

New Hampshire BIRD RECORDS



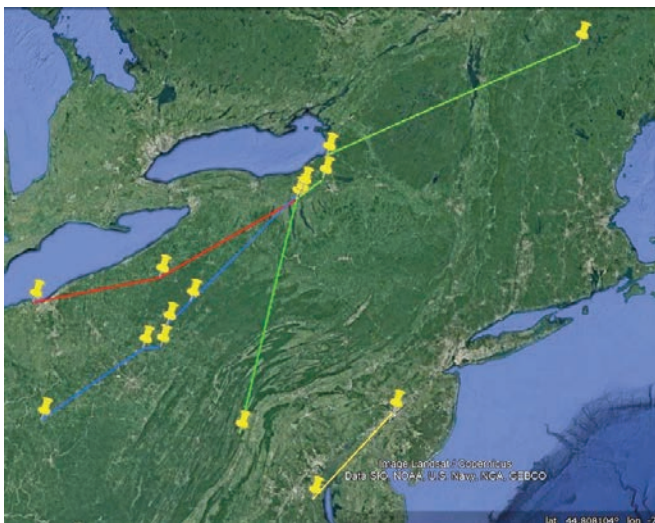
Article Highlights



A comparison of four male Rose-breasted Grosbeak bibs compiled by Mimi Wiggin from photos of birds at her feeder in May 2020. See the Field Notes for more on identifying individual grosbeaks by their bib.



Mississippi Kite with a tiger swallowtail in its talons. See the article by Steve Mirick on Mississippi Kites in New Hampshire. Photo by Debra Powers, 6-5-20, Durham, NH.



Motus is Underway in New England (see the article inside), Figure 1. Detections of an American Woodcock with a Motus nanotag put on in Ohio near the shore of Lake Erie. The lines show its spring and fall migrations in 2019 and 2020. Red line: 4-24 to 4-27, 2019; Yellow line: 11-9-2019; Blue line: 3-29 to 3-30, 2020; Green line: 10-26 to 11-9, 2020.

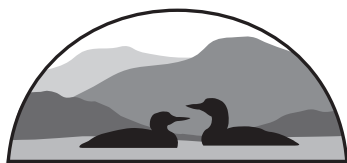
Photo Quiz



Can You Identify This Bird?

Photo by Will Broussard, 5-31-20.
Answer on page 38.

IN APPRECIATION



NH AUDUBON

Protecting our environment since 1914

NEW HAMPSHIRE BIRD RECORDS

VOLUME 39 NUMBER 2
SUMMER 2020

EDITOR

Rebecca Suomala
603-224-9909 X309
rsuomala@nhaudubon.org

TEXT EDITOR

Dan Hubbard

SEASON EDITORS

Eric Masterson, Spring
Greg Tillman, Summer
Ben Griffith, Fall
Jim Sparrell/Katherine Towler, Winter

LAYOUT

Dyanna Smith

PUBLICATION ASSISTANT

Kathryn Frieden

ASSISTANTS

Zeke Cornell, David Deifik,
Susan MacLeod, Gray Medynski,
Marie Nickerson, Betsy Robinson

FIELD NOTES

Diana Stephens

PHOTO QUIZ

Susan Wrisley

PHOTO EDITOR

Wendy Chatel

WEB MASTER

Kathy Barnes

WHERE TO BIRD

Phil Brown, Steve Lamonde

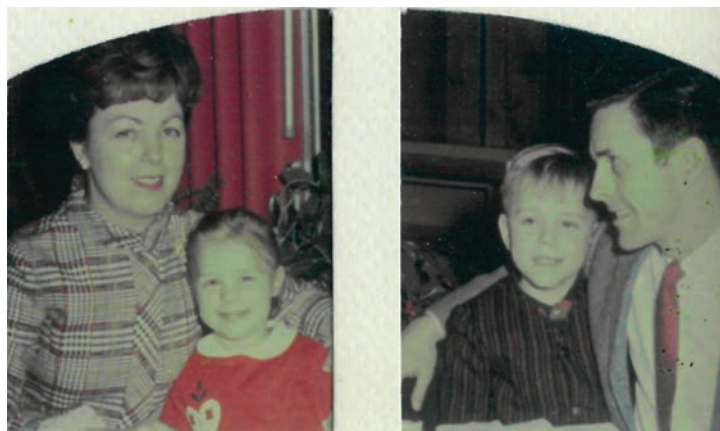
EDITORIAL TEAM

Phil Brown, Wendy Chatel, Hank Chary,
David Deifik, David Donsker, Ben Griffith,
Dan Hubbard, Pam Hunt, Iain MacLeod,
Eric Masterson, Robert A. Quinn,
Rebecca Suomala, Jon Woolf

www.nhbirdrecords.org

This issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* with its color cover is sponsored by Diana Stephens in loving appreciation of her mother and father, Dolores and Mallory Stephens, and her brother and sister-in-law, Mal and Claudia LaBrie Stephens.

From learning to love nature to hiking and cross country skiing to learning to appreciate the wildlife that surrounds us, I would like to honor my family with this issue.



In This Issue

Photo Quiz	Inside Front Cover
From the Editor	2
Promoting an Inclusive Birding Community	2
2020 Goodhue-Elkins Award – Betsy Janeway	3
Summer Season: June 1 through July 31, 2020 by <i>Greg Tillman</i>	4
Red-headed Woodpeckers Nesting at Bear Brook State Park by <i>Stephen R. Mirick</i>	19
Is it a Yellow-billed Loon? compiled by <i>Rebecca Suomala</i>	21
Common Loon 2020 Breeding Season Highlights by <i>John Cooley</i>	22
Nighthawk Breeding Summary 2020 by <i>Rebecca Suomala</i>	23
Mississippi Kites of Southeastern New Hampshire by <i>Stephen Mirick</i>	24
The Rockingham Recreational Trail, Newfields Section by <i>Kathryn Frieden</i>	26
Backyard Birder – Grape Jelly ... Not Just for Orioles Anymore by <i>Dan Hubbard</i>	28
Summer 2020 Field Notes, <i>Diana Stephens Editor</i>	29
Fish Crow Predation by <i>Scott Heron</i>	29
Identify Your Rose-breasted Grosbeak by <i>Rebecca Suomala</i>	29
Bluebird Helpers by <i>Diana Stephens and Rebecca Suomala</i>	30
Osprey Fledging at Great Bay NWR by <i>Steve Bennett</i>	30
A Virginia Rail in Epping? by <i>Greg Tillman</i>	31
The Pine Siskin and the Goldfinch	31
A Very Surprised Sanderling by <i>Jon Woolf</i>	31
Pandemic Backyard Birding by <i>Iain MacLeod</i>	32
Nesting Stories by <i>Robert A. Quinn</i>	33
A Birdbath with Karma by <i>Ruth Smith</i>	35
Motus is Underway in New England by <i>Carol Foss</i>	36
Rusty Blackbird Nest Photos	37
Answer to the Photo Quiz by <i>Susan Wrisley</i>	38
Photo Gallery – Nesting Least Terns	Inside Back Cover

Cover Photos: An American Oystercatcher and chick photographed at the Isles of Shoals by Shiloh Schulte on 6-25-20 is the first confirmed nesting of this species in the state. A Red-headed Woodpecker nest photographed by Susan Wrisley, 7-5-20, at Bear Brook State Park in Allenstown, NH, was the first of two – see the story inside.

Mississippi Kites of Southeastern New Hampshire

by Stephen Mirick



Adult Mississippi Kite feeding a fledged chick in 2008, the first year nesting was documented in New Hampshire. Photo by Jason Lambert.

This article first appeared in the February 2020 issue of Bird Observer (Vol. 48, #1) and is reprinted with permission. It was updated by the author in January 2021 for New Hampshire Bird Records.

The small town of Newmarket, New Hampshire, which lies about 14 miles north of the Massachusetts state line, became famous in the birding world in 1998 with a visit from a Little Egret that stayed for several weeks and entertained hundreds of birders from all across the country. Newmarket is also famous as the former residence of many noteworthy birders including Ben Griffith, Lauren Kras, Kurk Dorsey, Christopher Ciccone, and yours truly. But starting in the early 2000s, the town has become famous for new residents—Mississippi Kites.

The story of Mississippi Kites nesting in New Hampshire is a remarkable one that dates back to 2004. At that time, there had been only two single observer sightings ever for the state and both of those came from the 1980s (Keith & Fox 2013). There were no unambiguous state records, so the species was on the hypothetical list according to the NH Rare Birds Committee.

The story began on May 30, 2004, when Robert Roy was fishing from a boat along the Lamprey River in Newmarket, NH. He reported that he saw a Mississippi Kite land in a tree 100 feet away, where it broke off a branch and carried it away as if building a nest. The record, with good descriptive details, was belatedly submitted to the NH Rare Bird Committee; however, the committee could not in good conscience accept this record due to the implausible nature of the sighting. After all, how could it be possible that a Mississippi Kite would be building a nest in New Hampshire?

Unfortunately, Roy's record was disregarded and I had just moved out of Newmarket, so there were no birders ambitious enough to try to relocate or confirm this report in subsequent years. The story would grow stale until the spring of 2008.

On June 3, 2008, Darin Franceschini reported in his first post to the NHBirds email list that he had seen a pair of Mississippi Kites along the Lamprey River in Newmarket on May 28, 2008 (Donsker 2008). He described them as having "an unmistakable white band across the secondaries and the male had bright fiery red eyes." Once again, the birding world seemed to turn its collective head and deny the implausible. How could anyone see the fiery red eyes of a Mississippi Kite in New Hampshire? Absurd!

Finally, the "cork came out of the bottle" and the story unfolded to the birding world, when birder Ben Griffith, along with Charlie Wright, were driving through Newmarket on June 14, 2008 and spotted two Mississippi Kites flying across South Main Street. Thanks to a few phone calls and the Internet, the entire New England birding community learned of their presence and scores of birders swarmed to Newmarket and saw the birds that day.

The story became more and more amazing almost by the hour. That first day, June 14, the kites were observed gracefully feeding together all afternoon and coming down to roost and spend the night in the same area. The next day they were found again and were seen and photographed copulating. By the third day, they were seen copulating again and also building a nest. On or shortly after June 17, it was thought that an egg or eggs had been laid and incubation had started. On July 18, hatching was confirmed when a single chick was seen being fed (Ben Griffith, pers. comm.). The chick fledged in August.

With an increase of eyes focused on Newmarket, incredibly, a second nest was discovered in August of 2008, and a minimum of five adult or sub-adult Mississippi Kites were confirmed—all in Newmarket. Not only that, both nests successfully fledged a single chick.

The successful nesting of two pair of kites in 2008, combined with the number of adult and sub-adult birds in the area that year, all support the 2004 sighting and suggest that kites had been nesting, or at least attempting to nest, in Newmarket since 2004 or earlier.

Between 2008 and 2016, the kites returned to nest each year and the town of Newmarket continued to be the nexus of all kite activity. There were only a few scattered reports from individual kites in nearby towns. The primary areas of kite nesting activity were along South Main Street and Gonet Drive, less than two miles apart and near the center of

town. Each year, no more than one or two nests were found. Birders, however, spent little time in searching for additional territories or nests, which can be surprisingly difficult to find.

The 2017 nesting season was disastrous. Only a single nest was located in Newmarket. The male of that pair was struck by a car and after a long period of rehabilitation, the bird died when it flew into the wall of a flight enclosure. The female tried to raise a single chick by herself; however, the partly-grown chick fell out of the nest and the female would not feed the baby on the ground. The chick ultimately succumbed despite my best efforts, with help from others, in placing the baby up in a makeshift nest in a nearby tree. See the Summer 2017 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*, Vol. 36 No.2 for the photo-illustrated story of the attempted rescue and the trials of this kite family.



Mississippi Kite chick during the attempted rescue and relocation to a makeshift nest in a basket. Photo by Steve Bennett, 7-26-17, Newmarket, NH.

Despite this nest failure and the death of an adult, encouraging reports were received at the end of the 2017 season of kite activity from the nearby towns of Durham and Stratham. In 2018, three nests were found with one each in Newmarket, Durham, and Stratham. The new sites in Durham and Stratham were within five miles of downtown Newmarket. All three nests successfully fledged a single chick—the first time that three chicks were confirmed to have ever fledged in the state. During the summer of 2019, New Hampshire again had three known nest territories in the same locations; however, only two of the nests were successful and two chicks fledged.

During the summer of 2020, a fourth nesting territory in the town of Greenland was discovered. This nest, like others, was in a front yard in a residential neighborhood. The nest was placed high in a Shagbark Hickory and successfully fledged a single chick. Two other nests succeeded in Durham and Stratham during 2020, but the nest in Newmarket failed. A total of three young were fledged for the summer.

Below are a few observations I've made over the 13

years since the kites were first confirmed as nesting in New Hampshire in 2008.

Spring Arrival Dates: Arrival dates at nest territories are generally in mid-May. My earliest recorded date is May 13; however, there are eBird reports from as early as May 9.

Nest Location: 100% of the nests in New Hampshire have been in residential subdivisions with mature trees. Nests almost always have been in the front, side, or rear yards of homes. This has been convenient for monitoring the nests, most of which have been visible from the road or sidewalk.

Nest Tree: The type of tree that the kites chose for their nests has varied considerably and nests have been found in a variety of species including Red Oak, White Pine, Sugar Maple, and Shagbark Hickory. The nest is always relatively high in the tree, under the canopy, and often difficult to see. The small scraggly nest of twigs is sometimes located in forks of outer branches and vulnerable to high wind disturbance.

Nesting Behavior: Unlike Mississippi Kites in other parts of the country, these kites are tolerant of human activity. The birds are oblivious to anything going on below them, including dogs barking, lawn mowers blasting, kids screaming, or hordes of birders watching them from the street nearby. Some homeowners have been tolerant as well, with youngsters setting up lemonade stands for visiting birders. Photographers, however, have proven to be invasive of the privacy of some homeowners and nest locations, for the most part, have been kept secret.

Site Fidelity: Site fidelity is strong, as would be expected, but the birds don't always use the same nest tree. Sometimes they take over the old nest or build a new nest in the same tree, or they may choose a nest tree up to a hundred yards away or even at a different street address.

Number of Young: Only a single chick per nest has ever been confirmed for all of the nests I have observed or heard about. No one has ever seen a second head sticking up out of a nest. This suggests that the kites in New Hampshire lay only a single egg. This is noteworthy because in their usual breeding range, the normal clutch size is almost always two eggs (sometimes one and rarely three [Parker 1999]). Is this a modification in their egg-laying behavior to accommodate a shorter breeding season this far north, or could it reflect a scarcity of food when the kites arrive in May and a subsequent lack of resources that the female can put into egg laying?

Food: Food items I've seen brought to the nests have been mostly dragonflies, cicadas, and indiscernible flying insects. One memorable observation was of one of the kites eating a bat that it dropped, then swooped down to try to catch

(unsuccessfully) before it hit the ground at my feet. In 2019, I saw an adult feed a chick a fledged juvenile Eastern Bluebird, which was the first time I saw a kite eating a bird.

Post-Fledgling Period: Adult care and feeding of the single chick continues well after fledging. The family group moves around the neighborhood, but generally stays in the vicinity



Mississippi Kite fledgling by Stephen Mirick.

of the nest. Parental care is a long process that continues right up into early September, or roughly one month after fledging. The overall reproductive process appears to take about three months: one month of incubation, one month until fledging, and one final month until independence.

Nest Success: Nest success seems good

considering the northerly latitude for this southern species. Accurate data has not been carefully monitored over the years; however, I think that approximately 17 young kites have successfully fledged and I know of only five nest failures (eBird). Two of the failures seem to have occurred during incubation and three occurred with young in the nest. Other than the young bird that fell out of the nest in 2017, the reasons for the nest failures have been difficult to identify. I suspect at least one or more additional failures have been the result of strong storm activity with young or eggs falling from the nest; however, avian and mammalian predators are always a possibility.

Fall Departure Dates: Successful adult Mississippi Kites care for their young into the first or second week of September and then all birds seem to disappear at once. The latest reported observation I can find for territorial birds is of a family group of three on September 11, 2016 (eBird).

References

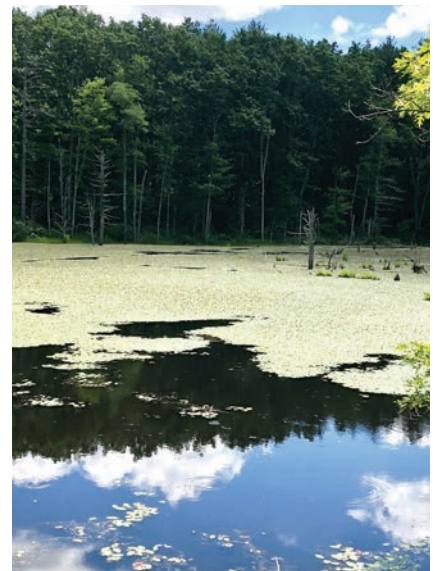
- Donsker, D. 2008. Mississippi Kites in New Hampshire. *New Hampshire Bird Records*. 27(2): 34–39.
eBird.<http://www.ebird.org>. Accessed: January 2021.
Keith, A. and R. Fox. 2013. *The Birds of New Hampshire*. The Nuttall Ornithological Club, Cambridge, MA.
Parker, J. 1999. Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), version 2.0. In *The Birds of North America* (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bna.402>

The Rockingham Recreational Trail, Newfields Section

Hiking, Biking, and Birding in Southeast New Hampshire

by Kathryn Frieden

The Rockingham Recreational Trail stretches 28 miles from Newfields to Manchester and is great for birding as well as a resource for community recreation. Although one often encounters runners, bikers, and dog-walkers on weekends, there are many times when we have not met a single soul while birding early in the morning and on weekdays. The trail surface is packed dirt with a few graveled areas and of course occasional roots and rocks that need to be avoided. Most of the trail is wooded but there are also lakes, ponds, marshes, and fields that provide a good variety of birding habitats. Although some energetic adventurers could bike the entire length of the trail and back in one day, birding is probably more enjoyable and productive when the trail is divided into more manageable segments.



One of the wetlands on the Rockingham Recreational Trail in Newfields, by Roger Frieden.

Travel notes:

1. Always bring water. You never know when you might inhale a black fly (this is New Hampshire).
2. If you are biking, use a hybrid or mountain bike. Some parts would be difficult on road bikes.
3. Be aware of snowmobiles in the winter which are allowed in some areas (it's not like you could miss them), but no other motorized vehicles are permitted.
4. There are a few short but dark underpass tunnels. Always walk your bike through or around them.
5. Stop and look both ways before you cross a road (but you already knew that).

New Hampshire Bird Records Endowment Fund

Donations to this fund provide long-term support for all facets of *New Hampshire Bird Records*, from the publication to the collection, organization, quality control, dissemination, preservation, and storage of New Hampshire bird sighting information.

Leave a Legacy for the Birds with a bequest in your will to the Fund:

I give and bequeath ____ % of my residuary estate
(or a specific sum of \$ ____) to the New Hampshire
Bird Records Endowment Fund, a permanently
restricted fund of the Audubon Society of New
Hampshire, 84 Silk Farm Rd., Concord, NH.

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

NHBR Subscription Form

I would like to subscribe to *NH Bird Records*.

☐ NHA Member \$25.00 ☐ Non-member \$35.00

All renewals take place annually.

*Mid-year subscribers will receive all issues published in the
subscription year.*

☐ I would like to join NH Audubon and receive
NH Bird Records at the member price.

☐ Family/\$59 ☐ Individual/\$45 ☐ Senior/\$29

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

City, State: _____

Zip: _____

Payment is by:

☐ check enclosed— payable to NH Audubon

☐ MC ☐ VISA

Card #: _____

Exp. Date: _____

Return to: Membership Department, NH Audubon,
84 Silk Farm Rd., Concord, NH 03301

Subscribe online at www.nhbirdrecords.org

Rare Bird ALERT

 **224-9909**

Available twenty-four hours a day!

Also online at www.nhaudubon.org

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

New Hampshire Bird Records is published quarterly by NH Audubon's Conservation Department. Thank you to the many observers who submit their sightings to NH eBird (www.ebird.org/nh), the source of data for this publication. The published sightings typically represent the highlights of the season. Not all species reported will appear in the issue. All records are subject to review by the NH Rare Birds Committee and publication here does not imply future acceptance by the RBC.

New Hampshire Bird Records © NH Audubon June, 2021

Published by NH Audubon's Conservation Department



Printed on Recycled Paper