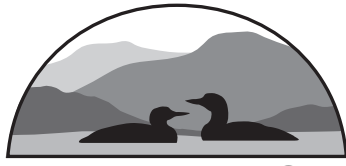


New Hampshire Bird Records





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This issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* with its color cover is sponsored by David Deifik in honor of his mother Sylvia Deifik and in memory of his father Max Deifik.



Max and Sylvia Deifik about 1964.

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Cover Photos: *Western Tanager* by Jason Lambert, 12-24-17, Dover, NH. *Dovekie* by Jason Lambert, 2-24-18, Seabrook, NH.

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Winter Field Notes

2017 – 2018

Compiled by Rebecca Suomala and Kathryn Frieden

Can You Find the Bird?



There really is a bird in this photo which demonstrates remarkable camouflage. See the end of the Field Notes for the species and the photographer.

Yellow-rumped Warbler Lingers in Errol

by Lori Charron

On December 15, 2017, the Christmas Bird Count in Errol had a starting temperature of 15 degrees below zero, but remarkably added four new species: Winter Wren, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, and most surprisingly, a Yellow-rumped Warbler! This bird was found coming to a suet feeder at the Errol Library by Chris Martin and his group. For the next few weeks, I stopped at the library



Lori Charron took this photo of the surprise bird of the Errol-Umbagog CBC on 12-24-17. The Yellow-rumped Warbler lingered at the Errol Library until 1-1-18.

frequently to check on it. As the weather was extremely cold, Steve Mirick suggested adding more suet feeders. This was a great idea, as it stopped spending so much energy on chasing the other birds away. It seemed to stay with one of the cardinals, as I always saw them together. On January 1, 2018, it was one of my first birds of the year. “Looking good,” I was happy to report. That night was cold and it became very windy for a few days. Actually, it seemed like it was windy for the next few months! That was the last time I saw it or the cardinal.

Ed. note: This was the first warbler species ever recorded on the Errol-Umbagog CBC over the 60 consecutive years since it began in 1958.

Fox Sparrow Banded and Recaptured 69 days later in Holderness

by Iain MacLeod

The Squam Lakes Natural Science Center in Holderness started a winter bird banding program back in 1979. Since then, Senior Naturalist Dave Erler has conducted annual programs for many hundreds of adults and children in which he demonstrates banding techniques. He allows participants to view the birds close up and (if they want) release the bird back to the wild after banding and measuring.

In those nearly forty years, Dave has banded more than 2,500 birds of 37 species. Dave has recaptured 1,436, all but two were birds he had banded here (75% of those were recaptured in the same winter). On January 6, Dave captured and banded a Fox Sparrow, a species he has caught several times, but “not every year.” On March 17, Dave captured the same Fox Sparrow, most likely indicating that it had spent more than two months at the Science Center.

Breeding Plumage American Goldfinch seen in Ashland in January

by Iain MacLeod

On January 22, I noticed a full breeding plumage male American Goldfinch mixed with 60+ “normal” winter plumage finches. It stuck out like the proverbial sore thumb. In an online article, David Sibley described the annual goldfinch molt cycle: “American Goldfinch follows this pattern. Beginning in September, and continuing for six to eight weeks, they molt all of their feathers, ending up with a completely new and pristine set of feathers (and drab colors) as they head into the winter. In the spring, as they grow new body feathers, the males especially transform into bright yellow breeding plumage, but the wing and tail feathers remain from the previous fall. As these wing feathers get older the pale buff edges fade to white and



Iain MacLeod took this photo of an American Goldfinch in its bright, summer plumage on 1-22-18 in Ashland.

disintegrate, so that by the end of the summer the wings look essentially all black. And in September another complete molt begins.”

So, did this male completely miss the fall molt? What would cause that? The bird was around my feeders for several days and I wondered how long it would be before it caught the local Sharp-shinned Hawk’s eye!

Ruby-crowned Kinglets Overwinter

by Diana Talbot and Rebecca Suomala

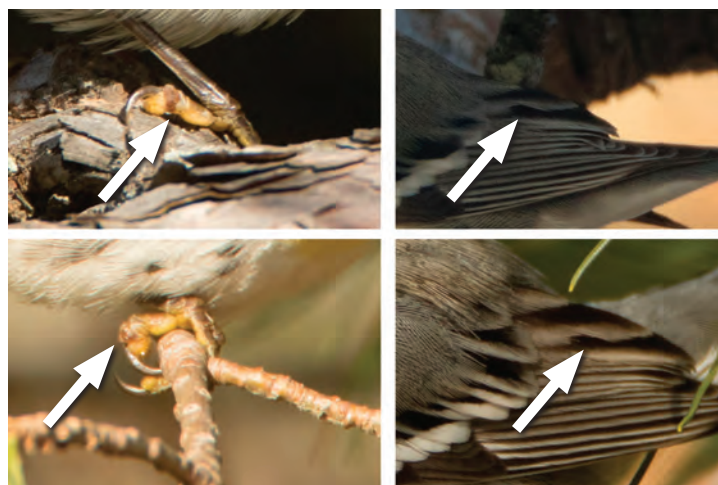
It is unusual to see Ruby-crowned Kinglets in winter, much less have one return to spend the winter at the same feeder two years in a row. This has happened in two separate locations over the past few years. In Winchester, Deborah Hill had a Ruby-crowned Kinglet spend the winter in her yard two years in a row, recording it for the second year on NH Audubon’s 2018 Backyard Winter Bird Survey, when she watched the bird for 2 ½ hours on February 10.

Many birders will also remember “Flitty.” For two years in a row, Bud and Helen Blanchard of Rye hosted “Flitty” at their feeders on West Road. They also hosted many birders, especially during the Superbowl of Birding when teams stopped to check the species off their list. Ruby-crowned Kinglets do not stay in one spot for long, thus the nickname. Sadly, the bird did not return in the winter of 2017-18. We can’t say for certain that it was the same individual each year, but it certainly seems likely!

Yellow-throated Warbler “Migrates” from Odiorne to Seabrook

by Kathryn Frieden

On November 23, 2017 Jason Lambert found a Yellow-throated Warbler at Odiorne Point State Park in Rye, NH – pictured on the cover. It was viewed and enjoyed by many birders over the next week and was even witnessed escaping an attack by a Sharp-shinned Hawk on November 25. It was last seen at Odiorne on November 30. Amazingly, two days later on December 2, Jane Mirick discovered a Yellow-throated Warbler at the Seabrook Wastewater Treatment Plant! When Steve Mirick posted their sighting to the NH Birds e-mail list, he mused, “While it is tempting to think this might be the same bird that has been in Rye (13.6 miles to the north), which seems to have disappeared a couple of days ago, it is just as likely, or even more likely, that this is a different bird.” But then Jason posted a compilation of close-up photos from both locations on Flickr that compared and analyzed unique abnormalities of the bird and proved that they **were** the same bird! The warbler stayed around Seabrook for several weeks and was last seen on December 19.



Jason Lambert put together these photos to compare the Yellow-throated Warbler seen in Rye in November with the one seen in Seabrook in December. The top photos are of the bird in Rye and the bottom photos are of the bird in Seabrook. On the left, there is a thickened brown lesion on the bird’s hind toe. On the right, there is a small area of feather damage. These confirm that it is the same bird.

Seabrook Wastewater Treatment Plant is in New Hampshire!

by Steve Mirick

Ed. Note: On 12-5-17, a post to the Massbird e-mail list about the Yellow-throated Warbler seen at Seabrook Wastewater Treatment Plant noted that the plant was in Massachusetts. This was definitively clarified by Steve Mirick’s post to the NH Birds e-mail list the next day, as follows.

Just to be clear, the Seabrook Wastewater Treatment plant is most definitely in New Hampshire. All of the access road and the buildings and fences are in New Hampshire. It would certainly be odd for a town to build a wastewater treatment plant in an adjacent state!

The state line is very close, however. It is not marked and is therefore open for discussion. The treatment plant is on an island in the Seabrook/Salisbury salt marsh. There are state line granite markers in the salt marsh, but it's difficult to use these to judge how it crosses near the treatment plant. It is believed that most of the Red Pine forest at the end of the access road and toward the back and left is in Massachusetts; however, any birds along the access road, including those birds in the Red Cedars (junipers) along the road and the short White Pines by the office buildings inside the fence, are in New Hampshire.

The most accurate map to use in a case like this would be a survey map performed by a licensed surveyor. Since I don't have one and don't know if there are any available, you can use either the town of Seabrook tax maps or a United States Geological Survey (USGS) map. I reviewed both. They generally agree, and both prove that the Google state line is *not* accurate. We often used USGS maps back when I started birding and yet these maps are now largely ignored. You can still find them by using Cal Topo: <https://caltopo.com/>. The old USGS map doesn't show the newer buildings of the treatment plant, so I overlaid a Google Aerial Map with a USGS topo map to show the difference, see Figure 1. The bold black dashed line shown by the USGS map is *correct*. The thin white dashed line shown by Google Maps is *wrong*. The big numbers 166 and 167 in the salt marsh are the granite state line markers.



Figure 1. New Hampshire-Massachusetts state line at the Seabrook WTP by Steve Mirick. The dashed black line is correct, the white dashed line used by Google Maps is incorrect.

Death of a Snowy Owl

by Alexandra de Steiguer

Ed. Note: Alexandra de Steiguer is the winter caretaker on Star Island, Isles of Shoals. On December 4, 2017, she posted on her public Facebook page that she had found a Snowy Owl that had died. A wing had become entangled in some monofilament fishing line that had been strung over the summer chicken coop. In the thread of comments following the post, which were at times angry, it became clear that the purpose of this fishing line was to protect the chickens from predators. Everyone involved learned something one way or another about protecting our environment and our wildlife. The following are excerpts from Alexandra's post.

I'll never forget the heartbreaking sight that I came across here on the island a few days ago of this magnificent being, hanging by its broad white wing, the single man-made thread wrapped tightly around the very tip. That's all it took. I want always to remember this. Each one of our small, seemingly insignificant actions affects the whole.

As I stood on the front wall this morning waiting for the sun's rise on the watery horizon and the full moon to set over the mainland, two Snowy Owls chased each other across the harbor. One broke away and flew toward me, and then directly over my head, looking down as if to ask "What is this thing, this human?" As the sun rose, I looked along the low-tide rocks of the harbor, at unnecessary plastic water bottles, jugs, a single flip-flop, a mesh bag, detritus of civilization washed up in the surf and I thought, "That's a good question. What are we?"

Before this happened, I wouldn't have known the possible ramification of using fishing line in this way, but now I do. Here is a link to a web site that discusses these issues:

https://www.nature.com/scitable/blog/saltwater-science/monofilament_in_the_ocean

As a final note, I want to say that Star Island continues to be a wonderful model of what can be achieved through conservation and environmental practices and each year the island continues to improve by leaps and bounds. We would be lucky to do so well on the mainland. It may be a bit gushy to say, but it is places like this and the community that surrounds it that gives me faith in humanity. This sad moment will pass, and Snowy Owls will continue to visit and to appreciate the bounty of this wild and rugged little island.

Mystery Goose in Sunapee

by Kathryn Frieden

Dylan Jackson stopped by some fields along Trask Brook Road in Sunapee on February 24, 2018 and discovered an unusual goose. This is the description he posted to the

NH Birds e-mail list on 2-24-18:

“It was noticeably smaller than a Canada Goose and probably the right size for a Snow Goose. It was mostly grayish in color, but paler on the belly. Its head looked like it was starting to turn white and its bill appeared pinkish at the base, but more yellowish at the tip.”



Dylan's mystery goose that he photographed 2-24-18 in Sunapee, NH.

After some research, he was able to identify it as a juvenile “blue” Snow Goose transitioning to adult plumage. Officially this bird is referred to as a dark morph of the Snow Goose. It was originally a separate species known as Blue Goose, but DNA evidence showed that Snow Goose and Blue Goose were a single species and they were combined in 1983. The largest numbers of Snow Geese in the state are seen during fall and spring migration. It is rare for one to linger into the winter and there are only a few February records according to *The Birds of New Hampshire* (Keith & Fox, 2013). It is even more unusual for the “Blue Goose” to be reported in New Hampshire. This makes it an exciting find for Dylan and in his words, “It’s also the first dark-morph Snow Goose I’ve ever seen!” However, the population of dark-morphs is increasing, so there is a good chance New Hampshire sightings will become more frequent.

“Cackling-ish” Goose

by Chris Sheridan

Chris Sheridan found a goose that she thought was a candidate for a Cackling Goose and described it in a NH Birds e-mail list post of 2-26-18. The photo shows “a smaller goose with a steep forehead, stubby neck, and long primary extension; and a somewhat larger goose that seemed intermediate between the smallest bird and the majority of the flock. The intermediate-sized goose did have a noticeably longer neck.”



This photo of a likely hybrid goose taken by Chris Sheridan in Nashua on 2-26-18 illustrates the difficulty of identifying a Cackling Goose.

These characteristics suggested a Cackling Goose. However, after investigating further, Chris came to the conclusion that this smaller goose is more likely a hybrid form. She explained in her follow-up post on 2-28-18 that, “its bill seems to have ‘ordinary’ Canada proportions, and it was somewhat larger than I’d expect for a Cackling.” Furthermore, “it appears that all varieties of Canadas and Cacklings are expanding their ranges, creating overlaps in range, and producing more and more hybrid and backcrossed individuals.” Here is the link to a useful online resource that she found on this topic, written by David Sibley: www.sibleyguides.com/2014/12/cackling-ish-geese/

Did You Find the Bird?



It's a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker! Photo by Steve Mirick, 2-3-18, Exeter, NH.

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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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