Skua	Northern Hawk Owl	Prothonotary Warbler
Ross's Goose	Long-tailed Jaeger	Burrowing Owl	MacGillivray's Warbler
Greater White-fronted Goose	Great Auk *	Great Gray Owl	Kentucky Warbler
– only if race/subspecies is identified	Ivory Gull	Long-eared Owl	Hooded Warbler
Pink-footed Goose	Sabine's Gull	Boreal Owl	Cerulean Warbler
Barnacle Goose	Ross's Gull	American Three-toed Woodpecker	Yellow-throated Warbler
Cackling Goose	Franklin's Gull	Gyr Falcon	Black-throated Gray Warbler
Trumpeter Swan	Mew Gull	Ash-throated Flycatcher	Townsend's Warbler
Tundra Swan	Iceland Gull – “Thayer's” subspecies only	Tropical/Couch's Kingbird	Summer Tanager
Common Shelduck	Slaty-backed Gull	Western Kingbird	Western Tanager
Eurasian Wigeon – away from Great Bay	Glaucous-winged Gull	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Black-headed Grosbeak
Tufted Duck	Sooty Tern	Fork-tailed Flycatcher	Lazuli Bunting
Common Eider – any race other than <i>dresseri</i>	Gull-billed Tern	Western Wood-Pewee	Painted Bunting
Eared Grebe	Arctic Tern	Say's Phoebe	Black-browed Albatross
Western Grebe	Royal Tern	Loggerhead Shrike	Frigatebird sp.
Band-tailed Pigeon	Sandwich Tern	Bell's Vireo	Anhinga
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Black Skimmer	Black-billed Magpie	Violet-green Swallow
Passenger Pigeon *	White-tailed Tropicbird	Cave Swallow	Smith's Longspur
White-winged Dove	Red-billed Tropicbird	Sedge Wren	
Chuck-will's-widow	Pacific Loon	Bewick's Wren	* extinct or extirpated
Calliope Hummingbird	Yellow-nosed Albatross	Northern Wheatear	
Rufous Hummingbird	Black-capped Petrel	Mountain Bluebird	
Clapper Rail	Wood Stork	Townsend's Solitaire	
King Rail	Brown Booby	Gray-cheeked Thrush	
Purple Gallinule	Neotropic Cormorant	Bicknell's Thrush – away from breeding sites in Carroll, Coos, and Grafton counties	
Yellow Rail	American White Pelican	Redwing	
Black Rail	Brown Pelican	White Wagtail	
Black-necked Stilt	Great Blue Heron – “Great White Heron” subspecies only	Common Chaffinch	
American Avocet	Little Egret	Brambling	
Northern Lapwing	Western Reef-Heron	Chestnut-collared Longspur	
Wilson's Plover	White Ibis	Cassin's Sparrow	
Eskimo Curlew *	White-faced Ibis	Lark Bunting	
Long-billed Curlew *	Swallow-tailed Kite	Dark-eyed Junco – any subspecies other than “Slate-colored”	
Ruff	Mississippi Kite – away from known breeding sites	Golden-crowned Sparrow	
Curlew Sandpiper	Swainson's Hawk	Harris's Sparrow	
Little Stint	Barn Owl	LeConte's Sparrow	
Wilson's Phalarope		Seaside Sparrow	
		Henslow's Sparrow	
		Green-tailed Towhee	
		Spotted Towhee	
		Yellow-headed Blackbird	
		Western Meadowlark	
		Bullock's Oriole	
		Worm-eating Warbler	
		Golden-winged Warbler	

# Checking the Status of Spring Migrants

by Rebecca Suomala

It's spring and everyone is watching for new arrivals. Circling above is a hawk that looks like a Broad-winged. It's the end of March and it seems reasonable. Other birders, however, raise their eyebrows when they hear a Broad-winged was spotted and eBird asks for details to be added to the report.

It's time to take a second look at how likely a Broad-winged Hawk would be on that date. How can we do that? The eBird bar charts are one place to start. Click on the Explore tab, click Bar Charts, select New Hampshire and the "entire region," and click Continue. Scroll down to Broad-winged Hawk.

The New Hampshire Broad-winged Hawk bar chart (Figure 1) shows a thin line for the end of March indicating it's possible but rare. Now check the eBird maps for up-to-date information on their migration. Our Broad-winged Hawks typically winter in Central and South America (rarely an immature winters in the north). We can follow their migration progress in eBird and see how far north they have traveled by the current date.

On the Explore page, click on Species Map, fill in Broad-winged Hawk and select it. Change the date range by clicking on the down arrow to the right of "Date" and selecting the Current Year. Zoom in to New Hampshire.

Looking at the map for all of March, 2020 (Figure 2) we can see that only a few Broad-winged Hawks had made it as far north as Pennsylvania by the end of March. It is very unlikely that there was a Broad-winged Hawk in New Hampshire in March. Red-shouldered Hawks, however, are back by the end of March and easy to confuse with Broad-wingeds, so that's one candidate for our sighting.

Let's look at another example. We get a glimpse of what looks

like a Yellow Warbler in early April, but it trips the eBird filter asking for more details. Could we have seen a Yellow Warbler? In this case, the bar charts are very helpful. Yellow Warblers do not occur in the first half of April, not even a thin line indicating it's rare. Looking at the eBird map in real time will show their progress north. Palm Warbler arrive much earlier than Yellows and would be a likely alternative candidate.

Birds have wings so you can rarely say "never," and there are anomalies (for example an over-wintering Semipalmated Plover in Rye, NH). If the bar charts or maps, however, indicate a sighting is rare or the species is still far from New Hampshire, try to take a photo for documentation. A little investigation into the eBird data, as described above, will help clarify the likelihood of an early returning migrant.



Figure 1. New Hampshire eBird bar charts for several raptors including Broad-winged Hawk. Image provided by eBird ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)) and created 5-4-21.

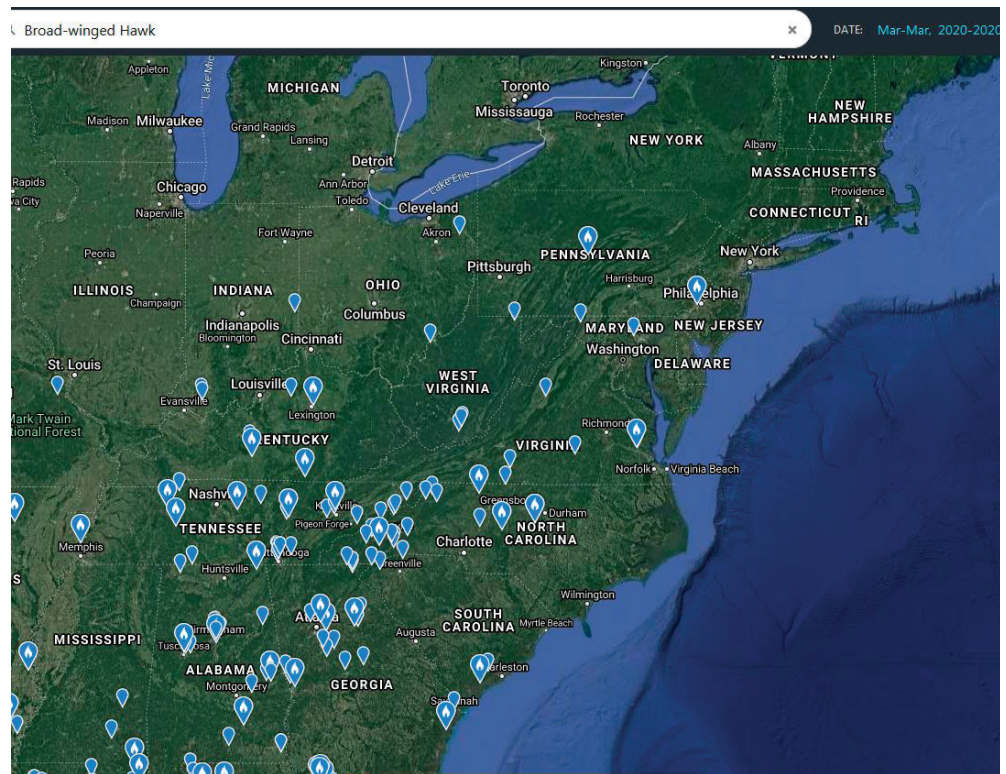


Figure 2. New Hampshire eBird map for Broad-winged Hawk in March of 2020. On real-time maps sightings in the last 30 days will be red pins. Image provided by eBird ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)) and created 5-4-21.

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# Answer to the Photo Quiz

by Jon Woolf

See the Inside Front Cover for the quiz photo.

Birders, even experienced ones, have to face many kinds of challenges in identifying birds. There are birds whose identities jump out at us, such as cardinals, and birds that take some study to distinguish, like the various sparrows. There are also master-class puzzles like the *Empidonax* flycatchers. Somewhere in between those last two lies the problem of identifying variant plumages – familiar birds in unfamiliar costumes. This issue's Photo Quiz poses just such a problem.

We can get a good start on identifying our mystery birds with a few simple observations. With their large, webbed feet, they're certainly waterbirds. The water all around them pretty much confirms this. The posture is another very good clue; these birds stand with their bodies upright. In fact, their legs and feet are so far back on the body as to make them look awkward, almost not designed for standing on land. These are birds so strongly adapted for a watery life that they are better adapted for swimming than for walking.

Several groups of birds share this sort of anatomy, with loons, grebes, alcids, and cormorants being the most common examples in New England. Which group do these birds belong to?

We can rule out any of the loons. While our mystery birds are heavily adapted for an aquatic life, loons are even *more* adapted for that sort of life. A loon's legs are so far back on its body that when a loon stands up, it holds its body almost vertical. These birds look awkward when standing, but not that awkward. Furthermore, in terms of behavior, loons are so firmly attached to water that if you see a loon on dry land, you can be sure it's either nesting or sick. We can rule out grebes for the same reasons.

Alcids also have a clumsy, upright stance when standing or walking; however, like the loons and grebes, alcids stand even more vertically than these two birds do. Alcids also generally have bills that are either short and stubby or long and slender. Our mystery birds have a long, large, hook-tipped beak, nothing like any alcid.

This leaves us with the cormorants. Here, everything matches: large waterbirds with webbed feet set far back under the belly, a large dumpy body, long neck, and large, heavy, hook-tipped bill. Two species of cormorants occur regularly in New England: the Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) and the Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*). Distinguishing between the two is easy if you see them side by side; Great Cormorant is consistently larger and heavier than Double-crested. Unfortunately, here we have two birds of the same species. So which one is it?

One detail is enough to tell us, the white around the throat. This is diagnostic for Great Cormorant. Everything adds up.

Or does it? The New Hampshire coast does see Great Cormorants, but if we look in a typical field guide we'll see the Great Cormorant described and illustrated as a large cormorant with black head and body and a white patch around the mouth and throat. Juvenile Great Cormorants have a pale belly and darker neck. These birds, on the other hand, have large white patches on the flanks and a lot of white all around the head and neck. Could these be some exotic species of cormorant, common somewhere else but rare in New Hampshire? It's possible, but extremely unlikely. To be on the safe side, we should try to rule out all common birds before we look at exotics (the "horses not zebras" principle).

This is one situation where having a top-notch field guide comes in handy. For example, the *Sibley Guide to Birds, Second Edition* entry on Great Cormorant illustrates and mentions whitish coloring on the head and neck. The *Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America* entry on Great Cormorant includes a photo of a bird that looks almost identical to these birds: white frosting on the head and neck and a large white patch on the flank, partly covered by the folded wing. Mystery solved; these birds are indeed Great Cormorants.

Still, whither the white on this normally all-black bird? As with so many things in nature, the answer lies in the need to breed. Some species of birds completely change their colors for mating season. Others barely change at all. Still others stay basically the same, but develop particular markers, like the long white nuptial plumes on Snowy Egrets. In the Great Cormorant's case, both males and females grow large, vivid white flank patches and white nuptial plumes on the head and neck. The extent of the white neck plumes varies; sometimes they're thin and look like white frosting on the black neck, while in other birds they form a near-complete hood.

It's always difficult to get a good look at a Great Cormorant, simply because they are strictly saltwater birds that prefer to gather on offshore rocks. They also tend to go into the water if humans get within a hundred yards. Still, seeing one in breeding plumage is worth the effort. In New Hampshire, we generally see Great Cormorants wearing these colors from February to mid-April, after they've completed their winter molt but before they head for their nesting grounds. As such, they become yet another sign that, whatever the weatherman says, spring is indeed on the way.

This photo of two breeding-plumage adult Great Cormorants was taken by Jon Woolf at Odiorne Point in Rye, NH, on March 14, 2021.

# New Hampshire Bird Records Endowment Fund

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

# Rare Bird ALERT

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## Abbreviations Used

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

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# Photo Gallery:

## The Transformation of a Red-headed Woodpecker

*Immature plumage with one red feather on the head, 10-18-19.*

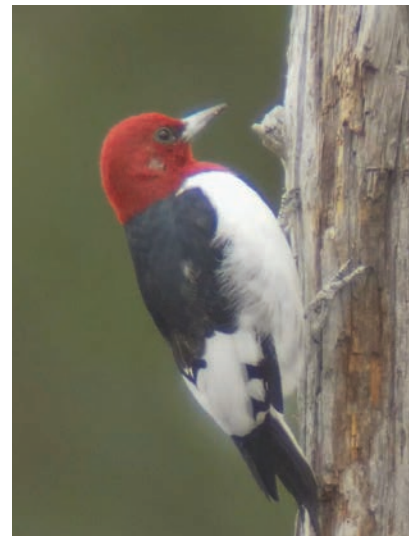


*A full adult, 4-25-20.*



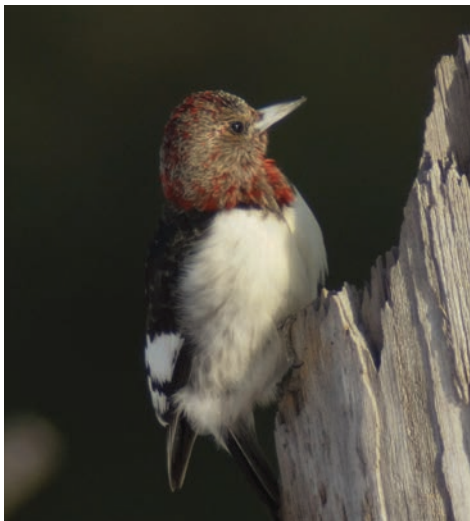
*The first few red feathers coming in on the breast and the head, 11-10-19.*

In October of 2019 an immature Red-headed Woodpecker was found at Burley Farm in Epping by Greg Tillman. This cooperative youngster stayed in the same area through the winter and into spring. Ed Norton documented its transformation from the brown juvenile plumage to the striking adult black and white plumage with the all red head. All photos by Ed Norton at Burley Farm in Epping, NH.



*The plumage changed quickly in March with only a couple of brown feathers left on the face, 3-28-20.*

*More red feathers on the head and some black feathers coming in on the back, 12-22-19.*



*The breast is nearly all red, 2-17-20.*



# Spring 2020 Rarities



*Brewster's Warbler (hybrid) by Steve Mirick, 5-17-20, Exeter, NH.*



*White-eyed Vireo by Scott Heron, 5-2-20, Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood, NH.*



*Dickcissel by Katie Essigmann, 3-15-20, Mill St., Epping, NH.*



*Painted Bunting by Leo McKillop, 3-1-20, Tin Mountain Conservation Center, Albany, NH.*



*Hooded Warbler by Steven Lamonde, 5-14-20, Hinsdale Setbacks, NH.*



*Common Gallinule by Len Medlock, 5-6-20, Deer Hill WMA, Brentwood, NH.*