

New Hampshire BIRD RECORDS



FALL 2021



Vol. 40, No. 3

Harris's Sparrow in Greenland, NH

Photos by Steve Mirick at Great Bay Farm, 10-23-21.



Black Tern at the Exeter WTP, NH



The Black Tern sat in the road for all to see, 8-22-21. Photo by Len Medlock.



Leo McKillop, 8-22-21.



Len Medlock, 8-23-21.



Steve Bennett, 8-22-21.



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 VOLUME 40 NUMBER 3
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Steve Mirick photographed these two juvenile Black-backed Woodpeckers chasing each other at Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge on 8-15-21.

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Cover Photos: A rare hybrid flycatcher believed to be a Couch's/Tropical Kingbird x Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, found in Dover, NH. Top photo by Ken Faucher, 11-14-21; bottom right by Steve Mirick, 11-15-21; bottom left by Paul Kursewicz, 11-14-21.

From the Editor

FALL 2021

by Rebecca Suomala

We're on Schedule!

It has taken years, but we're finally on schedule and getting this issue out before the Fall of 2022 starts. Let's Celebrate! We've also caught up with many other tasks that fell behind during COVID, including the Index (on the website). *New Hampshire Bird Records* has a fantastic volunteer crew and I'm grateful to everyone who helps make it such a great publication.

Our next challenge is to get caught up on eBird review. That means not only keeping up with the thousands of sightings that need review each month, but catching up the backlog of records to review. This includes the historical data that *New Hampshire Bird Records* has been uploading from the years when we entered bird sighting data on a computer at NH Audubon (3-1-86 through 9-30-09). We are expanding the review team and experimenting with

some changes in how we divide up the reviewing. If you are interested in being an eBird reviewer, please contact me.

Thank you Diana Stephens for doing an excellent job as the Field Notes Editor. Kathryn Frieden has taken on the task while we look for another volunteer to fill Diana's shoes.

New Hampshire Bird Records Endowment Fund

In this issue, you'll find our annual request for contributions to this Endowment Fund. The Fund supports all aspects of *New Hampshire Bird Records* and helps provide a stable base of long term funding. One of the common questions we receive is; ***What happens if the publication ceases?*** The Fund was designed with the flexibility to respond to changes. There will always be a need for gathering bird sighting data and even with eBird, there is still a tremendous need for data quality control, interpretation, and analysis – all of which are supported by the Fund. The Fund can also support other projects that fall under the larger goal of “contributing to the knowledge and conservation of birds in New Hampshire through bird data collection, birding, and sharing of bird information.” If you would like to read the full language of the Fund please contact me. Thank you ***all*** who have donated to the Fund.

How many Birds in the Picture?

Steve Mirick took this photo of a flock of Sanderlings on 11-11-21 at Jenness/Sawyer's Beach in Rye, NH. Practice your estimation skills and make an educated guess, then compare that with the total he got when he counted each bird in the photo.



Answer: 523

August 1, 2021 through November 30, 2021

by Ben Griffith



The fall season started out wet, especially for the southern part of the state, with two major tropical systems (Hurricanes Henri and Ida) depositing significant rain throughout the region and erasing any lingering effects of drought. These storms brought high hopes of vagrants,

but ultimately, few birds were reported as a result of the hurricanes. The fall remained mild through the end of the season and as a result, there were few pulses of migrants that are associated with cold fronts. Instead, birds trickled through or passed over undetected. Several record late dates were recorded (see below) and these may be associated with the mild weather.



Black Tern by Len Medlock, 8-23-21, Exeter WTP, NH.

Hurricane Birds

There were great expectations in the days leading up to Hurricane Henri which was the first “direct” hit by a hurricane in New England since 1990 when Hurricane Bob followed a similar track. Unfortunately (for New Hampshire’s birders), the storm made landfall in Rhode Island on August 22 and stayed to the south of New Hampshire, eventually heading east. It didn’t produce any show stopping vagrants in the state, but a few nice birds turned up nonetheless. Most notable were four **American Oystercatchers** seen from Rye Harbor State Park (SP) on August 22 by Steve and Jane Mirick. A **Black Tern** found by Jason Pietrzak at the Exeter Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP) on August 22

was also clearly associated with the storm. It was seen and photographed by many during its two-day stay. Two species that are rare inland, a **Laughing Gull** in Auburn (Rebecca Suomala, 8-22-21) and a **Sanderling** in Weare (Rosemary Conroy 8-24-21) were also likely deposited by the storm. Another rare inland bird that was found after Hurricane Henri was a **Northern Gannet** in Stratham on August 24; see the Field Notes for further discussion.



Black-legged Kittiwake by Donna Keller, 10-27-21, Wilson Pond, Swanzey, NH.

Although not a hurricane bird, the **Black-legged Kittiwake** that Donna Keller saw in Swanzey on October 27 could be called a “bomb cyclone” bird. A storm that day qualified as a “bomb cyclone” due to its high-speed intensification. This was the first Black-legged Kittiwake to be reported in eBird for Cheshire County.

The Rarest of the Rare

Likely the rarest bird of the season was a **hybrid kingbird**, with one parent a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and the other either a Tropical or a Couch’s Kingbird, only the second time this pairing has ever been documented. The bird was discovered at the Bellamy River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Dover by Jason Lambert on Nov. 14 and was last seen on Nov. 25. It is currently listed in eBird as Couch’s Kingbird x Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, though the parentage is not yet settled. Luckily, this bird was present for more than a week and was studied by many. See the article in this issue by

FALL SEASON

Steve Mirick about this unique bird.

Remarkably, on November 24, while Alex Lamoreaux was watching the kingbird with Lauren and Janel diBiccari, a female **Bullock's Oriole** appeared in the same area. This was only the 18th record for New Hampshire and the third record in the past two years.



A Magnificent Frigatebird was found in Hampton, NH on 8-19-22, then seen on Star Island at the Isles on Shoals on 8-20-22. Several birders made a trip to Star Island on 8-21-22 and did not see it, but it was photographed the next day at the Isles of Shoals just over the border in Maine where the above photo was taken by Carolyn Cline, 8-22-21, Appledore Island, NH.

New Hampshire's first documented **Magnificent Frigatebird** was found by JoAnn O'Shaughnessy on August 19 at Great Boars Head in Hampton. It soared overhead for about an hour before heading north, where Jim Sparrell was lucky to spot it again 30 minutes later at Odiorne Point SP. Henry Stevens saw it soaring low over his boat near Star Island the following day before it moved on. Based on plumage details, this bird is likely the same individual that was seen in Nova Scotia the week prior and in Massachusetts during the following week.

Another New Hampshire first, a **Roseate Spoonbill** was first reported during the summer season on July 30 in Gorham and was seen through August 1 before being found dead on August 3. A necropsy indicated that the presence of an old chronic wound likely contributed to its death. This species has become much more regular in the northeast with three other states, including Massachusetts, documenting their first records. See the informative article about Roseate Spoonbill vagrancy by Steve Mirick in the Summer 2021 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*.

A **Lazuli Bunting** photographed on Star Island on September 26 was only the third documented for the state, but was the second record for Star Island. The first was on the same date back in 2015 and both were on trips led by Eric Masterson! The three lucky observers this year also saw the 2015 bird, Rebecca Suomala, Zeke Cornell, and Greg Tillman (see the Field Notes for more). All three state records

The Frigatebird Connection



The unmistakable silhouette of a Magnificent Frigatebird, first found and photographed by JoAnn O'Shaughnessy on 8-19-21 at Great Boars Head, Hampton, NH.

Joanne O'Shaughnessy first saw the Magnificent Frigatebird soaring overhead as she was driving up Great Boars Head Avenue to her house in Hampton (8-19-21). She quickly made some calls to get the word out. One of those calls was to Steve Mirick who was at home with his wife Jane in Haverhill, MA about a half hour away from Hampton. Steve immediately sent out a text blast to alert the birding community.

According to Steve, "That's when it got a bit interesting. The text blast went down to Debbie Crowley who had moved to Costa Rica but was still on the list. She saw the text and immediately texted her friend who lives along Hampton Beach! Then that friend of hers walked across the street and saw it and took a nice photo and submitted it to eBird! It's kind of interesting and ironic that the information traveled from me to Costa Rica and back up to Hampton faster than it took for Jane and I to get there.....so we missed the bird!"

have been female-type birds which are challenging to separate from Indigo Buntings. The ability to document sightings with high-quality digital photographs has doubtlessly increased the likelihood of confirming this bird with its relatively difficult-to-identify plumage.

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks in Rochester and Exeter were only the third and fourth records for the state but were the second and third records this year. Gael Mazzela photographed one at Pickering Ponds on August 8 and then two were found the following day at the Exeter WTP by Christian Robinson. This species has been rapidly expanding



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks by Christian Robinson, 8-9-21, Exeter WTP, NH.

northward and they are now breeding as close as Illinois.

A **LeConte's Sparrow** found by Chris McPherson at Woodmont Orchard on October 23 was only the sixth record for the state. As with the Lazuli Bunting, despite the few records, two of them have now come from the same location. The LeConte's Sparrow breeds in eastern Quebec and may be a more regular migrant than the dearth of records suggest given the elusive nature of this species.

A **Swainson's Hawk** was reported by Iain MacLeod from the Interlakes School Hawkwatch in Meredith on September 16, a day when the Broad-winged Hawk tally was more than 6,000. According to Iain, the Swainson's Hawk was the "icing on the cake" of an amazing hawk-watching day. This was approximately the sixth record from the state. As is typical for this species in the east, this and nearly all other reports have been from hawkwatch sites and are therefore only present for a matter of minutes before they disappear.

Steve Mirick found a **Curlew Sandpiper** on August 30 in Hampton Harbor, where it was seen by a lucky few before moving to Meadow Pond where more birders were able to enjoy this charismatic rarity. This is only the seventh Curlew Sandpiper for the state and was the first since 2013.



A happy group that had success seeing the Harris's Sparrow thanks to help from Steve Mirick and Jason Lambert. Photo by Angie Krysiak, 10-23-21, Great Bay Farm, Greenland, NH.

Another rarity found by Steve Mirick was a **Harris's Sparrow** at Great Bay Farm in Greenland on October 20. He was excited, as this was only the second one he had ever seen! It was present until November 3 and many birders were able to enjoy the bird. This long-staying rarity was the ninth record for the state and the first since 2014. Most previous records of this Great Plains species have occurred in late fall or in winter.

Other Rarities



Leach's Storm-Petrel by Susan Wisley, 10-9-21, Rye Harbor SP, NH.

Leach's Storm Petrel is quite scarce in New Hampshire waters, as it typically occurs much farther offshore than the more frequently seen Wilson's Storm-Petrel. Remarkably, two birds were seen from shore this fall, one on September 5 at Little Boars Head in North Hampton (spotted by Steve Mirick). The second was found by Philip Laipis at Rye Harbor during a Seacoast Chapter Field Trip led by Steve and Jane Mirick on October 9. As Steve remarked, "It was the highlight of the trip."

A **Wilson's Phalarope** found by Alex Lamoreaux and Lauren diBiccari on August 4 in Keene was a rare inland



Photo by Jason Lambert, 10-23-21.

record of this species, which occurs slightly less than annually in the state, but nearly always coastally.

This was likely only the twelfth inland record for the state. Interestingly, two other recent inland records also occurred in Cheshire County in 2021 (May).



Red Phalarope by Steve Bennett, 11-17-21, Rochester WTP, NH.



Long-billed Dowitcher by Lori Charron, 10-26-21, Errol, NH.

Inland phalaropes are also quite scarce and neither species is expected in any given year. A **Red-necked Phalarope** was reported from Monroe by James Meigs on September 6, early in the fall when that species is far more likely. As fall progresses, **Red Phalaropes** are more likely and birds reported on October 3 in Pittsburg (Todd Quinn) and November 17 in Rochester (Greg Tillman) fit this pattern.

Long-billed Dowitchers are rare, but nearly annual along the coast and a juvenile found by Ed Norton at Meadow Pond in Hampton on October 11 was typical of the species' occurrence in the state. Two long-staying birds found the next day by Dick, Joanne, and Gregg Dionne in Errol were much more exceptional. They were present from October 12 through November 1, the only inland record for the state.

Moving from waterbirds to a woodland species, a **Hooded Warbler** was found on September 25 at Odiorne Point State Park by Steve Mirick. This southern warbler has been nearly annual in fall in recent years and it was the second time one visited Odiorne Point this year, the first visit being on May 3.

Uncommon Standouts

Red-throated Loon is a species that typically migrates coastally so the two found on Lake Winnepesaukee this



Cattle Egret by David Govatski, 11-14-21, Lancaster, NH.

fall were rare inland records. Iain McLeod reported one in Meredith Bay on November 14 and Andrea Robbins found one in Wolfeboro on November 17.

Cattle Egrets are recorded as single birds most fall seasons, but this year they staged a small influx at the start of November, with a flock of 19 in North Hampton on November 1, first spotted by Steve Mirick and then seen by many. Others were seen in Goffstown, Lancaster, and Durham in the days following.

Little Blue Herons are regular in small numbers. This year four birds were seen coastally: one in Hampton (Tom Bassett, 8-2-21), one in Rye (Richard Garrigus, 8-4-21) and two in North Hampton (Steve Bennett, 8-18-21). Although scarce inland, this species is more expected there than the similar Snowy Egret. There were two inland Little Blues reported: one in Rochester (Stuart Varney, Alan Murray, 9-4-21) and one in Brentwood (Dan Prima, 9-21-21).

Common Gallinules occur most often during the fall season in October. This year two were reported right on



American Golden Plovers by Steve Mirick, 9-15-21, Exeter WTP, NH.

schedule: one from Lake Massabesic on October 11 by Ben Reed and a second from World End Pond on October 17 by Kyle Wilmarth. However, a Common Gallinule heard at Lake Massabesic on August 30 by Pam Hunt, was a very early fall surprise.

American Golden-Plovers were reported widely, with birds present in Rye (2), North Hampton (2), Exeter (3), Star Island, Errol, Charlestown and North Hampton. **Baird's Sandpipers** were also relatively widespread this fall, with at least three birds present along the coast: two in Rye, and one in Hampton. Two more birds were found inland, in Rochester and Orford. One of the Rye birds lingered to a record late date of November 9. The last time one was seen as late as October was ten years ago in 2011!

Sanderlings are rare inland and individual birds found in Keene on August 9 by Eileen Synnott and Northwood the next day by Scott Young (see the Field Notes) were notable, in addition to the previously mentioned hurricane bird in Weare. A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was also found in Keene (Wendy Ward, 8-8-21) as well as in Rochester (Leo McKillop 8-30-21), Portsmouth (Katie Towler, Jim Sparrell, Steve Bennett, 8-28-21) and Dummer (Rebecca Hart, Steve Manns, 9-8-21). The Dummer report is the first for Coos County and the Keene sighting was notable since it was an adult bird. The vast majority of records in New Hampshire are juveniles.

A **Common Murre** photographed on the New Hampshire Audubon October 11 pelagic trip was on the early side for this species. It was dubbed "bird of the day" for that trip because of the sustained close-up looks enjoyed by all.

The three **Short-eared Owls** that were seen during the season all showed up on November 21. The sightings were in Durham (Kurk Dorsey), Hampton (Mark and Rebecca Suomala), and Rye (Robbie Prieto).

Connecticut Warblers are difficult to find in the state but are seen almost every fall. This year, four birds were reported: Etna (Wayne Scott, 8-14-21), Freedom (Pam Hunt, Unity Dienes, 9-16-21), Hollis (Forrest Rowland, 9-19-21) and Peterborough (Richard Frechette, 9-29-21). The Etna record was on the early side for the species, but they may be overlooked due to their skulking habits. Also, in August fewer birders may be looking for migrating songbirds which peak in September.

A **Nelson's Sparrow** was found by Nora Hanke on October 5 in Keene, away from the species' regular coastal haunts. A second inland Nelson's was found by Eric Huston on October 10 in Hinsdale. These were only the second and third records in eBird from Cheshire County, the first one occurring in Hinsdale just over one year ago. As with other *Ammodramus* sparrows, this species is quite inconspicuous and



Common Murre, 10-11-21, offshore waters, NH: top by Susan Wisley, middle by Leo McKillop, bottom by Jim Sparrell.

may be overlooked at sparrow hotspots.

A **Blue Grosbeak**, a species which has now visited New Hampshire every year since 2016, was reported from Star Island on September 26 by Phil Brown and Eric Masterson. **Clay-colored Sparrows** are scarce but widespread fall migrants and this fall individuals were reported from Rye (2), Star Island, Concord (2), Hampton, Peterborough, Franconia and Greenland. **Lark Sparrows** occur annually



White-eyed Vireo by Jim Sparrell, 10-3-21, Odiorne Point SP, Rye, NH.

but, like Nelson's Sparrow, tend to be more coastal than other sparrows. Birds reported from the Exeter WTP on August 13 (Danielle Berger, Max Carroll, Jacob Crawford, Natalya Hebert, C. Liazos) and Seabrook on August 24 (Steve Lamonde) followed this pattern.

White-eyed Vireos are a rare but regular fall overshoot, especially coastally. Birds were reported this fall from Freedom (Christopher Ferro, 8-19-21) Concord (Rebecca and Mark Suomala, 10-2-21), Rye (Jeanne-Marie Maher, 10-2-21) and Hopkinton (Donna Ellis, 11-11-21). Notably, three of these four locations are inland where the species is a less frequent visitor.

Late Lingering Migrants

A **Red Knot** lingered until November 21 in Hampton Harbor, on the later side for this scarce migrant. A **Great Egret** was seen on November 21 by Phil Brown and his Audubon field trip group in the Hampton Marsh, reflecting the species' increasingly late departure date from the state. A **Snowy Egret** that continued in Hampton Harbor until November 14 was even more notable and one of the few November records for the state.

A well-documented **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** in Bedford on November 10 (Susan Hunter, Steve Mirick) was the latest record for the state. November hummingbirds should be carefully scrutinized, as several western species are actually more likely this late in the season.

An **Eastern Phoebe** lingered until November 20 in Concord (Mark and Rebecca Suomala), several weeks past the species typical departure date. Another late departure record date was set by the one or more **Barn Swallows** lingering on the coast into December.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Steve Mirick, 11-10-21, Bedford, NH.



Marsh Wren by Zeke Cornell, 11-2-21, Concord, NH.

A **Marsh Wren** found in Concord on November 2 by Zeke Cornell lingered until November 10 (Chris Borg) and was one of four rare inland November sightings for the state. The others were on November 2 in Salem (Kyle Wilmarth) and Hinsdale (Sara Griesemer) and November 8 in Manchester (Pam Hunt and Kevin Murphy).

A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** found on November 11 at Odiorne Point SP in Rye by Steve Mirick was on the late side for the species. At that date, the Black-headed Grosbeak, although rare, needs to be carefully eliminated. A **Black-throated Green Warbler** found on November 8 in North Conway by Jeanne-Marie Maher was notable, but one that lingered through the end of the season in Hampton at the Wastewater Treatment Plant was the second latest on record. **Blackpoll Warbler** is a regular in November, but three seen together on November 9 in Hampton (Steve Mirick) was a good number for such a late date.

Regional Report, Fall 2021

Sullivan County and Lake Sunapee

by Dylan Jackson



American Golden-Plover by Eric Masterson 9-16-21 Charlestown WTP, NH.

Fall of 2021 continued an ongoing theme for the Sullivan County/Lake Sunapee area in 2021 and that theme was lackluster. The spring season was pretty boring and non-eventful. The summer would have been much of the same had the Eared Grebe not made an appearance on Long Pond in Lempster. Finally, fall migration was sure to heat things up before the dead of winter, but alas, things stayed quiet, really quiet in fact.

The most notable finding of the fall season was what wasn't found. The fall of 2021 was one of the least productive falls I've had in the area in my birding career. Passerines were quite lacking, for me anyways. I didn't encounter any vagrant species personally and, overall, there was one possible Clay-colored Sparrow in Sunapee and an Orange-crowned Warbler in Charlestown and that was about it. Even regular migrants were scarce. Bay-breasted Warblers, which I find are much more abundant in the fall than the spring, were lacking and I only had one all season. Others, such as Wilson's Warblers and Lincoln Sparrows were also practically absent. Even more common migrants, such as Cape May Warbler, were tough to find and I missed them completely in New Hampshire in 2021.

Waterbirds were also surprisingly absent during fall migration. Lake Sunapee and the surrounding smaller ponds and lakes can be great spots to find migrating diving and sea ducks, but not this year. Lake Sunapee frequently hosts all three species of scoter during fall migration, but I found none. I also missed out on Horned and Red-necked Grebes which

have been annual in years past. There was a single Long-tailed Duck on Sand Pond in Lempster (by Patti Wood, 11-11-21) which is an unusual location for this species. There was a large flock of 75 Ring-necked Ducks on Lake Gunnison in Goshen in early November (Bo Hopkins). Otter Pond just north of Lake Sunapee also hosted a large number of Ring-necked Ducks in November along with a Long-tailed Duck and three Greater Scaup on two different days, but that was essentially it for the excitement. Sometimes, an early cold snap can ice over a lot of waterbodies making waterfowl migration end faster than in other years, but that was not the case for the fall of 2021, so their absence remains a mystery.

The fall of 2021 did have a couple of high notes. The Charlestown water treatment plant is Sullivan County's mecca for migrating shorebirds. Many species that have become more frequent in recent years, such as Baird's and White-rumped Sandpipers were no-shows, but it did host an American Golden-Plover which is always an exciting species to find away from the Seacoast. This is the third record for the treatment plant since 2017, so perhaps, they may not be as rare at this location as previously suspected. The Charlestown plant also hosted a noteworthy bird that I'm sure will come as a surprise to many, a Northern Mockingbird. While abundant throughout much of the state, mockingbirds are frustratingly hard to find in Sullivan County, likely because of the mountainous and mostly forested habitat and lack of large urban areas. Whatever the reason may be, its absence makes finding even this common species worth mentioning.

Sometimes you need the bad years to make the good years look better, and 2021 seems to have been one of those years, at least in the Sullivan/Lake Sunapee area. We never know what nature will throw at us, but we can be hopeful that winter and 2022 will bring us some better times, and birds!

A Hybrid Flycatcher in Dover

by Stephen Mirick

Identifying birds is often a challenge. Sometimes they can be frustratingly difficult to figure out, even for a birder with 40 years of experience! Those tricky birds to identify are almost always small, drab, inconspicuous, or skulking birds such as sandpipers, *empidonax* flycatchers, or sparrows hidden in brush piles! So when a big, brightly colored flycatcher appeared in Dover and perched up in some low shrubs for great views, it was humbling to not be able to identify it!

This started with Jason Lambert calling me to report a Western Kingbird that he found at the Bellamy Wildlife Management Area in Dover on November 14. A gang of us who were on the coast rushed over to see if we could find it. The bird was still there when we arrived, but by the time we got there, Jason seemed to be having some doubts about



Photo of the hybrid flycatcher showing relatively long bill, bright yellow underparts and contrasting white throat and breast. See the front cover, bottom right photo showing the overlapping tail feathers forming deep fork and greenish flecks on the gray back. Photos by Steve Mirick, 11-15-21, Dover, NH.

his original identification. As we got closer looks at the bird and better photographs, it appeared that something clearly was wrong!!

Western Kingbirds, true to their name, are bright yellow flycatchers of the western United States. There are actually about five big yellow flycatchers out west, but fortunately (or unfortunately), we don't have to sort out their identifications too often. Western Kingbirds are somewhat rare in New Hampshire, but they are by far the most likely species of yellow kingbird from the west to visit us. Historically, there is a single record for a Tropical/Couch's Kingbird from Claremont in 2003, but all other records of yellow kingbirds in New Hampshire have been Western Kingbirds.

One of the "clinching" field marks for Western Kingbird is the white on the outer tail feathers and Jason's bird clearly had this feature, but apart from that, other field marks didn't match Western Kingbird! Western Kingbirds have a short, stout bill; this bird had a long heavy bill. Western Kingbirds have a very shallow notch in the tail; this bird had a deep notch in the tail. Western Kingbirds have a pale gray upper breast and back; this bird had a bright white upper breast and a gray and green back. What the heck was going on?!

The answer finally came when we were able to get detailed views of the tail. Close photos showed that the outer tail feathers were folded over the inner tail feathers, hiding a deep fork in the tail. This deep forked tail is only shown on two species in the United States: the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and the Fork-tailed Flycatcher. Since this bird was clearly not one of these two and it more closely resembled a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, it had to be a hybrid with that parent!

I had recalled from the literature that Scissor-tailed Flycatchers will rarely hybridize with Western Kingbirds and

produce young birds that look similar to this. I excitedly declared that this was a very rare hybrid of Western Kingbird and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher! After more views and photos, we all left to go home, convinced of this bird being this strange and rare hybrid, but some things still weren't right!

While driving home, Ben Griffith texted to me to point out some inconsistencies with this hybrid combination, most notably the proportionally very long bill which was quite unlike that of either Western Kingbird or Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Ben pointed to the potential of a more exciting and much rarer hybrid combination of a Tropical or Couch's Kingbird paired with a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher! He also pointed to a previous record of this hybrid from New York in 2003 which was identified as being a Couch's Kingbird x Scissor-tailed Flycatcher based on the bird's responses to playback of Couch's Kingbird. That bird was the first documented hybrid of this type ever recorded in history! Also, it looked almost *exactly* like our bird!

Tropical Kingbird and Couch's Kingbird are both found in southern Texas where their breeding ranges overlap with Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. They're nearly identical in appearance and were historically considered the same species until 1979 when ornithologists realized that there were two distinct species that had distinct breeding ranges, habitat requirements and vocalizations. The only reliable way to differentiate between these two species in the field is by their unique vocalizations.

Our bird continued for the next 11 days until it disappeared after November 25. It cooperated for many birders and allowed for some nice photographs. It even vocalized many times, but the only vocalizations heard were a strange, unfamiliar sound that didn't clearly match Tropical, Couch's, or Scissor-tailed, and it didn't respond to any playback calls from these species. One authority believed this bird was more likely a hybrid Tropical Kingbird x Scissor-tailed Flycatcher due to the very long bill (Tropical Kingbirds have marginally longer bills than Couch's). Another authority believed that the repeated call notes from this bird more closely matched one of the more obscure call notes from Couch's Kingbird, so felt it was more likely a Couch's Kingbird x Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. No one, however, was certain and birders were "forced" to enter all of the sightings into eBird as Couch's Kingbird x Scissor-tailed Flycatcher as there were no other hybrid combinations available for entry in the eBird database.

For now, the bird is being called a Couch's/Tropical Kingbird x Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. We'll likely never know for sure whether the second parent was Couch's Kingbird or Tropical Kingbird, but regardless of this bird's parentage, it was one of the most exciting, charismatic, and enigmatic sightings of the fall.

A Lazuli Bunting on Star Island.... Again!

by Rebecca Suomala



Lazuli Bunting by Greg Tillman, 9-26-21, Star Island, NH.

September is a great time to bird on Star Island at the Isles of Shoals and I've been on several fall birding weekends led by Eric Masterson, including one on September 24-26, 2021. The birding had been good with some unusual birds around but no mega-rarity, until Sunday (9-26). On a pre-breakfast walk with Zeke Cornell, we headed towards the harbor to check a spot that had been very productive the day before with a Dickcissel, Clay-colored Sparrow and two Bobolinks. Before we even got there, we met Greg Tillman coming to find us (and any other birder around). He had just seen a bunting that looked like a possible Lazuli at the very spot we were headed for.

We quickly followed him and feverishly scanned the birds. There were three buntings, two of which were Indigos and then we found the candidate Lazuli. We started checking for field marks, especially the white wing bars. All the buntings were in the immature female-type plumage that makes the identification challenging, but it looked good for Lazuli. As we were raising our cameras to take photos, someone came along the road from the other direction and spooked all the buntings. We watched as they literally flew off the island. Heavy sigh!

Fortunately, Greg had taken photos when he first saw the bird and this allowed us to determine that it was a Lazuli Bunting (of course, the record will be reviewed by the NH Rare Birds Committee). It looked very much like the Lazuli that was on Star in 2015, the first state record. Coincidentally, Greg, Zeke, and I had been on the 2015 birding weekend and seen the Lazuli. It was Eric Masterson who pointed out that the 2021 sighting was on the exact same day as the 2015 sighting, September 26! Amazing!

Fall 2021 Field Notes

Northern Gannet Blown Off Course

by Kathryn Frieden



Northern Gannet found and photographed by Candace Graves in her yard in Stratham on 8-24-21.

On August 24, 2021, Candace Graves found an unusual bird on the ground in her yard in Stratham, and although she wasn't sure what species it was, she knew it was out of its usual habitat. On August 22, New England had been hit with the remnants of Hurricane Henri, which had brought a few coastal species inland due to the strong winds. Candace called New Hampshire Audubon for help and sent in a photograph. Becky Suomala was able to identify the bird as a Northern Gannet, a pelagic species that was definitely off its usual course! According to *The Birds of New Hampshire* by Allen Keith and Bob Fox (2013), there are only a few reports of inland Northern Gannets in New Hampshire, all coming after a Nor'easter. Following Becky's advice, Candace called New Hampshire Fish and Game and Officer Jeremy Hawke of the Durham office quickly arrived. The bird did not appear injured, so he transported it safely to the coast. He put it into calm waters in a sheltered area, where it immediately began preening and diving. According to Officer Hawke, "It seemed very happy," indicating a good outcome for the bird.

Surprising Location for a Sanderling



On August 10, 2021, Scott Young photographed this Sanderling in the Hannaford's parking lot in Northwood, NH. After getting out of his vehicle, he noticed something white out of the corner of his eye that did not look quite like trash. He writes, "When I approached, I recognized it as a misplaced and tired Sanderling. It backed up under the edge of a pickup truck and started resting." Sanderlings are uncommon inland, and when they are, usually near a body of water. Scott did see the bird drink from a puddle of water.

Common Nighthawk on Star Island



Common Nighthawks are active at dawn and dusk and they roost during the day, usually in impossible to see places. It's always a treat to find one where you can get a good look at it. This one was found by Greg Tillman on Star Island at the Isles of Shoals on 8-21-21 and photographed by Steve Mirick. It was perched on the fence by the solar array. The third week in August is the beginning of peak migration, but they aren't common coastal migrants. It was a nice consolation prize for the group of birders that was hoping to see the Magnificent Frigatebird reported the day before from the island.

Noisy Grackles

by Richard Bielawski

On September 7, 2021, around 5:00 in the afternoon at my home in Merrimack (NH), I noticed it sounded like it was hailing outside even though the sun was shining. The noise turned out to be a flock of about 80 Common Grackles in an oak tree, picking off the acorns and letting them fall to the ground. This lasted about 15 minutes and then the grackles were on the ground eating the acorns. It looked like the mature birds were trying to show the immature birds how to crack the acorns and eat them, but the immature birds would just pick up the acorns and then drop them. Over the next few days, the squirrels and deer also enjoyed the acorns.

Woodpecker Drinking from Hummingbird Feeder



Linda Charron enjoys feeding birds, particularly this Downy Woodpecker that she photographed in New Boston on 9-23-21. She writes, "After the hummingbirds migrated, this male Downy Woodpecker just couldn't let the sweet nectar go to waste. He comes every day to my New Boston home and chirps very loudly before he lands on the feeder. With windows open, I hear him announcing his arrival. I'm sure I'll see more of him when I replace this feeder with the sunflower chips that he really likes!"

Discovery of a Bank Swallow Colony

Jon Woolf posted the following story to the NH Birds email group on 9-12-21:

Yesterday I went to the Hillsborough County Agricultural Fair, which is located at the agricultural fairgrounds off Route 13 in New Boston. I parked toward the back corner of the main parking lot up the hill from the fairgrounds, which put me near the high cutaway bluff that forms the back edge of the lot. The bluff is 60-70 feet high and has a vertically cut-away face that exposes sand and gravel, not bedrock. It might be natural, or it might be a sand and gravel quarry, possibly for road sand during the winter. Anyway, when I got out of my car, I happened to look up at the cutaway face of the bluff and saw a series of small round holes in the bluff-face not far below the top. They weren't exactly neatly organized, but they were clearly not randomly placed either.



Bank Swallow nesting site. Can you pick out the elongated holes that indicate successful breeding? Photo by Jon Woolf, 9-12-21, New Boston, NH.

Jon added a link to his photograph with the question, “Is this a Bank Swallow breeding colony?” Bob Quinn’s prompt answer was, “Yes, and the holes that are somewhat elongated show where they successfully had young this year. Good find and photo!”

Black-crowned Night-Heron Bonanza!

The Island Path Conservation Area in Hampton is a well-known location where Black-crowned Night-Herons congregate during their post-breeding dispersal. Fall 2021 was a good time to see these birds, as they were present in even larger numbers than average. When Steve Mirick took these photos on August 18, 2021, he counted 34 Black-crowned Night-Herons: 24 adults, four second-years, and six juveniles. This was the third highest count in eBird; the second highest count was at the same location just a few days earlier. There is a bonus of two Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in the more distant photo.



Fall 2021 New Hampshire Raptor Migration Report

by Iain MacLeod



Golden Eagle by Levi Burford 10-28-21, Pack Monadnock, NH.

Pack Monadnock Raptor Migration Observatory

Fall 2021 marked the 17th consecutive fall season of daily coordinated counts conducted at the Pack Monadnock Raptor Migration Observatory at Miller State Park in Peterborough, NH. The count was conducted this year under the leadership of the Harris Center for Conservation in partnership with New Hampshire Audubon in a formal agreement with the NH Division of Natural and Cultural Resources. The Seasonal Counter/Interpreter for 2021 was Levi Burford once again. Henry Walters and I split duties as Monday counter and Julie and/or Phil Brown covered most Tuesdays. Phil Brown served as the Raptor Observatory Coordinator and a wonderful group of dedicated volunteers rounded out the coverage and helped scan the skies.

Daily coverage started on August 28 and ran to November 20. In that time, 548 observation hours were logged (10.25 hours in August, 209.25 in September, 207.65 in October, and 121.25 in November). Levi described the weather as: “September was a little rainy, October was decent, and November was mild.” The total observation hours was a little above the previous 10-year average.

A total of 9,605 individual migratory raptors were recorded. That equals 17.51 raptors per hour. The prior 10-year average is 12,767 raptors (10-year averages in this account refer to data from just the prior 10 years, 2011-2020). The 10-year average for raptors per hour is 24.39.

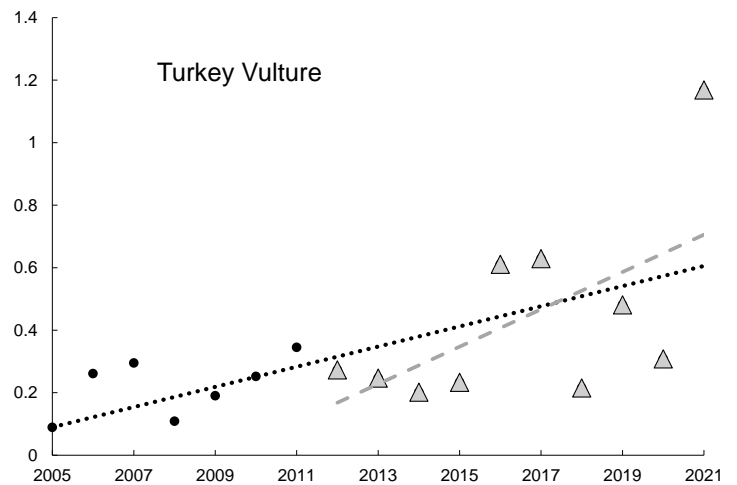
In this report, data were plotted for all species using “total birds per hours of effort” for all years. Six species (Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Golden Eagle, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon) show positive 17-year linear trend lines and eight species (Osprey, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and American

Kestrel) show negative trends. The 17-year trend line for all raptors combined is slightly negative. For some species, I took a look at trend lines for just the last 10 years to see if those trends are changing over time.

One of the highlights of the season was the sighting of two **Black Vultures** on October 22. This marks the first time this species has been recorded here since we began the official count in 2005, but they were not the first ones ever seen here. I had one over the count site on September 15, 2001. We had to wait 20 years for a repeat.

Turkey Vultures are generally mid-season migrants and we usually don’t see obvious signs of southbound birds until October. Our first migrating Turkey Vultures (TVs) were noted on September 26. This year, we had a spectacular increase with 641 migrant TVs counted. The prior 10-year average is 185, so we blew away all previous years (previous record year was 2017 with 324). The biggest single day count was 221(!) on October 5. The trend for the 17 years of counting is very solidly up. Obviously, Turkey Vultures are doing well and continue to expand their range north. We are seeing a similar jump in the counts at other New England sites including Clarry Hill in Union, ME which had a staggering count of 2,219 TVs in fall 2021.

Figure 1. Turkey Vulture counts with trend lines for 2005-2021 (dotted line) and 2012-2021 (dashed line) at Pack Monadnock Raptor Migration Observatory, NH. Circles are counts from 2005-2011, triangles for 2012-2021 counts.



The **Osprey** count at Pack had a slight uptick (182) after last year’s all-time low (162) but the 17-year trend is solidly down. The prior 10-year average is 217. As discussed in past reports, the increase in breeding Bald Eagles is almost certainly a major factor in the Osprey decline. I dug in a little and looked at the trend for just the past 10 years (2012-21) and the downward trend is not as steep, so maybe the decline is slowing. A look at spring counts in the northeast shows

a slight increase, so this suggests that the drop in our fall count is because of a reduction in young produced. More nest failures (because of competition with eagles) also means that more females leave the breeding sites earlier, so we may be missing some adult females who have already left by the time we start counting in September. The peak days were September 11 and 19 when 20 were counted.

The **Bald Eagle** total (227) set another new season-high count and marks the tenth consecutive season of more than 100 Bald Eagles counted. This year's total was 22% higher than the previous high, so the population explosion shows no sign of slowing down. The Bald Eagle migration is quite spread out, but the bulk moved through in September (110) with 64 in October and a record 50 in November. The peak one-day count was 14 on September 14. Much care is taken by the counters to not count the local breeding eagles which are seen daily from the count site.

Our count of **Northern Harriers** fluctuates greatly from one year to the next. We saw a near record-low of 54 in 2019, then a rebound to 108 in 2020, but back to 85 in 2021. In previous reports, I have discussed the cyclical nature of their main prey (voles) resulting in high or low chick production.

Sharp-shinned Hawks had a third "rebound" year after the record low set in 2018. This year the tally was 1,291 (10-year average of 1,163). A new single-day count record was set with 237 counted on September 28. Even with these three good years, the Sharp-shinneds per hour 17-year trend is still negative, although a look at just the last 10 years shows the trend flattening.

The count of 157 **Cooper's Hawks** was above the 10-year average (143). Overall, their 17-year trend line is down, but just looking at the last 10 years of Cooper's per hour shows a positive trend.

The fall 2021 **Northern Goshawk** count was low again with just 13 tallied. The 10-year average is 28! The overall 17-year trend is way down. Our counts in previous years have been as high as 68 so the last four years' counts (11, 9, 12, 13) have been really low. As I've mentioned in previous annual reports, the goshawk numbers in the east are down at all watch sites. I recently read a paper that highlighted the potential impact of West Nile Virus on Northern Goshawks as well as on their primary prey Ruffed Grouse. I hadn't read before that Ruffed Grouse (and all accipiters) show particular susceptibility to WNV and perhaps that is why their populations are all way down.

The **Broad-winged Hawk** count at Pack was low this year (6,055). The 10-year average is 9,922 and our highest count was 16,595 in 2015. This really shows the "hit or miss" nature of Broad-winged Hawk migration. There was a major flight through central New Hampshire on September

Figure 2. Northern Goshawk counts with trend lines for 2005-2021 (dotted line) and 2012-2021 (dashed line) at Pack Monadnock Raptor Migration Observatory, NH. Circles are counts from 2005-2011, triangles for 2012-2021 counts.

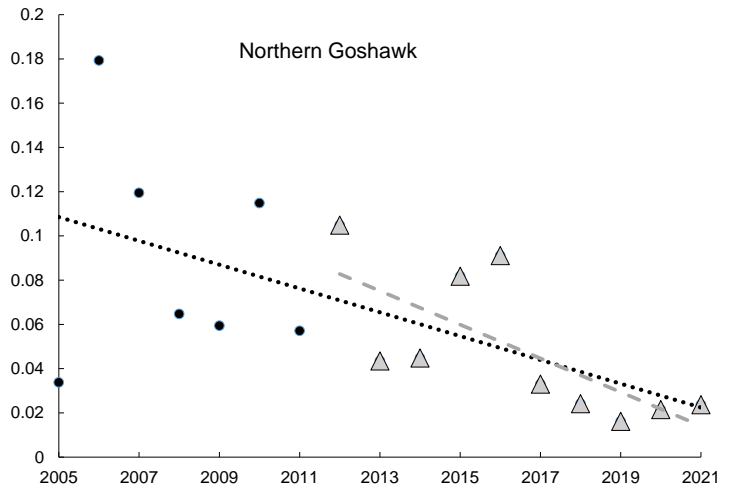


Table 1. Broad-winged Hawk fall migration totals and peak counts at Pack Monadnock, NH, 2005-2021. Source: HMANA's HawkCount.org Database.

Year	Total	Highest one-day count	Date
2005	3,978	1,687	18-Sep
2006	7,595	3,044	11-Sep
2007	7,776	2,676	16-Sep
2008	6,835	2,424	18-Sep
2009	4,322	2,042	16-Sep
2010	7,557	3,328	18-Sep
2011	11,831	5,208	18-Sep
2012	8,848	2,556	17-Sep
2013	8,221	2,759	17-Sep
2014	11,043	4,101	15-Sep
2015	16,693	3,959	17-Sep
2016	10,530	3,245	15-Sep
2017	8,744	1,836	21-Sep
2018	6,756	2,239	24-Sep
2019	7,840	2,436	18-Sep
2020	8,815	2,886	18-Sep
2021	6,055	1,636	14-Sep

16 and 17 with over 7,200 tallied in Meredith (see below). The weather was terrible at Pack over those two days and only five Broad-winged were seen in the rain and mist. On September 18, Putney Mountain in Vermont had over 6,500 Broad-winged, indicating that the big push had completely bypassed southern New Hampshire. The peak Pack day was

September 14 with 1,636 tallied. There was another good day on September 19 (1,240) and 20 (1,006). Overall, the 17-year trend line is slightly negative, but one “hit” year will put that trend into positive territory.

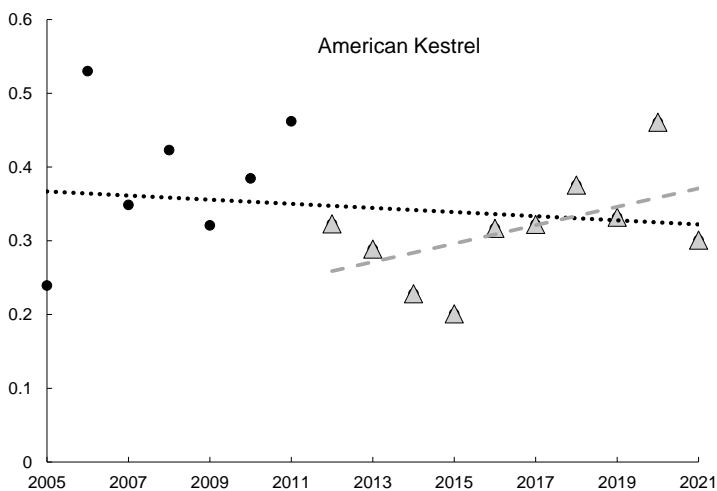
The **Red-shouldered Hawk** count of 223 tied last year’s record high and was well above the 10-year average (146). The 54 seen on October 23 was the second highest daily total. The previous single day record was 70 in 2020. The 17-year trend is strongly positive.

The **Red-tailed Hawk** tally of 329 was a nice increase over last year, but a little below the 10-year average of 339. The peak flight day this year was October 23 when 32 were counted (which is not a big peak at all). The 17-year trend at Pack is negative and more precipitous in the last 10 years. The “short-stopping” I’ve discussed in previous reports continues to be a likely reason for the “decline.” The milder November almost certainly kept many birds to our north and it was only a late-season push (55 in the last seven days of the season) that got us close to the average. Many Red-taileds were no doubt passing the site well into late November.

A single **Rough-legged Hawk** was recorded (and photographed) on October 23. Eleven **Golden Eagles** were tallied this year (10-year average is nine), all but one in November. There were three days when two were seen. Overall the Golden Eagle trend is up.

After a lovely rebound last year, the **American Kestrel** count dropped back to 165 (a 36% drop). The 10-year average is 171. After several years of declines, the species bottomed out in 2014 and is now seeing a steady increase. The 17-year trend is still slightly negative, but the last ten years show a positive trend.

Figure 3. American Kestrel counts with trend lines for 2005-2021 (dotted line) and 2012-2021 (dashed line) at Pack Monadnock Raptor Migration Observatory, NH. Circles are counts from 2005-2011, triangles for 2012-2021 counts.



The **Merlin** count was also down a little compared to last year. The tally of 100 was ahead of the 10-year average of 93. The peak flight day was September 19 when 12 were counted.

The **Peregrine Falcon** count was good this year with 57 tallied. The 10-year average is 47. The 17-year trend is positive, but the trend for just the last ten years is flatter; suggesting a leveling off.

You can read the Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory Fall 2020 Final Report at:

<https://harriscenter.org/final-report-from-the-2021-hawk-watch>

Carter Hill Raptor Migration Observatory

No counts were tallied (in HawkCount) in 2021.

InterLakes Elementary School

Fall 2021 marked the 41st year that staff from the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center have conducted a hawkwatching program with all fourth grade students at InterLakes School in Meredith. As part of the class, the students participate in hawkwatches from the grounds of the school. This year, the two count dates chosen were September 16 and 17 . . . and did we hit the jackpot! I don’t usually join my staff at the count, but I thought I would tag along this year. We had two spectacular days.

On September 16, in 9 hours of observation, we counted 5,887 migrating raptors: 5,802 Broad-wingeds, 18 Turkey Vultures (note, this site has consistently tallied all raptors seen and some of these may not have been migrants), 11 Ospreys, 20 Bald Eagles, 22 Sharp-shinneds, 1 Cooper’s Hawk, 2 Red-shoulders, 7 kestrels, 1 Merlin . . . and a Swainson’s Hawk! On September 17, in six hours of observations, we added 7 Turkey Vultures, 1 Osprey, 9 Bald Eagles, 1 Northern Harrier, 31 Sharp-shinneds, 1 Cooper’s Hawk, 1,410 Broad-wingeds, and 7 kestrels for a combined 2-day total of 7,354.

We were in the right place at the right time. As mentioned above, Levi and the Pack crew were shut out of the fun on those days under low clouds.

Little Round Top

Steve Mirick was at Little Round Top in Bristol on the same day as our big count at InterLakes Elementary School (September 16). Steve was by himself, but managed to count 3,567 Broad-winged Hawks streaming by. He also had 11 Turkey Vultures, 5 Ospreys, 11 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 5 Cooper’s Hawks, 21 Bald Eagles and 8 American Kestrels. I have no doubt that many of those birds were the same ones that we saw streaming over Meredith.

Interestingly, on September 14 over 5,000 Broad-wingeds

Table 2. Total raptors counted during fall for all years (2005-2021) at Pack Monadnock, NH. Source: HMANA's HawkCount.org Database.

Year	Obs. Hrs.	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	SE	TOTAL
2005	326	0	29	219	52	24	520	47	11	23	3,978	0	122	0	5	78	40	11	62	0	5,221
2006	379	0	99	257	55	77	1,253	213	68	46	7,595	0	407	0	11	201	48	29	76	0	10,435
2007	410	0	121	291	53	121	1,288	186	49	112	7,776	0	263	0	5	143	90	44	82	0	10,624
2008	433	0	47	256	50	87	1,189	162	28	67	6,835	0	254	0	3	183	59	17	37	0	9,274
2009	421	0	80	182	51	88	1,196	133	25	129	4,322	0	421	0	6	135	56	30	109	0	6,963
2010	575	0	145	298	85	115	1,248	168	66	109	7,606	0	410	0	10	221	147	53	105	0	10,786
2011	368	0	127	271	54	58	1,124	145	21	43	11,831	0	202	0	9	170	68	40	93	0	14,256
2012	601	0	164	314	105	91	1,388	181	63	209	8,848	1	522	1	7	194	108	54	74	0	12,324
2013	575	0	142	193	101	100	1,254	146	25	118	8,221	0	378	1	11	166	89	48	36	1	11,030
2014	491	0	99	213	120	85	1,094	126	22	123	11,043	0	348	1	7	112	80	39	53	0	13,565
2015	587	0	137	201	132	125	1,443	115	48	141	16,593	1	546	1	13	118	120	54	57	0	19,845
2016	527	0	322	242	136	92	1,126	163	48	117	10,530	0	294	1	5	167	96	49	78	0	13,466
2017	515	0	324	219	163	82	1,179	142	17	180	8,744	0	341	2	7	166	106	64	67	0	11,803
2018	455	0	98	181	176	64	668	124	11	126	6,756	0	246	2	22	171	58	31	108	0	8,842
2019	557	0	268	171	180	54	1,027	105	9	181	7,840	0	223	0	4	185	64	64	128	0	10,503
2020	558	0	172	162	185	108	1,325	180	12	223	8,815	0	293	0	5	257	143	30	122	0	12,032
2021	548	2	641	182	227	85	1,291	157	13	223	6,055	0	329	1	11	165	100	57	66	0	9,605
Average*	523	0	185	217	135	86	1,163	143	28	146	9,922	0	339	1	9	171	93	47	82	0	12,767

were counted at Greenlaw Mountain in New Brunswick, 240 miles to our north-northeast and the same day 6,000 Broad-wingeds were counted at Clarry Hill in Maine, 115 miles to the northeast. As mentioned above on September 18, 6,500 Broad-wings passed Putney Mt. in Vermont. If we draw a straight line between Clarry Hill and Putney Mt., the line goes right over InterLakes and Little Round Top. Steve and I were in the right place at the right time.

Data Sources

HawkCount.org. Online raptor migration database of the Hawk Migration Association of North America. CBC Data are provided by National Audubon Society and through the generous efforts of Bird Studies Canada and countless volunteers across the Western Hemisphere.

Iain MacLeod is Executive Director of the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center in Holderness, NH and is President of the Board of NorthEast Hawk Watch. Iain founded the Pack Monadnock Raptor Migration Observatory in 2004 and has studied raptors (particularly Ospreys) for 40+ years. Iain is a member of the New Hampshire Bird Records Editorial Team. In 2019, he was the very proud recipient of NH Audubon's Goodhue-Elkins Award.

Key to Table 2.

*previous 10 year average (2011-2020)

TV Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

OS Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

BE Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

NH Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

SS Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)

CH Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*)

NG Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)

RS Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)

BW Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*)

SW Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

RT Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

RL Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*)

GE Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

AK American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)

ML Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

PG Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

UR Unidentified Raptor

SE Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

Documenting Rarities in eBird

by Steve Mirick

If you currently use eBird or are considering using it in the future, please take the time to review the following article and its bullet statements.

– on behalf of the New Hampshire eBird Review Team

eBird Overview

Using eBird is a fun way to keep track of bird sightings and it's an incredible educational tool for people to learn more about the birds around them. It's been growing tremendously in popularity over the years and with the increase in data around the world, eBird has created some wonderful range maps and migration simulations that would not have been dreamed about 20 years ago. But with the value of adding more and more data, the difficulty in keeping up with quality control is extremely difficult. As more beginners are using the system, the likelihood of errors in data entry grows exponentially. eBird reviewers review the data in order to confirm it for the scientific database.

New Hampshire Team

In New Hampshire, we have an eBird team of volunteers that review filters, hotspots, and all of the “flagged” data that is caught by data entry filters. This job is a very difficult job with few rewards. Reviewers currently on the team include Eric Masterson, Pam Hunt, Jim Sparrell, Katie Towler, Susan Wrisley, Greg Tillman, Ben Griffith, Steve Mirick, and Zeke Cornell with help from Kathryn Frieden, Unity Dienes, Kyle Wilmarth, and Dylan Jackson. All of these birders have many years of birding experience in New Hampshire and are doing their best to keep up with the data entered. We are also trying to bring other experienced members of the birding community in to assist with the data quality control efforts. Becky Suomala recruits and supports NH eBird volunteers, and coordinates the statewide coverage.

Filters

Filters are data entry triggers that tell the user that a certain species they are entering is not expected in that area, or that the number of individuals they are reporting is higher than is expected. Filters are set by date and number for each species. Filters are currently one of the most important quality control systems in eBird, but they require a tremendous amount of effort to adjust and keep up to date. In addition, they **only work at a county level** so this can create major problems. For instance, a regularly encountered bird of coastal and offshore ocean waters such as a Razorbill

is not filtered in Rockingham County. This is fine if you are birding at the coast, but if you were birding anywhere away from the coast, a Razorbill would be an extremely rare find that would require detailed documentation. Certain species of waterfowl on the Connecticut River are rare elsewhere. Purple Martins are locally common at nesting colonies on the New Hampshire seacoast, but they are rare anywhere else in Rockingham County. A Red-bellied Woodpecker in southern Grafton County is not unusual, but it's still rare in northern Grafton County, etc.. Unfortunately, we can't adjust the filters with any more accuracy at this time, but we believe (hope) that the eBird team at Cornell is working on this significant problem. Bottom line – the filters are not perfect, but we are doing our best to work with them.

Provide Detailed Documentation for Rare Birds

When eBird triggers a filter and tells you something is unusual, please **provide some words of description** for **any** noteworthy birds. A decent photo can be extremely valuable and, if it's singing, try to record it with your cell phone! Species Comments are essential for reviewers and are helpful even for other eBird users. Every flagged sighting should have at least something in the species comments field. It doesn't always have to be a lot, but even a small amount of detail may mean the reviewer doesn't need to ask you for more information or invalidate your sighting.

It should be noted that some sightings may require more detailed documentation than others and a reviewer will take this into consideration when judging an eBird submission. Generally, the more rare the sighting, the more detailed the documentation required. If there are very few observers, then more detailed documentation is required. For instance, if you are recording the Purple Martins at their colony on Cross Beach Road in Seabrook (in May through July) you don't need to submit much documentation or, if you were one of the 100+ birders that saw the Northern Lapwing earlier this month, it wouldn't be necessary to provide “bullet-proof” detailed documentation since there were so many photographs submitted and so much corroboration on the identification. A few simple field marks that you noted would be sufficient. **But** if you are the only observer of a flagged bird species and if there are no photographs, it is up to you to submit **detailed** documentation.

Detailed documentation should include at a minimum:

- What field marks did you notice that differentiate it from more common species? (This is very important and could include size, shape, colors, etc.)
- If relevant, detailed discussion of call notes or song.
- What is your past experience with this and other similar species?

- How long did you watch it for and from what distance?
- What was the bird doing? (flying by overhead, perched in tree, swimming in water, etc.)
- What did you use for optics (eyes only, binoculars, spotting scope)?
- What was the visibility like (fog, clear, backlit, frontlit, dark out, etc.)?

Try to write notes right there in the field or when you get back to your car if possible. These are most valuable. Writing them when you get home after you've read through all of your field guides is not as useful.

Training yourself to patiently *observe* birds and notice details of their plumage is a valuable way to learn field identification. Read your field guides and understand the “field marks” of birds. One of the downfalls of eBird is the fact that it tends to encourage people to hastily chase birds and tick them off for their year/life lists. While this can be lots of fun (I do it too!), you don't learn as much and it doesn't make you a better birder.

Provide a discussion on high counts

A high count trigger also needs to be explained in detail. Again, a photograph can help a lot but, if you don't have a photograph, indicate how you arrived at a number. Was the flock estimated or was it a count of each individual bird? If it was during migration, indicate that the birds were migrating. Include the flock size of each individual flock if multiple flocks are involved.

Subspecies

Avoid selecting subspecies (or forms such as Downy Woodpecker (Eastern)) on the basis of expectation or because they are high on a list of suggestions. Some subspecies (or groups of ssp.) can be very difficult to differentiate in the field. Even professional ornithologists argue about what is a valid subspecies and what is not, and field guides are sometimes not useful (or are confusing) for field identification at this level. I (personally) avoid using all subspecies categories except for a couple of subspecies and then only enter them in certain circumstances. When in doubt, *don't use* the subspecies category. It most often isn't necessary and is not valuable. If you do use the subspecies category, then supply sufficient details so that other subspecies, even western subspecies, are excluded. Stating “expected subspecies” is not sufficient for documentation.

Red-tailed Hawks—At this time, New Hampshire reviewers are *requiring* photographs for all Red-tailed Hawks that are identified at a sub-species level due to the complexities and variations within Red-tailed Hawk populations. Please do not

Key Points to Remember

1. eBird is a great free tool that is providing fantastic information to us all, but the quality of the information is directly related to the quality of the data.
2. Volunteer eBird reviewers with decades of experience birding in New Hampshire work to maintain the standards in the state.
3. Filters are manually set by reviewers based on expected species and numbers for location and time of year.
4. Filters can only be set to a county level at this time. If eBird prompts you for more information on a bird that is common in your area, please understand it might be because it is rare elsewhere in the county.
5. If you are a beginner and your submission trips a filter, that might be an indication that your identification is incorrect. Documentation is required, but check other species options first.
6. Good documentation includes good photographs or describes the salient field marks that you observe in the field. One of the most common errors is to describe where the bird was – instead, describe what it looked like.
7. Please don't enter subspecies level data except in cases where the subspecies is clearly field identifiable and where other subspecies have been eliminated.
8. Use care in selecting the location for your sightings. Try to use an existing “Hot Spot” where it makes sense.

submit Red-tailed Hawks to a subspecies level unless you submit it with a good photograph.

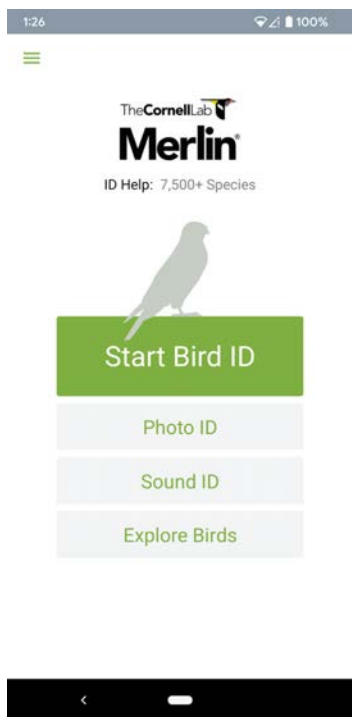
Don't be Offended

Don't be offended if a reviewer asks you a question. Be proud that you may have found something unusual! Reviewers volunteer their time to maintain data quality for eBird sightings and are usually very knowledgeable about the birds in New Hampshire. You can learn a great deal from their questions! Be aware that all of your data may not be accepted. This is not to say that you were wrong about your identification, but it is just that the reviewer(s) could not be sure based on the documentation that you supplied. *Don't be offended if your sighting is invalidated.* It happens to us all! Really! Try to use it as a learning experience for providing better documentation in the future.

The Merlin App Sound ID

by Iain MacLeod

Figure 1. The Merlin App home screen.



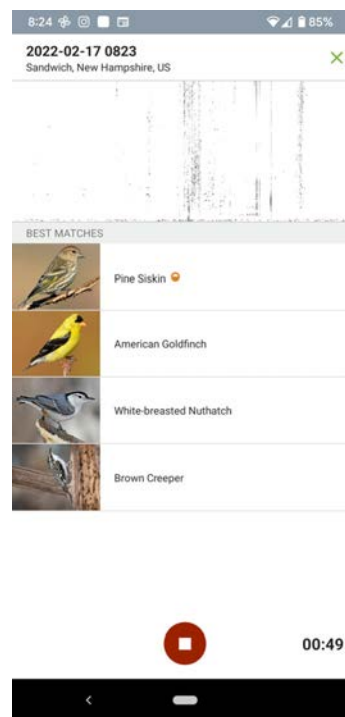
Identification of bird songs and calls is a skill that requires patience and many years of careful study. For beginning or casual birders, it's a skill they may never fully master. I have long wondered when the technology would be perfected that would allow a digital identification of songs.

In the past year, a major technological advance came along in the form of the Merlin app's song identification feature. The Merlin app (from Cornell Lab of Ornithology) has already made its mark as a go-to phone app for visual identification (including its Photo ID feature). The new

Sound ID feature makes it a soup-to-nuts app for all birders.

I was eager to try out the Sound ID. It is very simple

Figure 2. Merlin app Sound ID suggesting four species heard in my yard on a February morning.



to use. Within the normal app interface there is now a Sound ID icon. Click on it and it immediately uses the microphone built into your phone to pick up the sounds around you. I was surprised how sensitive the app and mic were, managing to pick up sounds that were really very quiet. Obviously, you are going to get better results where there is little extraneous background noise. I haven't tried the app in a noisy city environment, but I would imagine that its effectiveness would be impaired. Here in the nice quiet Lakes Region, I found it very effective.

As each bird calls, the app offers real-time suggestions for what the bird is (Figure 2). "Suggestions" is an

important word here. That is how the app describes the process. A list of the species is created and each recording is automatically saved to your phone. It also creates a simple sonogram of the sounds.

Tips for using the Merlin App

- The best success will be when there's an isolated song with little background noise.
- The App is fallible. Examples include a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker identified as a Gray Catbird and children's sounds as gulls. Do not assume that Merlin is always correct.
- Use Merlin as a prompt for what to look for (or what you are missing if you are hard of hearing) then try to get a visual confirmation of the bird. This will also help you learn the song and store it in your memory.
- When species first arrive in spring, check eBird to see if they are here yet. Go to Explore – Species Maps and change the date to the current year. The map will show where they have been reported so far.
- Beware similar species such as Chipping Sparrow, Pine Warbler, and Dark-eyed Junco, or Philadelphia and Red-eyed Vireos.
- Remember that bird songs can vary, and not all birds make the classic noises. Don't forget mimics like Northern Mockingbirds, European Starlings, and Blue Jays that have exceptionally good imitations.
- In your eBird checklist indicate which sightings were identified by Merlin and upload the recording.
- **If Merlin was the only basis for identification, please don't enter it in eBird** – wait until you are able to hear and identify it yourself or visually confirm the species.
- There's no substitute for a visual confirmation – even the experts get fooled!

See the eBird article on Merlin Sound ID best practices:

<https://support.ebird.org/en/support/solutions/articles/48001214056-merlin-sound-id-best-practices>

Now . . . nothing is perfect and this new app certainly isn't. It does make mistakes. Some of the suggestions are wrong, but as long as the user is aware of that, it is manageable. A good tip is to try multiple recordings to see if the app continues to suggest the same bird. If the app "insists" that you are hearing something unusual, try to get a visual of the bird and confirm the identification. You should also upload the recording to eBird in a checklist to verify if indeed that is what you heard. If Merlin identifies something unusual and you report it on eBird and just say "identified by Merlin," that is not going to be good enough to convince the eBird reviewer that you definitely heard what you thought you heard. If you upload the recording (which is easy to do), an expert can listen to the recording and verify or challenge the identification.

I'm sure that the app will keep improving and the accuracy will get closer to 100%. As of this review, the sound ID feature only works for birds in US and Canada. They plan to add more birds/countries in the future. That is where this app could really come into its own for me – when I am visiting somewhere with completely unfamiliar birds.

The Merlin Sound ID is a great tool. Use it to enhance your ID skills, but remember it's no substitute for careful observation and a trained ear.

Volunteers and Research

Black Tern with Color Bands

by Danielle Dauria

The Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) is the rarest breeding tern in Maine and nests in just a handful of freshwater marshes in the state. Since 1989, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) has been monitoring the number of nesting pairs. The population peaked in 2006 with 115 nesting pairs, but has since declined to an all-time low of just 30 pairs at three sites in Maine in 2021. This decline is not just occurring in Maine, which is somewhat on the periphery of the Black Tern's North American range. The Black Tern has experienced a long-term decline throughout its range, even in the core of its range in the Prairie Pothole Region of the US and Canada. It is unclear what may be causing the decline. While habitat loss and degradation have occurred, the available breeding habitat does not appear to be a primary limiting factor. In areas where survival and productivity have been studied, estimated vital rates fall far below those required to maintain a stable population.

To better understand the return rates of Maine's Black Terns to their breeding wetlands, MDIFW began color



Black Tern with metal leg band on its right leg and two color bands (orange over yellow) on its left leg. Photo courtesy of MDIFW.



Black Tern with a geolocator attached to the yellow plastic band. Photo by Don Lyons, 6-17-21.

banding adults this summer. Each adult has a unique color band combination on one of its legs and a silver metal USGS band on the other leg. In addition, to contribute to a larger migratory connectivity project in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan, MDIFW also equipped five adults with geolocators which were attached to a plastic leg band. The geolocators have a light sensor and use changes in ambient light levels to estimate the times of sunrise and sunset, from which latitude and longitude can be calculated.

The derived locations will shed light on where the birds go during migration, identify areas of mixing of different sub-populations, highlight important stopover and overwintering locations, and potentially discover priority conservation issues at these sites.

Over the next few years, MDIFW will continue to color band adults and re-sight color-banded adults to look at return rates. MDIFW will also need to recapture those marked with geolocators in order to obtain the data from the miniature devices. If you spot a black tern with color bands or a geocator, please be sure to report your observation to the Bird Banding Laboratory and email danielle.dauria@maine.gov with the color band combination, location, and date.

Backyard Birder

Do Birds eat Small Mammals?

by Kathryn Frieden



Paul Kursewicz took this photo of a hungry Great Blue Heron eating a chipmunk in his yard in Epping, NH on 10-3-21.

Early in the morning on August 25, 2021 a Great Blue Heron was standing on our dock on Pawtuckaway Lake, staring at the nearby rock jetty. He walked very slowly and carefully around the rocks, paused, and with a sudden head-thrust, snatched a chipmunk from its hiding place among the rocks. With it dangling from his beak, the heron went to the water, dipped the chipmunk a few times, then maneuvered it around to a swallowing position. My immediate reaction was to “rescue” the chipmunk, but I restrained myself and let “nature take its course.” After a little more maneuvering, the heron swallowed the chipmunk whole, stood around for a few minutes looking satisfied, and then flew off. The meal I had just witnessed recalled the first time I had ever seen a Great Blue Heron feeding, back in 2011 at the Dead Creek

Wildlife Management Area in Addison, Vermont. Seeing it eat a fish was exciting and memorable, but not surprising, unlike the chipmunk feast, which was very surprising!

I began thinking about the question of what herons eat after seeing this Great Blue Heron enjoy his breakfast. It turns out this is not such a rare event in New Hampshire. On October 3 (2021), there were two posts in the NHBirds email list about herons eating chipmunks.

Paul Kursewicz wrote:

We have an overabundance of chipmunks in our yard (25 plus). Their holes are everywhere, and our property looks like a mine field! They are very cute and not afraid of us. My wife has been at war with these critters since early spring. They have ruined her garden and all her potted plants. She told me that she has been praying for a miracle; that some predator would come and reduce the population. Well, she got her wish this morning. Who might that predator be, you may ask? It is a Great Blue Heron! It must have been starving to come so close to our house. We have a river in our backyard and that is where these birds have always hung out, never coming close to our house until today. We saw it catch and eat four chipmunks and it probably ate more because we could not stay watching at our windows all day.

Mary Weisman replied to this post with the following observations:

We too have had the same experience this past week! We live in Stratham, abutting the Squamscott River and marsh in the backyard. I share your wife's frustration with the chipmunks ruining the plants and gardens this year. Daily, I called them very bad names as I found dug-up dead flowers and herbs! We have counted 14 chipmunks so far taken by a single Great Blue Heron (and sadly one House Finch). He comes daily for lunch and dinner, so patient and stealthy in his hunting. He does not seem to mind my husband and me watching from the elevated deck. In past years, I have seen a heron take a very occasional chipmunk, but never to this extent.

According to the *Birds of the World*, (Vennesland and Butler 2020) the diet of Great Blue Herons is varied, and obviously includes fish, but likely reflects local food availability. In one study in Idaho, voles were an important component of the nestlings' diet and in British Columbia they were important to juvenile survival during the winter. Perhaps an abundance of chipmunks can serve the same role, helping young and immature birds survive.

Great Blue Heron was not the only species observed eating

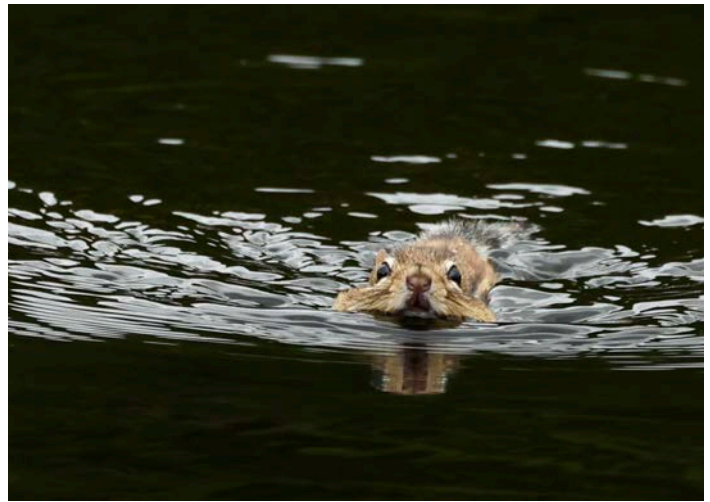
a small mammal. In August, Gerry Coffey photographed an American Bittern eating one. The American Bittern is a solitary, stealth feeder. Its cryptic coloration, especially the striped ventral plumage, is thought to be important camouflage for foraging, as it commonly feeds in vertical marsh vegetation (Lowther, et al. 2020). However, when Gerry photographed the bittern, it was in a farm field, quite out in the open. The American Bittern diet consists mostly of insects, amphibians, and fish, but approximately ten percent of the diet is small mammals, especially meadow voles.



Gerry Coffey took this photo of an American Bittern eating a small mammal in a farm field in Canaan, NH on 8-24-21.

You probably all remember “Squirrel-mageddon” of the fall of 2018, when so many squirrels were seen dead by our roadsides. That was the season when we “discovered” that squirrels can swim, a surprising phenomenon that was reported from several rivers and lakes around New Hampshire. The presence of an excessive number of squirrels was related to the mast seeding event of the year before, as described in the article “Barred Owl Phenomenon” in the Winter 2018-19 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*. Are we seeing a similar increase in the number of chipmunks this year due to mast seeding? Nanci Mitchell of Gilmanton can certainly attest to the high numbers of chipmunks. She wrote, “Our land is on the side of a small mountain and is very rocky. We unintentionally enhanced the chipmunk habitat by building stone walls. Of course, the bird feeders also attract them. They were everywhere! We have had three years in a row with a huge oak mast crop. I have wondered if that affected the chipmunk population.” Nanci described catching 69 in her yard!

In addition to the high numbers of chipmunks in people’s yards, a chipmunk was photographed swimming across the South Channel of Pawtuckaway Lake on September 22. We shall see if this presages another surge in the avian populations of mammal-eaters.



Chipmunks can swim! Photo taken on 9-22-21 by Roger Frieden in Nottingham, NH.

References

- Lowther, P., A. Poole, J. Gibbs, S. Melvin, and F. Reid. 2020. American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*), version 1.0. In *Birds of the World* (A. Poole ed.). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY.
- Vennesland, R. and R. Butler. 2020. Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), version 1.0. In *Birds of the World* (A. Poole ed.). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.grbher3.01>

Chasing Rarities

How to find the place when you’ve never been there before!

by Jon Woolf

Let’s take a look into the mind of a birder who has just heard about a rare bird in the area.

Hey, there’s a report of a Fork-tailed Flycatcher right here in New Hampshire. Oh, it’s at the Seacoast Science Center. I know where that is! [into the car, and zoom!]

Hey, there’s some Cattle Egrets at Runnymede Farm. I know where that is! [into the car, and zoom!]

Hey, there’s a Wood Stork at Pickering Ponds. I’ve been there before. [dig around in old NHBirds emails] *Right, right, here are the directions.* [into the car, and zoom!]

Hey, there’s a report on the NHBirds List of a Little Blue Heron. It’s at ... Peverly Meadow? Where’s that? Canterbury? But where’s Canterbury?



The Little Blue Heron at Peverly Meadow in Canterbury, NH. Photo by Jeanne-Marie Maher 5-23-21.

Which brings us to May 23, 2021. I had already had a nice morning of birding and it felt stupid to waste the rest of the day. So, I decided to head up north and try for the Little Blue Heron that had been reported at Peverly Meadow in Canterbury, NH.

Problem: Where, exactly, was this place called Peverly Meadow? The postings to the NHBirds email list seemed to assume that readers would be familiar with the location, but I wasn't. Despite having lived in New Hampshire for over fifteen years, there are still large swathes of this state that are *terra incognita* to me. I knew Peverly Ponds, which is located in the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge adjacent to the Portsmouth International Airport (Pease), but from what I could tell, Peverly Meadow was somewhere else entirely. How could I find it?

Someone said in their post that it was an eBird hotspot, OK, to eBird on my desktop computer. After a little fumbling around, I found the hotspots map and then Peverly Meadow. It's on Baptist Road in Canterbury, near Abberton Road, but the eBird map doesn't give street addresses or even latitude-longitude coordinates. (This appears to have changed, see below.) So, how do I program my GPS to get there? (GPS is "important" bordering on "vital" to my birding, especially when chasing a rare bird. I do know how to read a map, but large stretches of New Hampshire back roads are sadly lacking in places you can pull over and park while you consult a printed map.)

Hm, hm, hm....

To make a long story short, I did figure out a way to get an address for my GPS, using a few tricks that I had used before with varying amounts of success. Put them all together and they form a pretty reliable method of finding the location for pretty much any hot bird report or location.

Step 1: *Trust the original reports.* There may not be an exact GPS-ready location there, but the information that is given will usually be accurate as far as it goes.

Step 2: *Remember that map programs and map websites are programmed to be helpful as well as accurate.* Programming can sometimes have unexpected results such as the ability to find an address that doesn't actually exist. Map programs don't have a listing of every valid address along a street or road. They know which end of the street the numbers start at and they know approximately the interval between street numbers. Given that information, they can calculate roughly where the street address you enter should be.

Step 3: *Use all your resources.* So, what if the first place you look doesn't have the exact location you need? The World Wide Web is the greatest research tool in the history of the human race and it's right at your fingertips. That and one good clue are all you really need. Maybe it's an eBird hotspot. While I don't recall seeing this when I went heron-hunting in May 2021, now any eBird hotspot includes a "Directions" link in the little pop-up window you get when you click on the hotspot (see directions below). Maybe it's a place name, like "Pickering Ponds" or "Seacoast Science Center." Maybe it's a road name and a description of the local geography. With a place name or description, you can get a road name. With a road name, you can make up an address. With that, you can find the general area on a map site. Then find the exact place, get a close-by address (whether real or made up), and off you go!

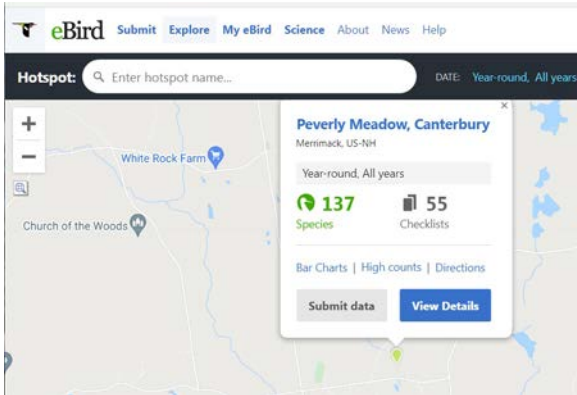
As a final thought: if **you** are on-the-scene of a rarity and you aren't protecting the **exact** location, then you can give useful directions in several different ways.

- Provide a street address. Most GPSs can extrapolate a street address from your current location, assuming you're on a street.
- Give a street name, with direction and distance from the nearest intersection. Many car GPSs can find a particular intersection and then you just drive the indicated direction for the given distance.
- Include an exact latitude-longitude location. Many GPSs and some smartphone map apps can plot a lat/long exactly and then you can look for nearby roads. If you're on a boat on water, then a lat/long location may be all you can get.
- If you're on a trail in a park or conservation area or just plain undeveloped land, give GPS directions, such as a street address to where you parked and then trail directions to where the bird is.

How to get Directions Directly from an eBird Hotspot

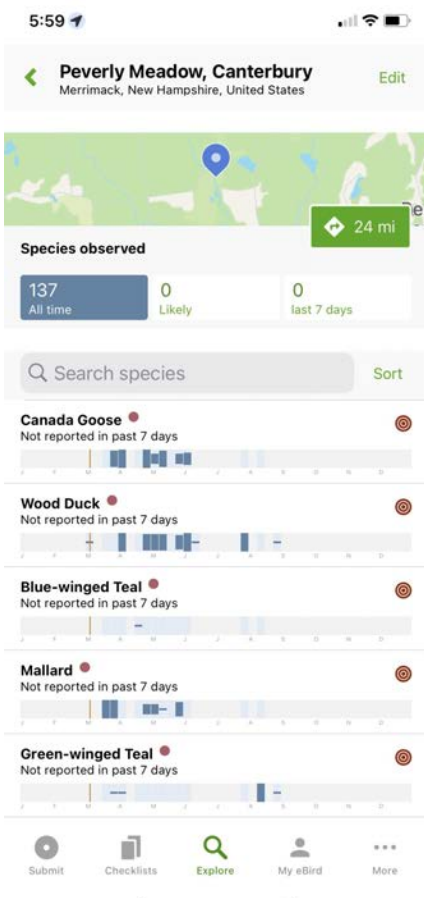
Step 1. On the website, find the hotspot in Explore Hotspots, then click the small marker. The resulting pop-up will have the Directions link just above the View Details button (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Step 2. On a smartphone, first make sure your Location Services are turned On. Then open the eBird app. Go into Explore mode, find the hotspot and tap the green button on the right that shows the estimated distance (Figure 2). This should start your map app with the hotspot as the “To” location.

Figure 2



Birding from Gorham to Errol, NH

by Robert A. Quinn

New Hampshire Audubon and Bob Quinn are partnering to produce a Guide to Birding Northern Coos County thanks to a grant from the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. The following is a sneak preview of some of the material that will be in the guide. Bob will also be presenting a free webinar for NH Audubon on birding in the region. Stay tuned to NH Audubon for future information on both these items.

I have written this article with the breeding season in mind, but I have included additional information that can be helpful during migration and winter (which comes early and lingers late!). There are about ten good sites and a beautiful drive between Gorham and Errol. It's a good idea to drive the route as early as you can in the morning and take it slowly.

As you come into Gorham, NH you enter the Androscoggin River watershed. From Gorham, Rt. 16 north follows alongside the Androscoggin River and eventually, in about 38 miles, it brings you to the village of Errol. The roadside habitats are excellent for northern birds. At the junction of Rt. 2 and Rt. 16, **re-set your trip odometer to 0.0 miles** since I use the approximate mileage from this junction in the following descriptions.

As you head north from Gorham and go through Berlin, the first major place to bird the river is at the **Nansen State Wayside** just at the Milan town line (Mile 11.5). It is well-marked by a large sign. This is a nice place for a picnic next to the river and it has a nice variety of bird habitats. About half-a-mile farther along Rt. 16 is an amazing site, the **Nansen ski jump**, which has recently been refurbished. Built in 1937, it was then the largest steel towered ski-jump in the world. It hosted the first ever US Olympic trials and numerous North American Championships, as well as International Invitationals, and was featured on ABC's Wide World of Sports. Some of the greatest ski jumpers of the day came to jump the "Big Nansen." The city of Berlin became one of the premier Nordic Centers of the East, like the Olympic complex of Lake Placid, NY. The Nansen Ski Jump held its final competition in 1985 and was then abandoned. A few years ago, a private effort was made to restore it to its former glory.

As you approach **Milan village** (Mile 14.3) there are several farm fields worth watching for Horned Larks, Northern Harriers, sparrows, and the occasional stray gulls. If time allows, turn right in the center of the village at the

only road to the east and slowly cross the bridge over the Androscoggin River. This bridge usually has a colony of Cliff Swallows. Continue to the stop sign and drive straight across



Nansen ski jump, Milan, NH. Photo by Robert A. Quinn.

the road to scan the Berlin Municipal airport for North Country rarities such as Eastern Meadowlark (rare), Brown Thrasher (regular), and other open country species. In late fall/winter, the Kelley horse farm (next to the stop sign) is a regular spot for a flock of Snow Buntings and an occasional Lapland Longspur. During migration, the river is worth a look for migrant waterbirds and Rusty Blackbirds.

Return to Rt. 16 and turn right (north) and proceed about four miles farther along to the turn off for the well-signed **Bofinger Conservation Area** (approx. Mile 19.6). Drive slowly into the small parking area and boat ramp. Here, there can be nesting Bobolinks and other field birds, as well as Rusty Blackbirds (in migration) and a decent view of the river at a spot where migrant waterbirds gather.

A powerline crossing Rt. 16 near **the junction of Rt. 110A** has an obvious Osprey nest (about Mile 20.5). Park either in the modest parking lot on the west side of Rt. 16 near Rt. 110A or on the narrow, but useable, shoulder of Rt. 16 at the powerline crossing. Please stay in your car as this active and photogenic Osprey nest is close to the road.

Pontook Reservoir and Dam (Mile 22.3) has a parking lot at the dam plus a couple of pull-offs and a wide enough shoulder in places to view the marsh. Expected birds that nest here include Common Loon, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Great Blue Heron, Ring-necked Duck, Wood Duck, American Black Duck, Virginia Rail, and Marsh Wren. Anything can turn up at Pontook such as Common Gallinule and King Rail (rare). When the water level is low it can be good for shorebirds.

A short distance beyond the last pull-off for Pontook marsh, and just beyond a Moose wallow, is a small U-shaped pull-off on the right side. Pull in and park by the water. This is a continuation of the Pontook impoundment and is known

as **Magill Bay** (approx. Mile 23.8). A fairly prominent Bald Eagle nest is across the water in a large White Pine (inactive in 2021). Look for Osprey, Common Ravens, loons, and several species of nesting ducks including Ring-necked Ducks and possibly teal.

Note – a Moose wallow is a wet area of mud and small trees with hundreds of tracks from the big ungulates. Besides Moose these wallows are frequently next to spruce-fir habitats which are good for boreal species including crossbills in some years.

13 Mile Woods (Mile 26.7) is a scenic drive through mostly spruce-fir forests and along the Androscoggin River. It is not only scenic, but these remaining 13 miles or so to Errol have excellent boreal habitat where you have about a 50/50 chance of seeing Black-backed Woodpeckers, which nest along this stretch of road. Please make sure you move over for other traffic, especially logging trucks which do not slow down for Moose nor birders! For the remaining miles to Errol, the Androscoggin River is right next to the road and adds the possibility of more loons, Osprey, ducks, and other waterbirds.



Pontook Reservoir. Photo by Robert A. Quinn.

There are several noteworthy “microspots” along the 13 Mile Woods to look for birds:

- the 0.3 miles of **old Rt. 16** on the right near the Cambridge, NH town line (Mile 27.0).
- **Seven Islands** just as you reach the Errol town line (Mile 30.3). These river islands are obvious, as is a long walkable snowmobile bridge that crosses the river.
- the **Androscoggin State Wayside Area** (Mile 33.4) which is mostly for picnics, but you never know.
- **Mollidgewock State Park** (Mile 35.8) is a long, narrow park which parallels the Androscoggin River and is the final major landmark a mile or two before the village of Errol.

Welcome to Errol!

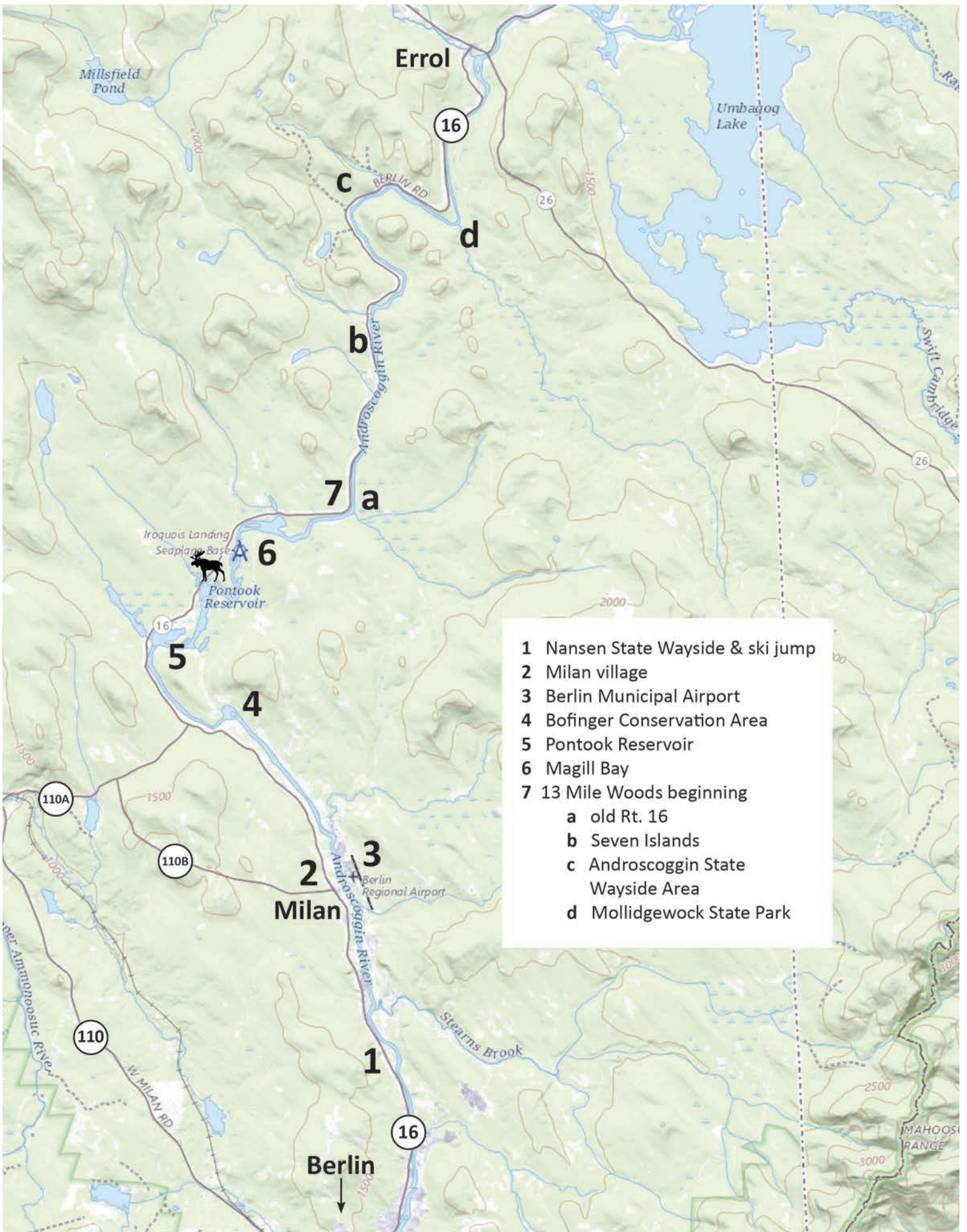


Photo Gallery: Cattle Egrets Doing What They do Best!

Steve Mirick found a flock of 19 Cattle Egrets at Runnymede Farm in North Hampton, NH on November 1, 2021. That's the second highest count for the Granite State. According to *The Birds of New Hampshire* (Keith & Fox 2013) and eBird the only count higher is 20 on May 10, 1964. The species is a relatively recent arrival to the US (1952) and New Hampshire (1953) but they do not breed in the state. Cattle Egrets the world over are known for feeding near grazing animals which is just what the November flock was doing.

All photos taken at Runnymede Farm, North Hampton, NH.



Roger Frieden, 11-1-21.



Paul Kursewicz, 11-2-21.



Steve Mirick, 11-1-21.



Paul Kursewicz, 11-2-21.



Paul Kursewicz, 11-2-21.



Steve Mirick, 11-1-21.

Concord 2021 Nighthawk Migration

by Rebecca Suomala



One of the 1,504 Common Nighthawks tallied on Concord's peak night of August 24, 2021. The bright white throat shows this to be an adult male. Photo by Judd Natban.

Zeke Cornell continued to lead the volunteer Nighthawk Migration Watch in Concord, NH in the fall of 2021. As usual, it was on the roof of the Capitol Commons Garage on Storrs St., but with the added sounds of concrete removal as crews worked late to reseal surface joints. The watch began on August 16 and went through September 11 with several rain-outs, including two nights due to Hurricane Henri. The day after Henri was the biggest night of the season with 1,504 on August 24. The average high count occurs on



A classic nighthawk watch pose as Zeke Cornell (center) and Chris Martin (left) count nighthawks going by. Rob Woodward (right), who founded the Concord watch, visits as a watcher emeritus. Photo by Rebecca Suomala, 8-26-21.

August 24 (Figure 1) and peak counts for the season often occur on that date (Table 1).

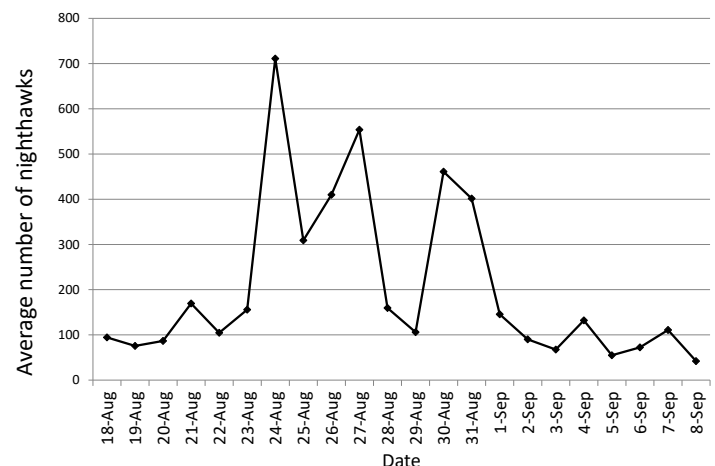
Nighthawk tallies are highest on light south or southwest winds and very low on north to northwest winds. A stretch of poor migration conditions from September 1-3 and rain on September 5 likely contributed to a remarkably high count of 523 on September 7. That is a very late date for a

Table 1. Peak counts of migrating Common Nighthawks in Concord, NH. Numbers in bold are the highest counts. Data collected by Zeke Cornell and Rob Woodward.

Year (# days watched)	Peak Day		Season Total
	Date	Number	
2011 (17)	8/30	262	1,059
2012 (19)	8/23	345	1,480
2013 (21)	8/25	966	3,623
2014 (19)	8/24	2,811	6,416
2015 (24)	8/30	1,465	4,516
2016 (24)	8/27	2,344	6,794
2017 (21)	8/30	1,050	4,158
2018 (19)	8/24	1,681	5,273
2019 (20)	8/27	806	3,930
2020 (23)	8/31	2,202	3,903
2021 (20)	8/24	1504	5,967

count that high and it is the highest that has been recorded after September 1 on the Concord watch since September watch dates first took place in 2009. The only other totals over 500 in 2021 were 550 on August 25 and 620 on August 26. The 2021 season total of 5,967 was the third highest.

Figure 1. Average number of migrating Common Nighthawks by date in Concord, NH (2011-2021). Early and late dates with fewer than five total observations were excluded. Data collected by Zeke Cornell and Rob Woodward.



Corrections

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

Summer 2016

- Inside cover, the Backyard Birder written by Kathryn Frieden, not Fieden.
- p. 4 Redhead listings, the sighting on 06/18 was only seen by S. Stoddard and A. Griffin. The detail for the sighting by P. & L. Charron was inadvertently omitted: 06/24 1 Lancaster WTP
- p. 34 In Figure 1 caption, last sentence should read “..on Figure 1b,” not “on the right hand map.”

Fall 2016

- p. 3 The sighting of 4 Brant on 09/15 by R. Quinn was actually 4 Canada Geese.
- p. 3 Blue-winged Teal sightings on 9/3 in Wentworths Location and on 9/4 in Errol were published before review was complete.
- p. 8 Vultures through Shorebirds
- Left column, sentence about American Golden-Plovers should read “one of five coastal sightings,” not “one of three.”
 - Right column, section regarding Red-necked Phalaropes should read: “One Red-necked Phalarope was reported from an inland location during the October rains and was diagnostically photographed. Three other phalaropes reported at the same time could not be conclusively separated between Red-necked and Red Phalaropes despite a photograph. Red-necked Phalarope usually migrate earlier in the fall, and Red Phalarope is probably just as likely this late in the season.”
- p. 24 The Dickcissel sighting at Exeter Station on 10/3 was published before review was complete.
- p. 39 Volunteers and Research
- In the second paragraph there are three spelling corrections: Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) not arngenatus; Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougalli*) not dougali; Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) not paradiesea.

Winter 2016-17

- p. 5 The Lesser Scaup on 12/13 was seen at Sewall's Falls not Sewells.

- p. 17 Left column, lower photo caption, it should be Stan Brallier not Brailer.
- p. 37 New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee Report, bottom of left column: Black-necked Stilt is #406 not #401 on the official state list; Swainson's Hawk is #407 not #402 on the official state list.

Spring 2017

- p. 4 American Wigeon x Mallard (hybrid) should be Wigeon sp. x Mallard (hybrid).
- p. 9 The Ruff was found by Steve Mirick on April 30, not April 29. (The report on April 29 was identified after the bird was confirmed on April 30.)
- p. 14 Yellow-bellied Woodpecker should be Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.
- p. 19 Warblers through Finches
- Left column, the Hooded Warbler was seen in Sullivan County, not the town of Sullivan.
 - Right column, the Dickcissel was seen on March 18, not May.
- p. 22 The American Tree Sparrow on 04/24 was at Thornton Gore Rd., Thornton.
- p. 24 The Baltimore Oriole on 04/28 was seen at the Contoocook River, not Contookcook.
- p. 30 Rough-legged Hawk photos were taken by Damon Beaudreau, not Boudreau.

Summer 2017

- p. 17 The Bank Swallow on 06/21 was seen by A. Kallenbach, not Kallenback.
- p. 20 Blackburnian Warblers on 07/02 were at Loverens Mill Cedar Swamp, Antrim.
- p. 21 Sparrows through Finches, first paragraph, the words “previously unknown” should be removed from the second sentence.
- p. 28 Red Crossbills on the Move, first sentence should say “Breeding Bird Survey,” not “Backyard Bird Survey.”

Fall 2017

- p. 9 Shorebirds, end of second paragraph. The Hudsonian Godwit in Rochester is the second, not first documented record away from the coast.
- p. 32 Peregrine Attack! was not by Robert Quinn. There is no author, just the photographs by Steve Mirick.

Winter 2017-18

- p. 37 The top left photo of the kingbird mobbing the crow was taken by Leo McKillop.

What to Watch for in Fall

August

- Post breeding dispersal can bring Great Egrets to inland sites anytime during the month.
- Shorebird migration is a highlight in August. Adults come through first – watch for them to be in molt with new feathers mixed in with the older, worn ones. Aging shorebirds helps with identification of species. Some of the first species to come through are Least Sandpipers and both yellowlegs.
- Male hummingbirds depart first, usually in early August; females and young linger into mid-September.
- Louisiana Waterthrush depart early and are gone by mid-August.
- Look for large flocks of Tree Swallows along the coast in Seabrook near Cross Beach Road and the Seabrook Back Dunes. Some roost at Plum Island and stream north in the morning. Tree Swallows are most numerous and Barn Swallows will linger into October, but Bank Swallows are few in number and Northern Rough-wingeds are the first to leave, departing by early August.
- Common Nighthawk migration peaks August 21- September 1. The best places to watch are along major rivers such as the Merrimack and the Connecticut, on warm evenings with a south wind.



Common Nighthawk by Len Medlock, 8-25-21, Exeter, NH.

September

- Shorebird migration continues with the young of the year coming through. They have fresh feathers and look stunning. The later-migrating species such as American Golden-Plover and Dunlin also begin to arrive.
- September is a great month for warbler migration as the “confusing fall warblers” can move through at any time. Odiorne Point State Park in Rye can be a great place for a fallout in poor weather.

- Broad-winged Hawk migration peaks in mid-September with the potential for days with over 1,000 birds. Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory in Peterborough has a regularly staffed fall hawkwatch, but you can watch from any high spot with a good view to the north.
- In late September, check any hummingbirds very carefully; this is the time when vagrants such as Rufous Hummingbird become more likely than Ruby-throated.

October

- Sparrow migration peaks. Good places to check are weedy fields or community gardens such as the Birch Street Community Gardens in Concord.
- Chipping Sparrows depart and American Tree Sparrows arrive from the north, with their rusty cap giving them the nickname of “Winter Chippy.”
- Waterfowl that winter on the ocean begin to arrive. Watch for inland fallouts of grebes, scoters, and other sea ducks anytime there is a rain storm.
- Most thrushes are gone by early October, but a few Hermit Thrush linger into November.

November

- Golden Eagles are rare in the state, but November is the month when they move through. The Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory is one of the best places to watch for one.
- Common Mergansers and Horned Grebes gather in large numbers on Lake Winnepesaukee.
- An offshore boat trip can bring sightings of alcids such as Razorbills and Common Murres, and Northern Fulmars as they leave their breeding grounds for the open ocean.
- If Cave Swallows are going to be seen in the state, November is the month. Watch for this rarity at the immediate coast.
- The first Snowy Owls arrive from the north but numbers vary each year and they can be absent in some years. The seacoast is the most reliable place to see them.



Northern Fulmars (light and dark morphs) by Leo McKillop, 11-22-20, Jeffreys Ledge, NH waters.

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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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More Fall 2021 Rarities



One of a flock of 19 Cattle Egrets in North Hampton, NH on 11-1-21. Photo by Steve Bennett. See the egrets in action in the Photo Gallery.



Yellow-breasted Chat by Steve Mirick, 9-28-21, Great Bay Farm, Greenland, NH.



Hooded Warbler by Susan Wrisley, 9-25-21, Odiorne Point SP, Rye, NH.



Wilson's Phalarope with Solitary Sandpipers by Donna Keller, 8-4-21, Keene, NH.



Red-headed Woodpecker adult and fledged young by Steve Mirick, 8-28-21, Bear Brook SP, Allenstown, NH.



White-eyed Vireo by Donna Ellis, 11-11-21, Hopkinton, NH.

Fall 2021 Rarities



Black-bellied Whistling-Duck by Gael Mazella, 8-8-21, Pickering Ponds, Rochester, NH.



An unusual adult Buff-breasted Sandpiper by Donna Keller, 8-9-21, Krif Rd., Keene, NH. Most state records are juveniles.



Roseate Spoonbill by Steve Bennett, 8-1-21, Gorham, NH (left).



LeConte's Sparrow by Christopher McPherson, 10-23-21, Woodmont Orchard, Hollis, NH (right).



Bullock's Oriole by Steve Mirick, 11-24-21, Dover, NH.



Lazuli Bunting by Greg Tillman, 9-26-21, Star Island, NH.