

New Hampshire

BIRD RECORDS



SPRING 2023

Vol. 42, No. 1

Storm-blown Birds

Storms and easterly winds on the last day of April and the first few days of May caused a massive regional fallout of phalaropes and a few other species shown here. See the Spring 2023 write-up for more.



Red Phalarope by Steve Mirick, 5-5-2023, Rye Harbor SP, Rye, NH.



Red Phalarope by Jim Sparrell, 5-4-2023, Rye Harbor SP, NH.



Caspian Terns by Jim Sparrell, 4-30-2023, Rye Harbor, NH.



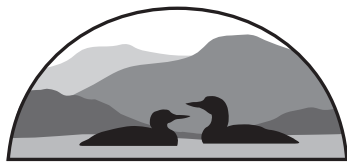
Red-necked Phalarope by Jim Sparrell, 5-1-2023, Eel Pond, Rye, NH.



Red Phalaropes by Leo McKillop, 5-1-2023, Eel Pond, Rye, NH.



Leach's Storm Petrel by Steve Mirick, 5-1-2023, Hampton Harbor, NH



NH AUDUBON

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NEW HAMPSHIRE BIRD RECORDS

VOLUME 42 NUMBER 1
SPRING 2023

www.nhbirdrecords.org

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IN MEMORY OF

Paul Miliotis

This issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* with its color cover is sponsored by friends of Paul Miliotis in his memory. He was a great birder and teacher who loved to observe the natural world and tried to do what he could to protect it. Photo by Doug Hitchcox.

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Cover Photo: Say's Phoebe by Darryl Parker, 5-15-2023, Canterbury Shaker Village, Canterbury, NH.

From the Editor

SPRING 2023

by Rebecca Suomala

Welcome NH Audubon Members!

New Hampshire Bird Records is now available in digital format free to all NH Audubon members! All members receive an email with a link to each issue. Printed copies are also available to members for an additional fee that covers printing and postage. Details are on the *New Hampshire Bird Records* website: nhbirdrecords.org, under "Support NH Bird Records."

Remembering Paul Miliotis

by Holly Bauer

Paul Miliotis was one of the first people who befriended me when I moved to the seacoast. We ran into each other frequently and I always enjoyed our chats as we watched shorebirds feeding on wrack or looked for migrants at "Chat Cove" at Odiorne Point State Park. After knowing him for about a year, I was re-reading Pete Dunne's *The Feather Quest* and much to my amazement right there in Chapter 2 was Paul Miliotis! True to his self-effacing personality, Paul had never told me the story, but when I asked him about it, I heard his wonderful account about how he and a Vermont birder identified the first Ross's Gull in North America south of its arctic territory. He alerted the birding world and called in sick the next day so he could relocate the bird; he was therefore on hand to help Roger Tory Peterson find his 668th North American life bird (see *The Feather Quest* by Pete Dunne). The bird and Paul made the news that night – making it questionable to his employers just how sick Paul had actually been that day.

Paul could have told many other stories about his adventures, after all, he led birding trips around the world, including a trip with Fred Sibley and his young son David. But Paul's concerns, and therefore his stories, were never about himself, they were always about the birds, the insects, the environment, and celebrating the people who made a positive impact on the world. MaryMargaret Halsey said of Paul "He was a great birder and teacher, a walking encyclopedia on plants, birds, insects, and more. One of the little lessons I learned from Paul was to wear my binoculars high on my chest so as to minimize the amount of



The picture of Paul Miliotis was taken by Chris McPherson on June 10, 2017 at the Karner Blue Butterfly Easement, Concord NH. In the picture there is a Karner Blue Butterfly on Paul's right hand (hard to see). According to Chris, the butterfly flew in and landed on Paul and hung out for a few minutes, so the outing was birds and butterflies!

movement required to get them to my eyes, thus trying not to disturb the bird."

Like MaryMargaret, I learned so much from Paul, from where to find whip-poor-wills and Aphrodite Fritillaries, to how much you can see by just sitting quietly and observing. But most of all Paul showed me, by his example, the importance of observing the world, trying to learn some of its secrets, and doing what you can to preserve and protect it.

A special thank you to the people who sponsored this issue in memory of Paul Miliotis:

Rich Aaronian
Holly Bauer
David Donsker
MaryMargaret Halsey
Dan Hubbard
Chris McPherson
Steve and Jane Mirick
Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Mooney
Rebecca Suomala
Jim Sparrell and Katherine Towler

A New Photo Quiz

by Greg Tillman

Not long ago, I was leading a spring birding trip at Burley Farm in Epping and I pointed out a Spotted Sandpiper in the bog a little ways away. One participant asked me how I knew, so I started talking about field marks. Then an Osprey flew to its nest and we both moved on (as birders do).

That conversation kept bothering me. As I thought about it, I began to feel that starting the conversation with field marks had been a disservice to that beginning birder. The field marks I talked about were all fine, but I didn't really know it was a Spotted Sandpiper because of those field marks. I had already used the shape of the bird to narrow it down to a small handful of sandpipers before I even started in on field marks. Of that handful, only two sandpipers are common in Epping from year to year.

So, when I described the white wing stripe, stiff wingbeats and the barred tail as field marks, I was really just differentiating between Spotted and a possible Solitary Sandpiper. But that beginning birder missed my mental preamble. What I'm afraid she pictured was the impossible task of using those field marks to choose from all of the 25 or so possible spring sandpipers in New Hampshire.

Size and shape are so important to identification, but they can get short shrift when we describe birds, if only because it can be hard to describe the shape of a bird. Shape is vague and lacks concreteness; field marks are much easier to point to and of course, birds are color! Why talk about shape when a field guide has pages and pages of beautiful bright bird pictures and descriptions of wingbars and tail spots and bright yellows and reds!

However, size and shape are fundamental. Indeed, they are really the first thing we see and sometimes the only thing we see. If you page through a field guide with shape in mind, you see how important it can be to identification. Winter loons, winter grebes, ducks like pintail and shoveler, and herons of various sizes all have clear and useful differences in size and shape. Sandpiper identification can barely be discussed without looking at the lengths of legs and curves of bills. Identification of owls and hawks and wrens and swallows all depend, at least in part, on size and shape. Even warbler descriptions are full of phrases like "short tail," "long undertail coverts," and "slightly curved bill."

So, that's our backdrop. With all that in mind, *New Hampshire Bird Records* will use our next few "Photo" Quizzes to review some of our feathered friends' non-feathery field marks. We'll present challenges that ask you to look at overall size and shape of birds, or the shape of beaks, or heads, or tails. If we can, we'll work in some focus on habitat, season, and location, all of which can be helpful identification clues. Maybe, we can even have some discussions about how behavior can help with identification (although behavior is much easier to see in the field than in a photograph).

For the quizzes, we'll be turning photos of birds into silhouettes, which is admittedly imperfect and not something you'll really encounter much in the field, but it's a way to take color out of the discussion a little bit. For beginners, we hope this might help you understand how shape, along with habitat and behavior, can be used as a key part of identification. For experts, maybe this will suggest new ways to talk about identification challenges when you find yourself leading a bird trip and, for everyone, we hope it's also a little bit of fun!

Photo Quiz

Our first photo is a bird that can be found throughout New Hampshire and we hope it's a bit of a warm-up for you. Photographed in February in Rockingham County by Greg Tillman.

See the Answer on page 35.



SPRING SEASON

March 1, 2023 through May 31, 2023

by Eric Masterson



A nor'easter on March 14 brought parts of the state to a halt until roads were cleared of snow. The Monadnock region was hit especially hard with four feet reported from some towns. A few weeks later, the state was being bathed in sun with temperatures peaking at 90 degrees in Concord on April 14, facilitating a mini-influx of swallows on April 7 and the early arrivals of traditional April migrants like Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray

Gnatcatcher, Louisiana Waterthrush, Palm Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Eastern Towhee. A period of unsettled weather toward the end of the month, especially from April 30 into May 1, brought a fallout of phalaropes, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Caspian Terns, and Leach's Storm-Petrels along the coast. The cold weather returned briefly on the morning of May 18, with the mercury in Concord dipping to 25 degrees, a killing frost for this year's flowers on many apple and peach trees and the mulberry in my backyard, which was barren this year thanks to the cold snap.

The season total of 291 species was just one short of last spring's record, but the long-term trend is clear. Year



Say's Phoebe by Mark Suomala, 5-15-2023, Canterbury, NH

on year, more species are being recorded in New Hampshire, both in spring and throughout the year. Either effort is increasing, bird diversity is increasing, or a bit of both. I think it's mostly the former (more birders and more cameras), with a little bit of the latter (increased frequency of

climate-displaced birds). Highlights this spring included second state records of **Black-necked Stilt** and **Say's Phoebe**, a fourth state record of **Chuck-will's-widow**, a first state record of **Baird's Sandpiper** in spring, and a terrific May flight of **Blue Jays**.

Waterfowl

A "**Blue**" **Snow Goose** flew north over Seabrook on May 11 (Steve Mirick), a very late sighting of this normally early spring migrant. The **Greater White-fronted Goose** seen in Monroe from April 30 to May 14 was also late, although North Country geese traditionally linger long after they have departed southern New Hampshire. Another Greater White-fronted Goose was found in Walpole (David Baum) where a bird remained from March 25 to April 3. The individual seen at International Drive in Portsmouth on March 23 (Rich Tremblay) was perhaps the same bird sighted at this location earlier in the winter. Lena Moser was lucky to spot 18 **Brant** flying north over Hebron on May 16, the only inland record of the species this season.



Northern Shoveler by Kyle Wilmarth, 3-7-2023, Salem, NH.

Tom Gumbart photographed a remarkable flock of 10 **Northern Shovelers** on the Merrimack River in Franklin on March 4 and Katrina Fenton recorded two more on May 12, a noteworthy record for Lake Umbagog. With the exception of two birds seen on Upper Suncook Lake in Barnstead (April 12, David Nelson), all other reports of Northern Shoveler came from the Connecticut River Valley or southeastern New Hampshire. Steve Mirick photographed a **Gadwall** flying north over Jeffreys Ledge on April 14, a rare offshore record. A **Eurasian Wigeon** found by Jeff and Gretchen Miner at Horseshoe Pond on April 15 was the first record for Concord and New Hampshire's Merrimack Valley. Another drake was seen throughout March on Great Bay where Patience Chamberlin also recorded a season high count of 200 **American Wigeon** on March 5.

A drake **Common Teal** (the European race of Green-



Canvasback by Susan Wrisley, 3-24-2023, Lake Massabesic, NH.



Ruddy Duck by Ken Klapper, 5-11-2023, Moultonborough, NH.

winged Teal) was seen at Meadow Pond on March 7 (Holly Bauer), presumably the same bird that was reported from this location in February. Another Common Teal was found on March 26 at Airport Road in Swanzey, where it remained until April 1 (Wendy Ward). I tallied 18 **Northern Pintails** at Wetherby Road marshes in Charlestown on March 24, a noteworthy total of this scarce duck. More remarkable was the drake **Redhead** in the same location, an odd choice of habitat for a diving duck that normally prefers open water. Additional Redhead were present on Great Bay throughout March, with a high count of five birds on March 5 (Becky Suomala and Zeke Cornell). Single **Canvasbacks** were recorded from Lake Massabesic on March 24 (Susan Wrisley) and World End Pond in Salem March 8 -13 (Kyle Wilmarth). **Ring-necked Duck** congregated in remarkable numbers at Elm Brook Park in Hopkinton, with a high count of 320 birds on April 10 (Daniel Calder). These numbers are more expected from World End Pond in Salem, which hosted a maximum of 150 birds on March 8.

The female **King Eider**, first reported in this publication in the spring of 2022 (see the Field Notes in this issue), continued offshore from Rye throughout the season. Surf Scoters were on the move on April 22, with birds reported inland across northern Massachusetts and two each at Hinsdale (Wendy Ward, Donna Keller) and Goose Pond in Keene (Ryan Crandall). There were scattered reports of **White-winged Scoter** throughout interior New Hampshire, especially in May, including 10 birds on Lake Umbagog on May 19 (Katrina Fenton). Donna Keller and Wendy Ward photographed a **Black Scoter** on the Connecticut River in Hinsdale on May 24.

It was an excellent spring for **Ruddy Duck** with sightings at nine separate locations. Single birds were reported from Hinsdale on March 24 (Alex Lamoreaux, Lauren DiBiccari), Exeter on April 10 (Dan Prima), Haverhill on April 11 (Wayne Scott), Conway on May 6 (John Keator), Seabrook on May 7 (Jim Sparrell, Katie Towler), Center Harbor on May 11 (Ken Klapper), Umbagog on May 16

Rainy days in spring are a good time to look for migrating waterbirds that have been brought down on inland lakes and ponds. Although spring 2023 was fairly quiet for these inland fallouts, two rain events brought grebes and a few other highlights.

April 23

Horseshoe Pond, Concord (Joe Ripley)

1 Caspian Tern

Silver Lake, Madison (Logan Anderson)

3 Red-necked Grebes

1 Horned Grebe

Weirs Beach, Laconia (Iain MacLeod)

4 Red-necked Grebes

Hinsdale Setbacks, (Hector Galbraith)

14 Bonaparte's Gulls

Spofford Lake (Eric Masterson)

16 Bonaparte's Gulls

April 27

Lake Sunapee (Dylan Jackson)

16 Long-tailed Ducks

13 Red-necked Grebes

1 Common Tern

Lake Waukegan, Meredith (Iain MacLeod)

32 Bufflehead

8 Red-necked Grebes

3 Horned Grebes

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(Katrina Fenton), and five each at Portsmouth Country Club on March 22 (Alex Lamoreaux, Lauren DiBiccari) and Cobbetts Pond in Windham on April 1 (Kyle Wilmarth). Conversely, it was a fairly quiet spring for migrant grebes in New Hampshire's interior, with 13 **Red-necked Grebes** on Lake Sunapee on April 27 (Dylan Jackson) being the sole highlight.

Nightjars, Gallinule, and Coot

As I was leading a birding trip on Star Island, a **Chuck-will's-widow** flew north along the outer shore at 10:00 am on May 13, presumably just arrived off the ocean. This represents the fourth record for New Hampshire and the second for Star Island. The first record was in June of 2013 in Newton, NH. Meanwhile Dave Kolesar heard a record-early **Eastern Whip-poor-will** in Lyndeborough on April 14.



Common Gallinule by Kathleen Wheeler, 5-22-2023, Thompson WS, Sandwich, NH.

Lainie Epstein found a **Common Gallinule** on May 22 at NH Audubon's Thompson Wildlife Sanctuary in Sandwich, a first for this excellent birding location. Another was seen at Pickering Ponds in Rochester on May 9 (Alan Murray). **American Coot** was barely more numerous, with individuals seen at Merrymeeting Marsh in Alton on March 26 (Steve Lauermann), Parsons Creek Saltmarsh in Rye on April 27 (Holly Bauer), and World End Pond in Salem from March 22 to April 21 (Kyle Wilmarth).

Shorebirds

A **Black-necked Stilt** found by Steve Mirick in Meadow Pond, Hampton on May 18 was only the second state record. This species, which breeds on the Atlantic coast north to Delaware, has become a more frequent spring overshoot to the northeast in recent years, with multiple birds this spring in Maine and Massachusetts. In an interesting coincidence, Black-winged Stilt, a close cousin to our Black-necked Stilt but restricted to the Palearctic and Africa, also staged a major northward flight this spring, with multiple flocks in Ireland and the United Kingdom and several individuals making it as far as Iceland.



Black-necked Stilt by Steve Mirick, 5-18-2023, Meadow Pond, Hampton, NH.

Sightings of **American Oystercatcher** continue to increase in New Hampshire. The species is a daily occurrence on Star Island from spring through fall, courtesy of several breeding pairs located on nearby islands, but until recent years, it was still fairly rare to see one from the mainland. This spring individuals were sighted from the coast on May 3 (Steve Mirick) and May 5 (Roger & Kathryn Frieden), and May 27 (Brett Hillman).

There were scattered reports of **Semipalmated Plover** from interior New Hampshire during the latter half of May, including six at Copps Pond Wildlife Management Area on May 22 (George & Andrea Robbins). Ken Klapper found a **Baird's Sandpiper** molting into breeding plumage at the Ambrose Gravel Pit in Sandwich on May 5. Baird's Sandpiper is almost exclusively encountered in New England as a scarce fall migrant in juvenile plumage. The majority of adults migrate north and south through the interior of the continent. This is especially true in spring, with Ken's bird being the first seasonal record in eBird from northern New England. With apologies to Black-necked Stilt and Say's Phoebe, the Baird's Sandpiper gets my vote for the rarity of the season.

Red Knot was seen at Odiorne Point SP in Rye on May 19 (Steve Mirick), Hampton Harbor on May 20-21 (Dan Prima) and Seavey Island at the Isles of Shoals on May 29 (two birds reported by the Tern Conservation Program biologists). High counts were reported of 228 **Purple Sandpipers** at Seal Rocks in Rye on May 14 (Cameron Johnson) and 626 **Least Sandpipers** at Meadow Pond in Hampton on May 17 (Holly Bauer).

Lori Charron found a nice collection of shorebirds at the Panorama Golf Course in Coos County on May 16, including a rare spring report from the North Country of **Pectoral Sandpiper**. The only other Pectoral records came from the Rochester Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP) on



Just some of the 228 Purple Sandpipers that Cameron Johnson documented on 05-14-2023, sitting on one rock in Rye, NH.

May 24 (Dan Hubbard) and Hampton Saltmarsh on May 11 (Holly Bauer). Rebecca Lovejoy found 13 **Semipalmated Sandpipers** in the Monroe Sandhill Crane field on May 12, with the only other inland report of a single bird on May 27 from the Merrimack River Trail in Bedford (Cathy Wennerth). Scattered records from the coast included 18 birds reported from Hampton Saltmarsh on May 15 (Dan Prima).

A series of low-pressure systems and easterly winds caused a massive regional fallout of **Red Phalaropes** and to a lesser extent **Red-necked Phalaropes** during late April and early May. The phenomenon was most pronounced on Cape Cod in Massachusetts, where thousands of Red Phalaropes were documented close to shore, but elsewhere Red Phalarope was the undercard, with Red-necked Phalaropes more numerous farther north along the Maine coast. Recorded gusts of 48 knots at the Isles of Shoals drove several individuals of both species to New Hampshire's coast. On May 1, there was at least one Red-necked Phalarope at Hampton Harbor (Holly Bauer, et al.), Alan Murray found a Red Phalarope at the Rochester WTP, and at Eel Pond in Rye there were three Red Phalaropes and two Red-necked Phalaropes found by Leo McKillop and Susan Wrisley. At Rye Harbor State Park, five Red Phalaropes and three Red-necked Phalaropes were found on May 4 and 5 (Brian Tucker, et al.).

Dan Hubbard reported a very early **Spotted Sandpiper** at the Rochester WTP on April 14. Apart from an old 1954 record listed in *The Birds of New Hampshire*, this represents the earliest date for the species in modern time. Will Johnson recorded a diverse collection of shorebirds while attempting a big day by bicycle on River Road in Hanover on May 12. Low water in the Connecticut River created habitat for several species, including a high count of 26 **Solitary Sandpiper**.

Alcids



Thick-billed Murre by Rebecca Suomala, 5-17-2023, Star Island, NH.

This season's alcid report offers a concise guide to the six species' occurrence in the state. Steve Mirick recorded three **Dovekies** at Jeffreys Ledge on March 10. While often commonplace at Jeffreys Ledge in winter, Dovekies move north quickly in March, and April records are exceptionally rare. There were only two **Thick-billed Murres** reported. One was found at Odiorne Point by Betsy Heron on May 12. The bird continued to be seen between Odiorne and Fort Stark in New Castle until May 19. The other was seen at Star Island on May 17 and Zeke Cornell watched a Great Black-backed Gull pick it up, and then drop it, apparently unharmed. Not one Thick-billed Murre was seen in six birding trips offshore during March and April, repeating a pattern of recent years where the species is most often encountered close to shore late into spring. **Common Murre** on the other hand was only seen on the aforementioned trips offshore, often being the most common alcid recorded. Their absence from the mainland in spring has become the norm.

Razorbill was seen on all the March pelagic trips but became scarcer in April, with only a few individuals seen in May, including singles in Rye on May 15 (Rebecca Crofton & Walter Harmon), Seavey Island on May 20 (SML Tern Conservation Program), and an obliging individual from Star Island on May 21 and 22 (Mini Mahata). **Black Guillemots**, as usual, were tied to land, being most common at the Isles of Shoals, followed by the mainland coast, with no reports from Jeffreys Ledge. **Atlantic Puffin**, as expected, was only seen offshore and on about half of the trips, with four on March 10 (Steve Mirick), three on March 29 (Zeke Cornell, Susan Wrisley, Leo McKillop, Steve Bennett, Chris Duffy), and four on April 14 (Steve Mirick).

Gulls and Terns

Elaine Faletra photographed an adult **Black-legged Kittiwake** on Lake Tarleton on May 5, a very rare inland

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record of this highly pelagic species, even more so for being a spring sighting. Black-legged Kittiwake is a “seagull” in the truest sense of the word, being routine on Jeffreys Ledge from late fall through early spring, but it is exceptionally rare west of Route 1A. Since the turn of the millennium, there is one inland record of this attractive gull up to 2019, a bird at the Rochester WTP in late fall 2007. Since 2019, however, the species has been found on Lake Massabesic in Auburn, Wilson Pond in Swanzey, and the Hinsdale Setbacks. Elaine’s bird, the fourth inland record in five years, was a one-day wonder, although I am not convinced that it disappeared for good. Tune in to the summer issue to find out more.

The first migrant **Bonaparte’s Gulls** were found in the Connecticut River Valley in Charlestown on March 26 (Kyle Jones, Wayne Scott). There were no impressive fallouts inland, although there was a scattering of reports from multiple waterbodies on April 6 and from April 22 through the end of the month, highlighted by 16 birds at Wilder Dam in Lebanon on April 6 (Wayne Scott) and two flocks on April 23 (see sidebar). An **Iceland Gull** at Horseshoe Pond in Concord on March 20 (Darryl Parker) was the only record away from the southeast coastal plain.

Juli Tyson, NH Fish and Game’s Piping Plover monitor, reported a high count of 50 **Least Terns** from Hampton on May 12, an astounding total for a bird that was difficult to see in New Hampshire when I moved here in 1999.

Caspian Tern was reported from River Road in Hanover (Will Johnson) and Hinsdale Setbacks (Donna Keller), both on April 14, Horseshoe Pond in Concord on April 23 (Joe Ripley), and Silver Lake in Madison on April 30 (Logan Anderson), with a high count of 11 on the coast at Rye Harbor on April 30 found by Leo McKillop. Leo also reported four **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** along the coast on the same day, both the terns and the gulls a casualty of the same weather system that brought the phalaropes.

The only **Black Tern** of the season was recorded from a fishing boat inland of the Isles of Shoals on May 11 (Leo McKillop). Thanks to clear skies, there was a poor showing of late-season inland terns, with just one **Common Tern** seen on Lake Sunapee on April 27 (Dylan Jackson).



Black Tern by Leo McKillop, 5-12-2023, inland of the Isles of Shoals, NH.

Loons and Storm-Petrels

Pacific Loon is typically a yearly visitor that could show

up in any season, but the first one since January 2021 was reported by Rick Steber and Logan Anderson on March 13 at Rye Harbor State Park. A few days later on March 18, Kurk Dorsey found one at Odiorne Point State Park.

It’s a long way from the Antarctic Ocean to the Gulf of Maine (over 8,000 miles), but **Wilson’s Storm-Petrels** made it in near record time again this spring, with 30 birds seen from a fishing boat over Old Scantum on May 3 (Leo McKillop, Susan Wrisley). *The Birds of New Hampshire* (2013) lists an early arrival date of May 18, which stood until 2022, when Leo McKillop, Susan Wrisley, and Steve Bennett found several birds on May 1. Wilson’s Storm-Petrel abundance decreases with declining sea temperature (*Birds of the World*). In southeast Australia, the species is found over waters with surface temperatures between 9.4 and 22 degrees Celsius (Reid et al. 2002). Taking this as a guide to the species environmental preference and extrapolating to New Hampshire (an assumption, I admit), proves interesting in light of the petrels’ increasingly early occurrence. The mean temperature of the Gulf of Maine surface water, as measured since 1981, rises from a low of about 3.4 degrees Celsius in mid-March to a high of 17 degrees in mid-August and passes the threshold of 9.4 degrees cited above at the beginning of June (https://mco.umaine.edu/climate/gom_sst/). Any warming could conceivably affect the arrival date of a species tied to such a specific range of water temperatures.

Of the two petrel species that occur in New Hampshire, **Leach’s Storm-Petrel** is the more likely to be storm-driven. The same conditions that precipitated the phalarope fallout delivered four Leach’s Storm-Petrels to Hampton Harbor on May 1 (Steve Mirick, et al.). Steve Bennett saw three birds in the more likely setting of Jeffreys Ledge on April 25.



Leach’s Storm-Petrel by Jim Sparrell, 5-1-2023, Hampton Harbor, NH.

Herons

Least Bittern returned to the Cranberry Pond wetlands in West Lebanon, with two birds seen on May 22 (Kyle Jones), Beaver Brook Association’s Great Meadow in Hollis on May 25 (Susan Wrisley), and the Rockingham Recreational Trail in Newfields on May 26 (Logan Anderson). There were reports of birds from new locations at Old Mill Road in Lee on May 22 (Kurk Dorsey) and the Seacoast Community School in Portsmouth on May 23 (Stuart Varney).

Great Egrets were well represented, with reports along the

length of the Connecticut River Valley north to Monroe and the Merrimack River Valley north to Campton, in addition to numerous coastal reports. Several reports of **Little Blue Heron** included an individual at Bedell State Park in Haverhill on April 16 (Rebecca Lovejoy) and Pickering Ponds in Rochester on April 23 (Alan Murray) and May 23 (Gary Shepherd). There were also several reports of one or more individuals from the Rye coast from April 19 (Stuart Varney) to May 23 (Jonathan Lethbridge).

An adult **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Nutt Pond in Manchester on April 12 and 13 (Kevin Murphy) offered birders a rare opportunity to see this furtive species away from the coastal region where most birds are recorded. Five **Glossy Ibis** found by Nora Hanke at Mud Pond in Dublin delighted multiple observers on April 18 and 19. Other notable records include singles at Morrill's Farm in Penacook on April 4 (Pam Hunt) and Horseshoe Pond in Concord from April 18-21 (Chris Borg), with numerous records from the coast and coastal plain, including a high count of 26 birds on May 21 at Parsons Creek Saltmarsh in Rye (Logan Anderson, George Buress, Hannah Wait).

Raptors

A few short years ago, every **Black Vulture** sighting warranted a listing. Now only high counts get a mention: five birds at Elm Brook Park in Hopkinton on April 19 (Daniel Calder) and four birds over Route 63 in Westmoreland on May 30 (Will Stollsteimer). All this year's birds (70 eBird reports for the season) were south of a line of latitude running through Lake Winnepesaukee, so keep an eye out for the species north of the Lakes Region where they remain rare.

JoAnn O'Shaughnessy reported an exceptionally early **Osprey** flying north over Hampton Marsh on March 3. It was an excellent spring for **Golden Eagle**, with multiple reports, including a much-enjoyed individual at Great Meadows that lingered in Charlestown from March 24 to April 1 (Dylan Jackson).

Other reports include one in Alexandria on April 4 (Levi Burford, Katrina Fenton), Francestown on April 12 (Timothy Gotsick), and Cornish on



Golden Eagle by Zeke Cornell, 3-26-2023, Charlestown, NH.

May 13 (Jen Armstrong). **Mississippi Kites** returned to their favored locations in the environs of Great Bay, with the first bird reported on May 11 from Stratham (Roger Stephenson). An extremely early **Broad-winged Hawk** was reported from Morrisette Conservation Area in Exeter on March 31. Please see Kirk Elwell's excellent description on eBird which made this an easy record to review.

Rough-legged Hawks were reported from Dillant-Hopkins Airport in Swanzey for much of March starting on March 9 (Alex Lamoreaux, Lauren DiBiccari). Other reports, all from the southern part of the state were from Hampton Marsh on March 3 (Kirk Elwell), Burley Farms in Epping on March 27 (Karen Hochgraf), Boggy Meadow Farm in Walpole on March 30 (Rand Burnett), and Mud Pond in Dublin on April 1 (Nora Hanke).

A rare Carroll County report of **Eastern Screech-Owl** came from Matt DiMaoi who heard the species' unmistakable trill early in the morning of May 11 in Conway. Other birds were reported from the south section of Concord on multiple dates in March and April (Rebecca Suomala), Gillis Hill in Bennington on May 21 (Peter Eppig), and from multiple locations in the species stronghold in eastern Rockingham County. There were only two **Snowy Owl** reports in spring. One was seen in Hampton on March 5 (Ethan Ring) and possibly the same bird on April 3 (Donna Ellis). Ethan Ring also provided the only report of **Short-eared Owl**, a bird flying over Odiorne Point State Park on March 19.

Woodpeckers, Flycatchers, and Vireos



Red-headed Woodpecker by Jim Sparrell, 3-12-2023, Somersworth, NH.

Red-headed Woodpeckers were fewer than in recent spring seasons, with just two records, a bird seen at Spinney Lane in Durham on March 8 (Samuel Bratsman) and a

SPRING SEASON

much-enjoyed bird at Pinewood Drive in Somersworth for much of March and April (Deborah Shelton).

Steve and Jane Mirick recorded 42 **Eastern Kingbirds** migrating north over Seabrook dunes on May 13. Susan Wrisley and Leo McKillop found a singing **Acadian Flycatcher** in Manchester Cedar Swamp on May 21, the first of an excellent year for this uncommon species in New Hampshire. Ruth Smith went one better and found a second state record **Say's Phoebe** at Canterbury Shaker Village on May 15 (see her article in this issue). The first record was in Penacook in November 2012, proving that you don't have to hit the coast to find rare birds. The phoebe lingered for only one day, but word got out early enough to allow almost 30 people to see this western stray. A **White-eyed Vireo** at Mink Brook Nature Preserve in Hanover on May 1-3 was an excellent find by Jack Bushong and the only one of the season.



White-eyed Vireo by Will Johnson, 5-1-2023, Mink Brook Nature Preserve, Hanover, NH. GRANT

Jays, Swallows, and Thrushes

Blue Jay migration in May was a personal highlight for the simple reason that it's one of the easier ways to actually see bird migration in action. Their movements are often diurnal, at relatively low altitude, and noisily obvious as they canopy-hop in a ragged line across tree tops, whereupon, reaching the edge of a field, they take off in a loose flock, heading north or south depending on the season. This season, their movements were made all the more apparent by their general absence in the winter of 2022-23. The acorn crop was so poor that most birds went south in search of food – a textbook case of facultative migration – and they returned not in dribs and drabs but all at once, with a big flight in early May reported across the state, including 205 birds flying north at Tin Mountain Conservation Center in Albany on May 8 (Logan Anderson et al.), 209 birds flying northeast at Range Road in

Sandwich on May 11 (Ken Klapper), 230 birds flying north over Odiorne Point State Park in Rye on May 11 (Brett Hillman), 333 birds migrating north over Seabrook Beach on May 11 (Steve Mirick), 221 birds over Tilton Hill Road in Pittsfield on May 12 (Andrea Robbins), 250 birds over Seabrook Beach on May 13, and 254 birds there on May 14 (Steve & Jane Mirick). Between the jays in May, the Evening Grosbeaks in March and the escalating price of sunflower seed, spring was an expensive season!



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher by Jim Sparrell, 4-11-2023, Odiorne Point SP, Rye, NH.

Susan Wrisley photographed a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at Horseshoe Pond in Merrimack on March 30, setting a new record early arrival date for the species. **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were also early, with a bird at Odiorne Point State Park in Rye tying the record early date of April 11 (Jim Sparrell). **Marsh Wrens** were present at the Hinsdale Setbacks from March 21 (Donna Keller), but because the species has been discovered wintering at this site in recent years, these birds may have been holdovers. A few other holdovers from the winter season persisted into spring; the **Mountain Bluebird** at Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge was last seen on March 29 (Kirk Elwell) and the **Varied Thrush** in Bath was last seen on April 9.

Grosbeaks through Blackbirds

The **Evening Grosbeak** invasion of the previous winter petered out over the spring as birds left the state, with totals at my Hancock feeder dropping from 40-50 birds in late March to a single bird last seen on May 8. It will be interesting to see if there is a bump in the breeding population this summer. Except for 20 **Pine Grosbeaks** at Hollow Oak Farm in Sullivan on March 3 (Milton Trimitsis) and a couple of birds at Miller State Park in Temple on March 12 (Anna Thaenert), the mini-invasion of winter

2022-23 had retreated north of the Lakes Region by the beginning of March and by April all the birds were gone from the state. **Common Redpoll** also vacated the state but not until mid-April, with the last individual reported from Chatham on April 14 (Bob Crowley).

Except for a small movement north along New Hampshire's coast in March, **Red Crossbills** were primarily restricted to the North Country until May when birds moved into southwestern New Hampshire. **White-winged Crossbills** were very scarce and entirely restricted to the North Country. A **House Finch** in Colebrook on April 2 (Aubrie Giroux) was the only record from the North Country, where Purple Finch is the default species. Steve and Jane Mirick recorded 1,100 **American Goldfinches** migrating north over Seabrook dunes on May 13.



Clay-colored Sparrow by Kyle Wilmarth, 3-7-2023, Salem, NH.

A **Chipping Sparrow** in Errol on March 25 (Lori Charron) was notably early for being so far north. **Clay-colored Sparrows** were more common than usual in spring with singles in Salem on March 7 (Kyle Wilmarth), Star Island on May 15-16 (Harlee Strauss), and a singing bird on suitable territory at Arboretum Drive in Newington from May 14-19 (Logan Anderson). Scott Heron found a late **American Tree Sparrow** at Brasen Hill Farm in Barrington on May 13 and Chris McPherson found an early **Vesper Sparrow** at the Charlestown Wastewater Treatment Plant on March 31. Steve and Jane Mirick recorded 92 **Bobolinks** migrating north over Seabrook dunes on May 13. William Chandler photographed an **Orchard Oriole** on April 25 in Stratham, a record early arrival date for the species. Heather Burns counted 25 **Rusty Blackbirds** on the Peanut Trail in Newton on April 30.

Warblers and Tanagers

With 31 species recorded, it was a terrific spring for warbler diversity, although one species was a winter holdover and not a spring migrant proper. The first **Louisiana**

Waterthrush of the year was fairly early, a bird in Brookline on April 6 (Chris McPherson). Two **Golden-winged Warblers** included a bird at the Everett Dam Conservation Lands in Weare from May 15 through the end of the month (Peter Newbern) and another bird on Church Street in Hampton on May 13 (Steve & Jane Mirick). A **Black-and-white Warbler** at the Deer Hill Wildlife Management Area in Brentwood on April 13 (Paul Kursewicz) was the earliest on record.

There were two **Prothonotary Warblers** this spring, including a bird that left Star Island at dawn on May 15 but not before being documented with a photograph (Eric Masterson). Another bird was well described by Taylor Phillips at the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge on May 20. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** visiting a feeder March 16 to 25 at Appledore Avenue in North Hampton was a holdover from the winter season (Edward Larrabee). If not also a winter holdover, a **Common Yellowthroat** in Pittsfield on April 17 set a new record-early arrival date (Andrea Robbins).



Yellow-throated Warbler by Holly Bauer, 4-25-2023, Witch Island, Hampton, NH.

There were three **Hooded Warblers** this spring, all males: a bird at Odiorne Point State Park in Rye on May 13 (Steve & Jane Mirick), a bird in Canterbury on May 18 (Jacob & Stephanie Bowser), and a singing male at Lubberland Creek Preserve in Newmarket on May 20 (Kurk Dorsey). Three was also the magic number for **Yellow-throated Warbler**: a bird at a private residence in Hampton, first documented on March 16 though the homeowners reported that it had been coming for more than two weeks prior (Carol & Gretchen Gobar); a bird at Meadow Pond in Hampton on April 25 (Holly Bauer); and a bird at the Hinsdale rail trail on April 27 (Donna Keller).

The only **Summer Tanager** of the season was a remarkably early immature male at Odiorne Point State Park on April 18, found by John Pecknam. The bird was also seen the next



Summer Tanager by Steve Mirick, 4-19-2023, Odiorne Point SP, Rye, NH.

day, but minus its tail. The long-staying **Western Tanager** in Greenland squeaked into the spring season, having been last seen on March 1 by Dan Hubbard, eating an apple under a tree. A single **Blue Grosbeak** in Moultonborough on May 22 (Jen Brooks) brought another great spring season to a close.

References

Reid, K., M. Sims, R. White, and K. Gillon. 2002. Spatial distribution of predator/prey interactions in the Scotia Sea: implications for measuring predator/fisheries overlap. *Deep-Sea Research II*. 51:1383–1396.

Regional Report, Spring 2023

Regional reports are dependent on the availability of authors and the occurrence of notable sightings. If you are interested in writing a regional summary, please contact the Editor.

The Lake Sunapee and Sullivan County Area

by Dylan Jackson

After a bleak 2022 in the Lake Sunapee area, and in Sullivan County as a whole, spring of 2023 brought some excitement in the form of first and second county records for some species. Every spring brings with it interesting trends in distribution and numbers of passing species and this spring was no exception.

Waterfowl migration is the first wave of excitement to hit the area after the long, dreary winter. The Connecticut River Valley is the place to be at this point in the migration season. On March 17, Eric Masterson found the county's first Redhead, a long overdue first record in my opinion. This bird was found among hundreds, if not thousands, of other

ducks and geese in the flooded cornfields off Wetherby Road in Charlestown. For a future note, as this spot has become more popular, it's important to relay that the best viewing of this area is from the Route 12A overpass. This provides the best viewing while not disturbing residents nearby or flushing the birds.

Not long after, I discovered an immature Golden Eagle seeming to be actively hunting in Great Meadow in Charlestown on March 24. Luckily, this bird hung around and was last seen in the same area on April 1. Curious, I looked at eBird and found a report of an immature Golden in Putney, VT to the south on February 12 and another in Windsor, VT on March 15. This had me pondering the possibility that this bird may have spent the winter in the Connecticut River Valley. Further, an immature Golden was reported in Cornish on May 13 making this record more interesting. Could all these possibly be the same bird?

It's not breaking news that Black Vultures are becoming more common in New Hampshire, but this was illustrated by an exceptional showing in western Sullivan County. While this species has been common just south of the border in Cheshire County for several years now, Sullivan County had very few records and I didn't see one until March 31, 2018 (and I haven't had one since). This spring alone had five records for the county from Langdon to Claremont from late March to May 16. While a known northward range expansion is occurring in this species, it was most noticeable in Sullivan this year.

One notable early arrival came in the form of a Common Tern that I found on Lake Sunapee on April 27. From a little research I did on eBird, it appears to be only the second inland record of this species for April (in eBird). Other waterbirds were lacking this year. Bonaparte's and Herring Gulls only showed in small numbers. Grebes and scoters only appeared in small numbers except for one good fallout day on Lake Sunapee (4-27) which also brought a flock of 16 Long-tailed Ducks. Shorebirds made a weak showing with no exceptional species being reported anywhere in the area.

Another take away from this spring was the lack of a big fallout of migrating birds. Even species that usually arrive in huge numbers, like Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers, just trickled through the area. Passover species that breed north of our area snuck past us, with only low numbers being reported; some seemed to pass through completely undetected. Outside of warblers, other species like Philadelphia Vireo, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and Swainson's Thrush passed through quickly and relatively unnoticed. It's curious to see how in some seasons this seems to happen and in others it seems to be dripping with birds.

While we didn't have a great warbler movement this spring, it's worth noting that later in the spring (May 13)



The Lawrence's Warbler that returned to Claremont's Moody Park for the third year in a row. Photo by Michael Foster, 5-19-2023.

Claremont's Moody Park hosted its Lawrence's Warbler, a hybrid of Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warbler, for the third year in a row. This bird has stayed faithful to the same territory year after year even as Blue-winged Warblers seem to be harder and harder to find. I believe this trend is attributed to the maturing of the secondary growth that resulted from extensive forest cutting in the park a few years ago. As the trees mature, this important habitat may disappear, taking these birds with it unless some sustainable forestry practices are continued here.

Overall, this migration season was slow and fairly typical, but thankfully it was punctuated by some exceptional records. It's always interesting to not only see what each new spring brings but to be able to compare it with prior seasons.

Coos County

by Robert A. Quinn

Birders might think that Coos County is thoroughly covered by observers during every month. This is true for a few key sites such as Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Berlin/Gorham, and Errol, thanks to David Govatski, Kathy Dube, Dick Dionne, and Lori and Paul Charron, but the reality is that large areas of this vast county do not get many birders except in June and July. It is truly a world apart from the rest of the state. The weather, terrain, scenic wonders, ecological processes, and populations (low for people and high for birds) are different from the other nine counties. I cannot bird Coos County as often as I would like, but I do have over 40 years of experience birding there every month of the year. Recently, I have focused on spring and fall migrations, especially for inland waterbirds.

Be aware that there are *significant* differences in northern Coos County between the Connecticut River Valley/Connecticut Lakes region (Pittsburg) and the Androscoggin River Valley/Lake Umbagog region (Errol). There are even more differences from north to south in the county. These

differences are due to Errol being at a lower elevation, the Androscoggin River having more rapids and open water, and Lake Umbagog having marvelous wetlands. All these factors mean that the Umbagog region has more inland waterbirds almost a month earlier than the Connecticut Lakes do because ice-out on the lakes in Pittsburg is about two to three weeks later than around Lake Umbagog. Also, spring comes earlier to the southern parts of Coos County, particularly along the Connecticut River!

Early "spring" in Coos County is typically more like *winter* and that was the case this year. March 2023 came in like a lion (after a mostly mild February) with significant snowstorms on February 22-24, March 1, 4, and 14 resulting in many feet of snow on the ground well into the month. (Compare that with Rockingham County!)

March

Early March was wintry with typical winter birds, but a few spring migrants started to seep through the cracks of winter during the first two weeks and then the migratory dam broke at the end of the month. Throughout March, there were wandering winter flocks of 60 Cedar Waxwings in Lancaster (Robert Hunt) and 25 Bohemian Waxwings in Gorham (Will O'Brien). Please note that while Horned Larks and Snow Buntings may winter in Coos County, spring birds could easily be north-bound migrants.

March 1 – Possibly due to deep snow, a Barred Owl was seen during daylight in Lancaster (Ann Griffin) and a Boreal Chickadee was seen the same day in a yard in Errol (Lori Charron).

March 2 – A Northern Shrike was seen along Reed Road in Colebrook (Aubrie Giroux) and a Northern Flicker was seen in Gorham (Will O'Brien).

March 3 – Two Red-winged Blackbirds and at least one Song Sparrow were seen at Jefferson Meadows (Zeke Cornell, Becky Suomala) and later that day they had 20 Snow Buntings in Shelburne, *which is an under-birded area*.

March 5 – Aubrie Giroux saw a Northern Shrike, an American Robin, and an apparent overwintering White-throated Sparrow along Reed Road in Colebrook and Logan Anderson saw a Wood Duck in Gorham.

March 6 – Five Evening Grosbeaks and five Pine Grosbeaks were noted in Berlin (Benjamin Gagnon). Also seen were four apparently overwintering Mallards in Gorham (Lisa Lukawicz), eight Pine Siskins in Shelburne (Will O'Brien), and five Horned Larks at Airport Marsh in Whitefield (Ginny Umiker).

March 12 – Four Horned Larks were again noted at Airport Marsh (Ann Griffin) in Whitefield. Fourteen Herring Gulls and seven Great Black-backed Gulls in Berlin were likely migrants (Katrina Fenton). See also March 28 below.

March 14 – Lori Charron had a great yard-day with a Great Horned Owl and a Red Crossbill in her Errol yard.

March 21 – Two Pine Grosbeaks in Joanne Dionne's yard in Millsfield lingered until this date.

March 22 – A Sharp-shinned Hawk tried to take advantage of Lori Charron's birdie yard! A Northern Harrier was photographed at Pondicherry NWR (Daniel Lounsbury).

March 23 – Three White-winged Crossbills were seen in Jefferson (Leslie Bergum).

March 25 – A Chipping Sparrow was seen in Errol (Lori Charron) which could have been an overwintering bird since Lori and Paul Charron had one on the Errol Christmas Bird Count on December 15!

March 28 – An adult Ring-billed Gull was photographed at Pondicherry NWR (Ann Griffin). Additional birds on March 28 included four Turkey Vultures in Berlin (Benjamin Gagnon), and a Northern Saw-whet Owl in Jefferson (Leslie Bergum).

March 29 – David Forsyth photographed a male Barrow's Goldeneye in Errol.

March 31 – A few more *migrants* reached northern Coos such as a Killdeer, a Field Sparrow, a Merlin, and an American Kestrel.

April

eBird data was somewhat sparse so I will condense my impression of the month. For my April 10 and 28 paddle trips at Lake Umbagog, see a separate article "Ode to the Outlet."

A significant push of migrants came through the last few days of March and the first day or two of April. Most notable were a Rusty Blackbird in Gorham (Lori & Paul Charron) and many species in Errol including two Wood Ducks, eight Ring-necked Ducks, a Northern Shrike, plus a rare sighting for the time and place, a male Red-breasted Merganser (found by Greg Dionne).

Early April was mostly cold and wet plus ice still locked up the lakes and ponds, but the rivers were open enough for a modest migration of waterfowl. Migrants on April 1 included Canada Geese, Green-winged Teal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and American Robin, plus a Purple Finch in

Lancaster (Ann Griffin). In Errol, a buildup of 67 Common Goldeneyes occurred at the dam on the Androscoggin River (Lori & Paul Charron, Joanne Dionne), along with an America Black Duck, three Hooded Mergansers, an Eastern Bluebird, a Tufted Titmouse, and a Fox Sparrow. The buildup of Common Goldeneye peaked on April 9 when I tallied 134, the highest spring count for the state.

A Vesper Sparrow seen in Colebrook on April 7 and 8 by Aubrie Giroux was a rare spring migrant, although there may be more nesting in Coos County than we are aware of. On April 8, she also found one Purple Finch, eight Pine Siskins, and eight Evening Grosbeaks in her Colebrook neighborhood.

On April 14, a flock of 67 Ring-necked Ducks and four Horned Grebes (rare in spring) were on Cherry Pond in Jefferson (David Govatski). A male Barrow's Goldeneye was in Errol on April 18 (Joanne Dionne) and on April 20 Lori Charron's Errol yard was busy with a Red-bellied Woodpecker (which probably overwintered), two Pine Warblers, one White-throated Sparrow, and an adult White-crowned Sparrow (rare for the date).

Winter met spring on April 21 in Dummer when Matt Tarr tallied one lingering American Tree Sparrow and one early Barn Swallow along with ten Tree Swallows, and six Evening Grosbeaks. A walk at Pondicherry NWR in Jefferson by Ann Griffin on the same day turned up a Sandhill Crane, one Pine Warbler, three Palm Warblers, eight Yellow-rumped Warblers, and a Brown Thrasher, which is uncommon in Coos County.

May

May, of course, was a very birdy month and again, I have been selective of which records to highlight.

May 2 – At Fort Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Stratford, there were three Green-winged Teal described as "agitated" plus a Pied-billed Grebe and a Northern Rough-winged Swallow (Logan Anderson).

May 11 – A Bonaparte's Gull was seen by Katrina Fenton on Lake Umbagog and the next day, she saw a pair of Northern Shovelers there which were probably migrants, but the marshes of Umbagog would be perfect for nesting dabblers. (American Wigeons have nested there in recent years.)

May 13 – *Pondicherry Migratory Bird Day* is always fun and a wonderful encapsulation of the mid-May throng of migrants. Just some of the highlights, quoting from David Govatski's post to the NHBirds email list on 5-14-2023:

...21 species of warblers including Cape May Warbler....six species of woodpeckers including

two Black-backed Woodpeckers...ten raptor species seen including a goshawk with something in its talons...both yellowlegs species, and Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers were seen. Black-billed Cuckoos were noted from three locations. A pair of Canada Jays ...was perhaps the most notable bird.

May 14 – Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were unusually far north and a pair of Northern Harriers seen at Airport Marsh in Whitefield were intriguing since they have nested there over the years (David Forsyth).

May 16 – Another unusual and intriguing duck at Lake Umbagog was a Ruddy Duck and two Greater Yellowlegs were also present (Katrina Fenton). Meanwhile, Lori Charron found a nice mixture of shorebirds in Colebrook including one Pectoral Sandpiper (rare in spring), a Killdeer already on a nest plus migrant Lesser Yellowlegs and Solitary Sandpipers. She also recorded another unusual species for Coos County, a Black-billed Cuckoo.

May 19 – Kathy Cronin saw a Philadelphia Vireo at the Wildcat Mountain Ski Area in Pinkham's Grant.

May 20 – The infrequently birded Fort Hill WMA in Stratford rewarded Ann Griffin with a Sora, a Pied-billed Grebe, a Virginia Rail, three Wilson's Snipe, three Marsh Wrens, and an American Bittern.

May 22 – Fort Hill WMA rewarded Dick Dionne with a Northern Harrier. These lesser-known marshes along the Connecticut River are quite productive and deserve more attention.

May 23 – A Red-shouldered Hawk was farther north than usual in Colebrook (Lori Charron).

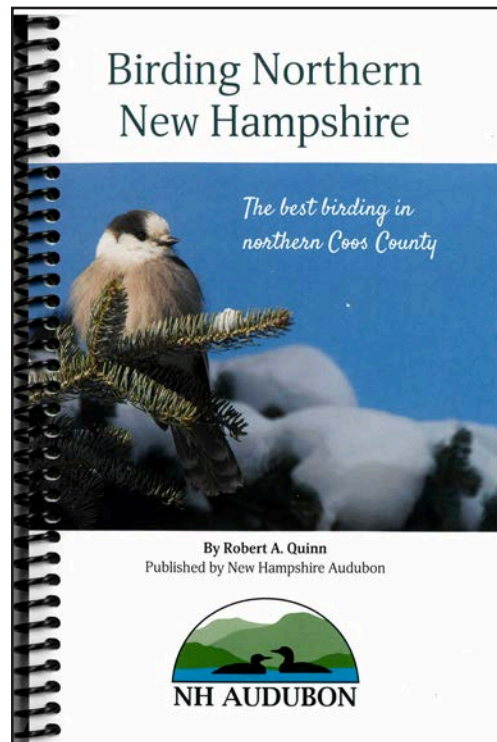
May 26 – A female Bufflehead was photographed on Back Lake in Stewartstown (Aubrie Giroux). Stewartstown is another under-birded area.

May 28 – Two Marsh Wrens were seen in Groveton (Unity Dienes, Pam Hunt) and a Greater Yellowlegs was in Lancaster (Ann Griffin).

May 30 – A Brown Thrasher was seen in Colebrook (Aubrie Giroux), a Merlin in Carroll (Hannah Pryor), and a Green Heron in Randolph (Ginny Umiker).

This is just a snapshot of some of the fun birding moments in Coos County this spring. Where did you bird and what did you learn? What new sites will you go to? You too can make the effort, have fun birding, discover new sites, and share it all with *New Hampshire Bird Records* and other birders. I hope to see you in the field!

New Birding Guide to Northern New Hampshire!



NH Audubon is excited to announce its newest publication, *Birding Northern New Hampshire* by Robert A. Quinn. This is your guide to the best birding in northern Coos County. The abundance of boreal birds in Coos County is rarely seen anywhere else in New England.

Bob's book will help you plan your journey with details about the North Country areas of Errol, Lake Umbagog, Colebrook, and the Pittsburg Region plus additional tips as you drive north from Lancaster and Gorham. Species such as Boreal Chickadee, Canada Jay, Black-backed Woodpecker, and Spruce Grouse, among many others, could be part of your journey to northern New Hampshire.

Whether you are an experienced birder looking for specific species or a beginner just trying to figure out the best spots to go, this 98-page, full-color book has the information you need. The book contains maps and specific directions to the many bird species that can be found and the best times of the year to look for them. It provides details on how to get to marshes, ponds, lakes, wetlands, bogs, rivers, and back roads, as well as paddling sites and amazing vistas.

"Rails, bitterns, snipe, Marsh Wrens, Northern Harriers, and even Bobolinks are likely in the breeding season. The wooded edges are usually full of birds and the unexpected should always be anticipated."

The book is available for sale in NH Audubon's Nature Stores in Concord and Auburn and online on the *New Hampshire Bird Records* website (nhbirdrecords.org, Resources). All proceeds benefit NH Audubon.

The development of this guide was funded by a grant from the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

Interview with a Birder—Bob Quinn

by Kathryn Frieden



Bob Quinn exploring Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge by Dyanna Smith.

Bob Quinn's lifework is birds and birding. He is well known in the New Hampshire community as a birding guide and an expert on the North Country, as well as for his work at NH Audubon and the *New Hampshire Bird Records* publication. He was the chief editor of *New Hampshire Bird Records* starting with its first issue, Spring 1982 and, during his four years in that position, he also pinch-hit as a season editor when the need arose. In 1996, he was hired for his favorite contract job ever, a bird survey of the Pondicherry area in Jefferson to help determine if it should be part of the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge. He found many new species there and is particularly proud of discovering "Moorhen Marsh." Pondicherry did become part of the refuge and we can all be grateful that this beautiful area with such great birding opportunities was preserved.

How old were you when you became a "birder" and what got you started?

When I was in my mid-teens, my much older brother, who was a biologist, got me interested by taking me birding at Plum Island in Massachusetts, but the critical event was in the fall of 1972 during my freshman year in college. I was at Nubble Light in Maine and I saw a black and white bird out on the water. It wasn't a single species, but a group of birds with lots of blacks and whites. I had my binoculars with me (a high school graduation gift), and it was the excitement of sorting them all out that triggered my interest. I was hooked! At the University of New Hampshire, I was lucky to get

to know Art Borrer who became my birding mentor. Not only that, when I took Ornithology my Junior year, George Robbins was the teaching assistant, and he also became a mentor for me.

Do you have a favorite sighting that comes to mind?

Sometime around the spring of 1980, I was preparing to lead a field trip at the Silk Farm Audubon Center in Concord, when I thought I heard a Yellow-throated Warbler, and that's what it was. A rare bird is definitely not the average start to a bird walk! Another sighting that was special for me was finding an American Three-toed Woodpecker at a nest near Greeley Ponds off the Kancamagus Highway in July of 1981. This ended up being the last known nest in all of New Hampshire.

How many birds are on your state list and what do you hope for next?

I know there are over 300 birds on my state list, but I don't know the exact number. I am not a particular lister, so I don't often chase rarities.

Do you have a New Hampshire "nemesis" bird?

The Canvasback was one nemesis until Dave Lipsy found one on the Merrimack River in Concord on January 14, 2013. But probably an even better nemesis was Connecticut Warbler, which was even more satisfying because I found it myself. I had seen over 50 species of warblers in North America, including some rare ones in the Southwest, but never a Connecticut Warbler. Then, about two years ago in the fall, I finally saw one along the Merrimack River at the Jamie Welch field in Boscawen!

If there was only one place in New Hampshire where you could go birding, where would it be?

That's easy, Lake Umbagog!

What changes have you seen in birding over the years?

The most notable change is the number of people birding, which has exploded in recent years. When I started birding, there was a small community of birders and most everyone knew everyone else. There were no NH Audubon chapters back then, just the state Audubon in Concord, NH.

Any ideas for future birding for you? Do you have a United States target bird?

I want to see the rosy-finches! I managed to see a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch on the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea, but I've never seen any of the other ones, though I've certainly tried in Colorado and New Mexico.

Do you have any advice for young or new birders?

Get out in the field and just do it! Slow down and enjoy your surroundings.

Ode to the Outlet

by Robert A. Quinn

On April 10, 2023, a brown and gray mosaic floated on the calm water of the Androscoggin River where it exits Lake Umbagog (Errol, NH). This mosaic of colors and forms was created by literally hundreds, possibly thousands of feathers from the numerous flocks of waterfowl that skittered ahead of me as I paddled upstream. At first, I did not even notice them, but gradually I became aware of these fluffy and unique ornaments decorating the river. This abundance of feathers was an impressive example of the joys of paddling at Umbagog in April.

I was alone on the river and it was silent except for the conversations of the ducks. In fact, those vocalizations were another bonus. I had become so familiar with their voices that I could identify each species, squealing Woodies, piping teal and wigeons, honking geese, whistling goldeneyes, barking Ring-neckeds, and gargling mergansers. The wail of a loon echoed off the placid water.

Flock after flock passed ahead of me as I wended my way toward the lake. Eventually, I found a spot to stash my boat so that I could proceed on foot, allowing me to creep up on the birds as they gathered at River Junction (where the Magalloway River flows into the Androscoggin River, at the edge of Lake Umbagog). An estimated 1,000 ducks cavorted in the shallows, much more focused on each other than on this erect interloper slowly crunching on the secure but unstable ice shelf at the edge of the river. They leapt and dashed, they flew high then low, often ending with waterski-like landings. I was spellbound.

Historic aficionados of the Umbagog region, “Will and Tudor,” would have been astounded, amazed and, most importantly, pleased. William Brewster was the 19th century ornithologist who “discovered” the wonders of the birds of Umbagog and lived to see the stark decline in the hordes of waterfowl during the extreme market hunting slaughter in the late 1800s. While during Tudor Richards’ visits later in the 20th century, the duck populations grew in numbers to more sustainable levels, yet he never saw Gadwall and rarely saw wigeons here.

I visited and paddled in the Lake Umbagog region (Errol) twice during April 2023. On April 9-10, the water was very *low* and the waterfowl were concentrated in the rivers, especially the Androscoggin River at River Junction. The larger area that encompasses River Junction and the edge of the lake is known as “the Outlet.” The rivers were open, but all the meadows were encased in ice. The meadows were also several feet above the river levels. Lake Umbagog had a small amount of open water at the Outlet. My second visit was on April 27 and 29, 2023. This time the water was *high*, the

meadows were flooded and almost all the ice was gone. Here are my records from these two paddles to the Outlet.

April 10, 2023

I paddled from the Steamer Diamond Boat Launch to River Junction and back, with very low water, 7:15 am to 11:45 am, 21-55 degrees. Sunny, calm to moderate breeze. Hundreds of ducks including four pairs of Northern Pintail, one pair of Gadwall, one pair of American Wigeon, 45 Wood Ducks, 220 American Black Ducks, 50+ Green-winged Teal, 70+ Ring-necked Ducks, along with, eight Killdeer, three Wilson’s Snipe, several Tree Swallows, and at least eight Ring-billed Gulls. Unidentified ducks estimated at 500.

April 29, 2023

My next paddle trip had much higher water. The highlights included a few Buffleheads, a calling Pied-billed Grebe, and a female Northern Harrier coursing over Harper’s Meadow. A final bonus was a chorus of Leopard Frogs, also at Harper’s Meadow. Eventually, it was time to paddle south, and a nice following breeze brought me back to my car and then onto southern New Hampshire...until next time!

Say’s Phoebe – A “Bird Day” Gift

by Ruth Smith

I love watching birds. Their beauty, song and behavior all fascinate and delight me. For years, I have spent my birthday in mid-May, joined by seven or eight friends, searching for as many species as possible all within my town of Canterbury, NH. It has been my own version of a very local “Big Day”.

My “team” is rather varied, some are life-long birders, others more recent to the hobby. Each of them brings a different skill: a sharp-eyed spotter, a good vocalization identifier, a tenacious detective, a detailed note taker, or a tech-savvy researcher. Together we have fun putting clues together to identify species that are less common or taking time to marvel at the beauty of a Blue Jay. We have our favorite, annual spots and find comfort when we hear the “gunk-a-chunk” of an American Bittern at the local marsh, watch Bobolinks flutter over Shaker Village fields and are dazzled by a Prairie Warbler in the shrubs near the bison farm.

Canterbury hosts a great variety of habitats. The Merrimack River, ponds, streams, wetlands, fields, shrubby areas, forests and backyards all offer various combinations of food, shelter and nesting areas. This leads to a wide variety of birds. The highest one-day count I’ve had in town was 98. That year we started before dawn, ending well past dark. A



Ruth's Bird-Day team attempting to photograph the Say's Phoebe at Canterbury Shaker Village.

more typical list yields a tally in the 70s.

This year the final number was 72 species, but the number was not the remarkable aspect of our “hunt.”

After several hours at Canterbury Shaker Village (a true hot spot for birding), we were ready to move on. As we drove out of the parking lot, one of us spotted a bird that seemed a bit different. We stopped the cars and got out for a closer look. After eliminating a list of possible options, the newest member of my team*, who had lived and worked out west said, “You may think I’m crazy, but I’m pretty sure that’s a Say’s Phoebe.”

We looked at her in puzzlement; none of us were familiar with that species. Pulling out various guidebooks and phone apps, we found images and descriptions of the Say’s Phoebe. All field marks and behaviors matched perfectly. What didn’t match was the range map. This bird is normally found in the western US.

Knowing a sighting like this would interest the staff at NH Audubon, we called them. They were dubious when we reported our finding. “Take a photo and send it to us” was the request. After several attempts using a smart phone held up to my spotting scope, we were able to get a high enough quality image to send. Quickly after the photo was sent, my phone rang. “We’re on our way, keep an eye on that bird!!!!”

Of course, a moment later the bird, which had been exceptionally cooperative up to that point, flew across the street, out of sight. At least we had a photo! Two members chased after it. Two of us stayed in the parking lot to await the Audubon ornithologists. Sadly, the rest of the team had left for other commitments.

Those in pursuit of the phoebe were able to relocate it and sent a text message to alert us. It was near the Village gardens. When the Audubon staff arrived, we high-tailed it across the street. There it was, perched on a garden stake, as visible as a flame on a birthday candle. With the identification officially confirmed, the Say’s Phoebe became the subject of many much better photos and rapidly typed descriptions posted on eBird. The news spread rapidly. I didn’t wait to greet the many birders from across the state who came to see my birthday bird; I had more species to observe and record.

As it turned out, our sighting was only the second time a Say’s Phoebe had been recorded in New Hampshire . . . ever! My “bird day” tradition will certainly continue, but needless to say, this was a birthday that will be hard to beat and will go into the history books (and into *New Hampshire Bird Records*)!

** As a footnote, I want to give a special shout out to Linden Rayton who was the first to identify the Say’s Phoebe. Without her western experience and willingness to risk being “thought of as crazy,” I’m pretty sure we would not have been able to make the call and share this bird with others. The next day, it was gone from Shaker Village. The ephemeral nature of birding is part of what makes it fun . . . and so are surprises – especially on my birthday.*



Say's Phoebe by Pam Hunt, one of the first NH Audubon staff members to arrive at Canterbury Shaker Village and see the bird. Photo taken on 5-15-2023.

Field Notes Spring 2023

Anita Fernandez, Editor

Broad-winged Hawk with a Snake

by Kathryn Frieden



This Broad-winged Hawk carrying a snake was photographed by Roger Frieden at Deer Hill WMA in Brentwood on 4-28-2023.

The Broad-winged Hawk has a wide variety of prey in its diet. In North America, its most common prey are small mammals and amphibians, but it also eats insects and juvenile birds. Several studies have reported that from three to ten per cent of its diet consists of snakes. Apparently, Broad-winged Hawks can be a little particular with their food, as it has been observed that large snakes and frogs are sometimes skinned before being eaten and birds are often plucked.

On April 28, when Roger was birding at Deer Hill WMA and just happened to have his camera with him, he saw a Broad-winged Hawk land in a nearby tree with something dangling from its talons. He aimed the camera at the tree, ready for the hawk to fly again. Sure enough, less than a minute later the hawk took flight, carrying away a snake for lunch. The identity of the snake is unclear, but it could have been either an Eastern Garter Snake or a Ribbon Snake.

A Female Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Bow: What does she think she is?

by Anita Fernandez

Photos by Robert Reynolds III



This female Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was seen in Bow, NH by Robert Reynolds III. The female's head shows all black coloration, instead of the more standard red. In color, you can just see a small bit of yellow on the left side of the bird's chest.

Woodpeckers can be difficult to identify, especially for species like Hairy and Downy, whose plumage is so similar. When a woodpecker comes along with a color aberration, identification can be even more of a challenge. This Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was observed by Robert Reynolds III in his Bow, NH yard. According to a study done by Kilham (1977), adult females can sometimes exhibit all black crowns, crowns which are mixed red and black, black with red spots, or black with buffy markings. From this photo, it does appear that this is a female Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, as the throat is white. This coloring may be a result of melanism, in which some feathers on a bird's body have excessive amounts of melanin, causing feathers to appear brown or black that otherwise would not.

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What Nest is This?

Text and photos by Rebecca Suomala

The leaves were not out yet and this nest had survived the winter. What species made it? See the end of the Field Notes for the answer.



A Shape-shifting Warbler in Grafton County

by Anita Fernandez

When a predator is near the nest of a Black-throated Blue Warbler, both the female and male will mob the intruder, giving frequent call notes. If the female is flushed from off the nest, she will often perform a distraction display, flapping her wings wildly accompanied by high-pitched chittering and twittering notes, or dragging a wing along the ground, feigning injury to lure a predator away. Females have also been recorded diving repeatedly at those who get too close to the nest, such as chipmunks.

In a post to the NHBirds email list on 3-28-2023, Sandy Turner reported her experience with a Black-throated Blue Warbler in the 1980s. While working on the Breeding Bird Atlas, she witnessed a different sort of distraction display from a Black-throated Blue; it appeared to shape-shift into multiple species. While walking through the woods in Grafton County, she observed a small rodent scurrying away from her. The rodent then “morphed” into what looked like an injured bat, and then “morphed” again into its true warbler self as it took to the air and flew away, distracting indeed!

Barred Owl Nest



Barred Owls nest in cavities. You can just see this adult in the darkness of a cavity about 10 feet high in a decaying birch tree. Photos by Rebecca Suomala, 3-26-2023, southern New Hampshire.



Red-bellied Woodpecker in Manchester digging out a nesting cavity on a snag on 4-4-2023.



The woodpecker looks up as a Downy Woodpecker flies low and close over the Red-bellied's head, 4-4-2023.



"Spencer" looking out from his finished cavity into the sunshine on 4-15-2023.

Downy vs. Red-bellied: Can't Woodpeckers Just Get Along?

by Anita Fernandez

On April 4, 2023, I entered the backyard of my Manchester home to Red-bellied Woodpecker "querr" calls in the snag of one of my oak trees. As I looked up, the Red-bellied was perched on the north side of the trunk, and a Downy Woodpecker was making several dive attempts at the Red-bellied, landing on higher branches to either side. The Red-bellied was not to be deterred and began excavating a nesting hole, approximately 30 feet off the ground in the snag. I observed the Red-bellied pulling wood shavings from the in-process cavity on April 8 and 15, and on two other occasions observed the Downy flying to the site and briefly displacing the Red-bellied. The Red-bellied continued to call and complete his cavity. In mid-May, I still heard him calling every day and had not seen the Downy Woodpecker in several weeks. The Red-bellied's persistence paid off. He was heard and noticed by several neighbors and we affectionately refer to him as "Spencer."

Update: Over the course of the 2023 summer, although the exact number could not be verified, "Spencer" successfully fledged multiple Red-bellied Woodpecker chicks. Success!

Scarlet Tanager Fallout

by Robert A Quinn

I led a walk at Pawtuckaway State Park on May 24, 2023 and we witnessed an apparent local fallout of Scarlet Tanagers. It was a very productive morning of birding highlighted by *lots* of birds, good looks at many of them and the frosting on the top was finding an American Redstart nest and several stunningly bright male Scarlet Tanagers.

What was unusual about the tanager sightings was that we did not see *any* in the first 45 minutes of birding along the road in the western part of the state park but, as we retraced our path back along the same road, we saw many where moments before there were none. Also unusual was that most of these birds were low to the ground and easy to see. Many were brightly colored adult males. My strong impression was that they had just arrived, were tired from their overnight migration and were urgently looking for food. The number of birds we tallied in less than a mile was about ten.

It appeared that we were lucky enough to be at the right place at the right time to witness a mini-fallout.

Queen Eider Anniversary

by Kathryn Frieden

On **May 22, 2022**, Brett Hillman spent the day at Odiorne Point State Park in Rye and reported a grand total of 90 species! One of the birds he saw and photographed that day was a female King Eider, a duck that breeds in the northern Arctic. The species is rare and irregular in New Hampshire, with most sightings during the winter or spring migration. This King Eider was particularly exciting because there had not been a coastal sighting since September 2018, almost four years!



Female King Eider found by Brett Hillman at Odiorne Point SP in Rye 5-22-2022. Photograph by Jim Sparrell.

When Mark Suomala reported her presence in his weekly Rare Bird Alert email, he suggested that she really should be a “Queen Eider” and the name stuck. She continued to be seen (most often in the cove south of Odiorne Point) all summer and into the fall and then, even more surprisingly, all winter. Her first spring season sighting in 2023 was by Steve Mirick at Pulpit Rocks, Rye on March 3. Nobody reported seeing her on her actual New Hampshire “anniversary” on **May 22, 2023**, but sure enough, she was seen on May 25 and continues to be seen regularly. Clearly, she lives here now!



Our “Queen Eider” surveys her territory around Odiorne Point. Photo by Len Medlock, 4-21-2023.

What Nest is This? – Answer

Text and photos by Rebecca Suomala

Nest identification can be difficult, but in this case, we had first found this nest when the bird was sitting on it! It was much harder to see with the leaves on the trees. This Red-eyed Vireo was in the nest on 6-12-22 at Elm Brook Park in Hopkinton, NH, found by Zeke Cornell, Mark Suomala, and me.





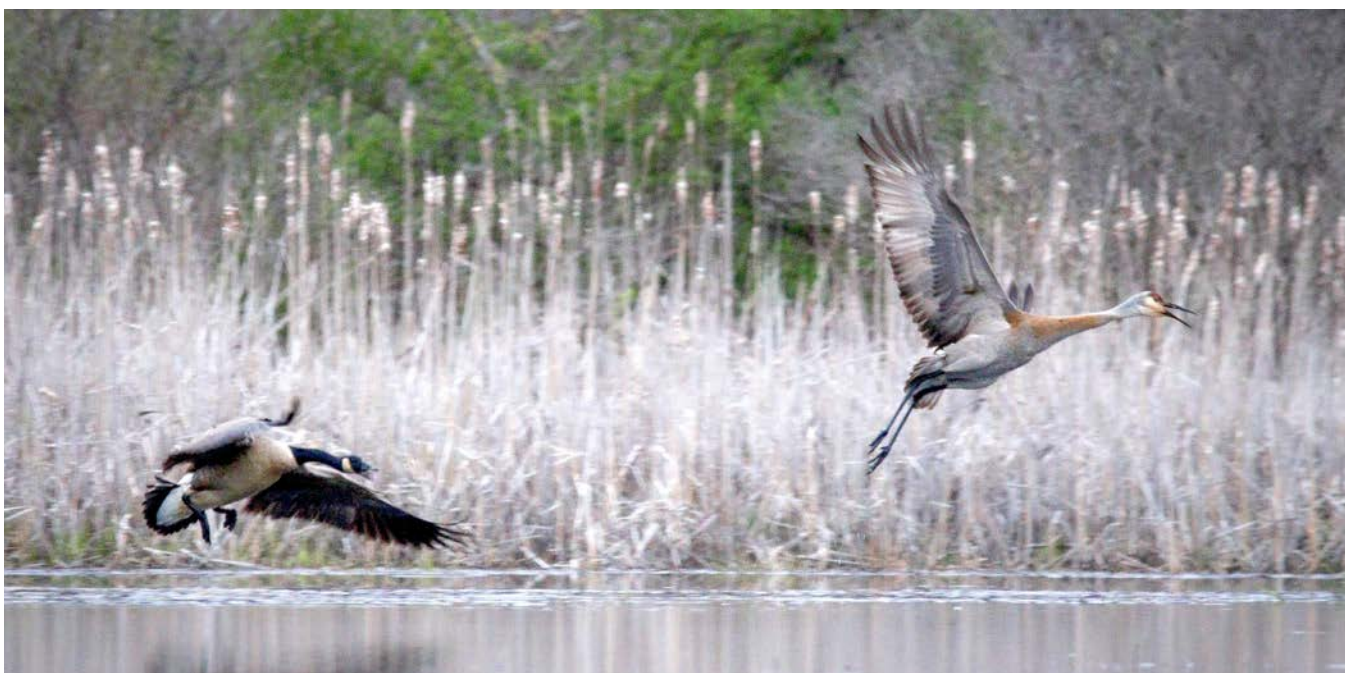
Showdown in Orford – Sandhill Crane vs. Canada Goose

Text and Photos by Catherine Holland

On Wednesday evening, May 3, 2023, I received a text from my dear friend Cathy Eastburn that there was a Sandhill Crane at Reeds Marsh in Orford, NH. This species had not been seen at Reeds since 2019 so I immediately hopped in the car to join her for a sunset birdwatch. The crane was hanging out on the north end of the marsh near a pair of nesting Canada Geese. These poor geese never have any luck nesting at this location due to the constant rising and lowering of water levels along the Connecticut River. Nevertheless, each year they try their best and can often be quite aggressive towards other wildlife. On this occasion, the goose that was not sitting on the nest became very territorial and started honking, swimming, and flying at the lone crane. The crane attempted to fly off several times while being chased but never flew more than ten to fifteen feet away, thus the drama continued. As the goose honked, the crane began its bugling call, which sounds like a velociraptor squawk straight out of the Jurassic Park movies. This cacophonous duet continued until the sun set over the cliffs of Fairlee, Vermont.



These photos show the dramatic confrontation between a nesting Canada Goose and a stubborn Sandhill Crane at Reeds Marsh in Orford, New Hampshire on May 3, 2023.



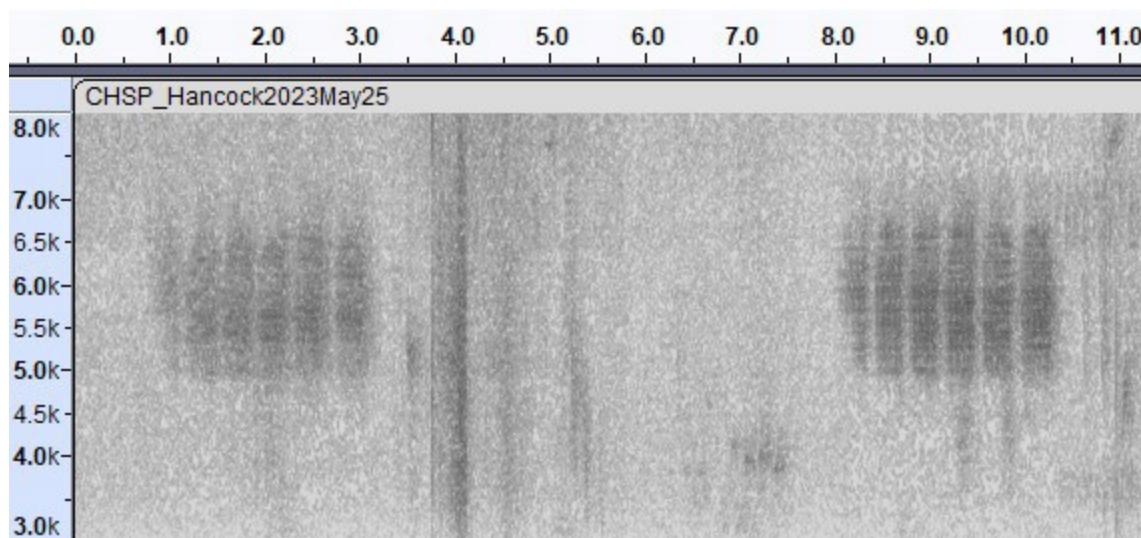
Chipping Sparrow Masquerades as a Clay-colored Sparrow

by Steven Lamonde

While driving to work on the morning of April 30, 2021, I heard through the car window what sounded like a Clay-colored Sparrow singing near the intersection of Route 137 and Cross Road in Hancock. Unable to stop to investigate further, I texted an alert to local birder-extraordinaire, Phil Brown. He arrived on site a few minutes later, quickly found the bird, and texted back that it sounded good for Clay-colored Sparrow. Seconds later another text arrived, “It’s a Chipping Sparrow!!” Neither of us had heard a Chipping Sparrow sing a broken song so consistently. The spacing between buzzes seemed a perfect match for the Clay-colored Sparrows that we have encountered.

I didn’t bother enjoying this odd sparrow, until it was re-sighted on May 24, 2023. Just as I had been fooled two years earlier, another local birder originally reported it as a Clay-colored Sparrow. The following day, I headed over to investigate, collecting several WAV-format audio recordings with the phone-based Voice Record Pro app. The following measurements were made using Audacity software. Songs averaged 2.2 seconds in duration, consisted of six separated buzzes, and were spaced 4.8-6.8 seconds apart (Figure 1). Each buzz consisted of 10 rapid notes, followed by a 0.06-second gap before the next buzz began. Individual notes lasted 0.02 seconds and each spanned 2.3 kHz, ranging from a low of 4.5 kHz to a high of 6.8 kHz, with nearly all notes at the same pitch. One consistent exception to this observation was the

Figure 1. Spectrogram displaying two iterations of the odd Chipping Sparrow’s broken song. Kilohertz are displayed on the y-axis and seconds are displayed on the x-axis.



first note of each song, which spanned 5.5 kHz to 6.8 kHz. The sound volume was equal across all buzzes.

Was this bird buzzing like a typical Clay-colored Sparrow or stuttering through a Chipping Sparrow song? I dove into the ornithological literature to find out, focusing on the number of buzzes, song pitch, and song duration. Clay-colored Sparrow songs range from one to eight buzzes (Grant 2020), although two or three are most common. Conversely, in an analysis of 461 Chipping Sparrow songs, Borror (1959) reported only one with a two-parted trill. Song pitch varies widely among populations of both species (Borror 1959, Knapton 1982, Pieplow 2017, Grant 2020, Middleton 2020), and this overlap contains the frequency span of the Hancock sparrow. On average, however, the pitch of Clay-colored Sparrow songs tends to max out around 6.2-6.5 kHz. Average song duration in Clay-colored Sparrows falls just shy of two seconds (Knapton 1982, Grant 2020), whereas song duration in Chipping Sparrows ranges from one to seven seconds (Borror, 1959) and averages three to four seconds in duration (Middleton 2020). Comparing these song characteristics to the Hancock sparrow, arguments could be made favoring greater similarity towards either species.

Could this oddball Chipping Sparrow have learned its song from a Clay-colored Sparrow? While song development in *Spizella* sparrows remains poorly studied, scientists have previously, albeit rarely, documented similar observations to our own. Grant (2020) mentioned a single report of a male Clay-colored Sparrow song that included a partial Chipping Sparrow-like trill, and Tasker (1955) described a “Chipping Sparrow or morphologically similar hybrid” singing a Clay-colored Sparrow song. In both instances, the researchers could not determine if these irregular songs resulted from inter-species learning or cryptic hybridization. Apparently, inter-species song learning or development within the *Spizella* genus is very limited, although not unheard of (also see Short, 1996). Chipping Sparrows can live more than 10 years; thus, Hancock birders may enjoy this local oddity for several years to come.

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Big Days in May 2023

World Migratory Bird Day is officially celebrated on the second Saturday of May in Canada and the US and the second Saturday of October in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean; see <https://www.migratorybirdday.org/>. This year's date was May 13, 2023, and eBird also held its Global Big Day on the same date to help celebrate. Below are some Bird Day stories from New Hampshire birders posted to the NHBirds email list.

Durham 5 MR big Morning/Evening

by Kurk Dorsey, posted 5-13-2023

I had a very productive day within my 5 MR (mile radius) centered on our house in the Woodridge neighborhood in Durham. The only drawback is that one of our teenagers decided to take up crew for some unknown reason (and I'm not about to ask him), so we had to leave at 9:30 to get him to a race and didn't get back to Durham until almost 5:00 pm. So, it was not really a big day so much as a big morning and medium evening.

I woke up at 5:15 unable to sleep, perhaps because of the dog breath coming from extremely close range, but it's May, so I'm not complaining. Instead, I leashed them up and headed out to walk the Woodridge neighborhood. The warbler show was not as good as yesterday, but I still set my high count for the neighborhood with 62 species! Among the usual suspects, I am happiest to report a continuing sapsucker, which seems to have signed a lease for the corner of Fogg and Meserve, tapping out its Morse code messages almost daily since mid-April. (it might be saying, "help,

I'm stuck in the sap") Plus, I saw a skunk that the dogs, thankfully, did not see.

I admit to being a bit cranky because on my return, I ran into a very slow-moving neighbor, whose dog is crazy about my dogs (again, no known reason for that). I was antsy to be on my way, but had to admit the error of my ways when I heard "three beers!" I waited for a bit to see if I could hear it again, but no further orders. So, I headed inside to feed myself, the dogs and the birds. I'd like to apologize to the birds for crossing up the order and putting kibble in the suet basket, but I found the suet to be very filling.

I headed out to Lubberland Creek but stopped at the Fogg playing fields to tell my neighbor, Ted Bradshaw, to be on the lookout for the Olive-sided. Et voila, it appeared, giving us great looks and calling repeatedly. One other oddity came later, with only my second yard mockingbird in the 15+ years here. Lubberland was birdy but nothing unusual (Warbling Vireo was the rarest) and I ended up with 51 species in a bit less than an hour. So, I stopped briefly at Heron Point, where I picked up my only Yellow-rumped Warbler of the day and some rough-winged swallows, no herons and no points. So at 9:30, as we were heading out for the race, I was sitting at 83 species, then picked up an American Kestrel in Lee.

When we got back to town, I foolishly decided that rather than clean the house or do something productive, I would work around dinner to see if I could push (or pish) the day's count to 100. The Durham town landing was missing all of the birds I hoped to add to my list, but turned up a nice surprise, two Lesser Yellowlegs arguing with four Greater Yellowlegs about who was really the lesser bird. A Barred Owl called during dinner, but I let it go to voicemail.

A stop at Old Mill Road in Lee yielded three expected additions, Field Sparrow, Prairie Warbler, and Green Heron, but also a nice surprise, a calling Sora, 90! Little River Park in Lee had Winter Wren and Louisiana Waterthrush, although neither was singing, to put me at 92. With the sun starting to fade behind the trees just a bit, I rushed over to Moore Fields to get a Killdeer and maybe a miracle. I'd say that a Northern Harrier that dropped into the field just as I got out of the car counts, but an added miracle was the pair of Least Sandpipers in the quickly fading puddle near the gravel road, 95!

I had time for one last stop, Oyster River Forest, where I had some hope to pick up five stragglers: Hermit Thrush (check), Great-horned Owl (check), Wood Duck (check), American Woodcock (check), and Blue-winged Warbler (check please, it's getting dark!). I'm also almost certain there was a nighthawk, but I didn't see it because of the woods and heard it just once. Olive-sided Flycatcher, Sora, Northern Harrier, and Lesser Yellowlegs made for a nice day. If only my son had been lazier, maybe I could have hit 105? I'll have to bug him about that.

Sullivan Big Day

by Dylan Jackson, posted 5-13-2023

As is tradition, I spent eBird's Global Big Day birding within the confines of Sullivan County. I started in Sunapee at 3:45 am and worked my way west. I started early in hopes of finally getting my first Eastern Whip-poor-will for Sullivan, but alas, that one continues to elude me. Unfortunately, at no point throughout the day did I get that "migration bonanza" feeling.

Migrants were really hard to come by and species in general showed up in very small numbers. You'll be surprised to see how many species made the list represented only by one individual. Warblers were very lacking, with only one northern-breeding species found (Tennessee Warbler). Most other warblers were found on territory. One special note on warblers, however, was the return of Claremont's Lawrence's Warbler that returned to the same spot in Moody Park for the third consecutive season since I first found it.

Other notes include a fairly late female Red-breasted Merganser in the Connecticut River in Charlestown. I found Marsh Wrens not only at Great Meadow where they've been reported previously, but also in an extensive cattail marsh at the Sullivan/Cheshire county line in Charlestown, completing a clean sweep of resident wren species. Notable, and frustrating misses include American Kestrel despite visiting half a dozen or more spots that are normally reliable for them. Northern Flickers were nowhere to be found despite being almost everywhere last weekend. Several spots that are usually reliable for Field Sparrow and towhee let me down and I couldn't buy a Common Loon anywhere if I wanted. Big days always have glaring misses, but today especially hurt.

In 2015, Pam Hunt and I and others set the highest single day count I've ever had in Sullivan with 116 species, a number I've been chasing ever since. The highest I've had since was 108 which I accomplished last year. This year, I managed to tie that exact same number (not including the half of a Golden-winged Warbler in the Lawrence's). I'm shocked I was able to get this number, despite how few birds I was able to find today, but my determination to someday beat 116 will never fade. Until next time!

Concord Big Day

by Pam Hunt, posted 5-14-2023

Time for me to follow in the electron streams of Dylan and Kurk with my own account of yet another "restricted area" big day. I was, of course, (mostly) in Concord.

Dog breath didn't wake me up, but I was awake at 1:30 am, although not on purpose. The residents of the adjacent condo appeared to be having some sort of late celebration,

and while I don't know if that's what woke me up, I certainly couldn't get to sleep – although I tried. I stayed in bed doing Wordle and other things on my tablet until maybe 3:00 am, at which point, I decided I might as well get up and get this thing underway. My first bird was a cardinal that spontaneously chipped when the neighbors let their dog out onto their deck around 3:30 (it got two more hours of sleep than I did!). By 04:00 am, I was out the door, adding robin, Chipping Sparrow, and Barred Owl before I got in my car. A stop at the south end of Long Pond yielded begging calls from two Great Horned Owls, plus a spontaneously-singing Song Sparrow and spontaneously-calling Spotted Sandpiper, and then I was off to Mast Yard State Forest. Eastern Whip-poor-wills didn't disappoint (had five), but woodcock had me a little worried until I heard one in the distance as it was getting light. At the same time, the usual powerline residents (towhee and Field Sparrow) were gearing up, as were forest thrushes (Veery and Hermit Thrush). On the way out, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was an excellent bonus, and I was back at my car at 5:16 with 36 species. The sun was due up in nine minutes.

The next two hours were spent visiting hot spots along my normal Penacook survey route and I was back to my condo at 7:15 am with 79 species under my belt. Highlights in this stretch included a Blackpoll Warbler and Winter Wren along Bog Road, White-crowned Sparrow at Murray Farms, and a Tennessee Warbler on The Island. I had to stop at my house for two reasons: 1) a bathroom break and 2) picking up the bag containing a change of clothes for later in the day (stay tuned!). As I was literally driving out of my development, I heard a Cape May Warbler singing from one of the non-native landscape spruces for #80. Time to head east.

Stops along Sewalls Fall and Mountain Roads got me ten more species, a distant meadowlark being the highlight at the latter. Hoit Road Marsh provided kingfisher, Least Flycatcher, and Yellow Warbler. I was now at a good pace with 93 species, but it was time to change gears, and change clothes.

You see, it was the first day of the New Hampshire Renaissance Faire, so birding was about to take a back seat for several hours. But not quite, since a Broad-winged Hawk flew over Unity's yard as we were getting in the car.

There were birds at the Faire (along Martin Road in Fremont), one of which was Killdeer, a species I hadn't found in Concord at that point. The highlight came around 1:30 pm when three large dark gangly birds flew right over the "Queen's Stage" as Unity and I were walking past it. I pointed at them and yelled "Ibis!", no doubt confusing some of the passers-by (lots of strange things can be seen at faires, but a wench pointing at the sky yelling out a strange word is not usually one of them). The ibis circled the pond behind the fair a few times and eventually settled and remained there

for at least an hour. There have been a fair number of ibis away from the coast this spring, perhaps a result of the return of this species as a breeder at the Isles of Shoals.

We left the faire a little after 4:00 pm, were back in Concord by 5:30, and at 5:50, I was back in full big day mode and walking around behind Unity's house. I had two goals here: 1) see if any of the Solitary Sandpipers she's been seeing there were still around and 2) listening for White-breasted Nuthatch. I was successful with the sandpipers. For some time now, the nuthatch had been the top contender for the "common species missed on a big day" award, and there it remained as I headed south. There were more people at Turtle Pond than I think I've ever seen there (and of course I'm not usually there at 6:00 pm on a gorgeous May weekend), but they didn't seem to bother the Common Loon. At this point, the sun was starting to set, the wind becoming more consistent, and birds quieting down. I decided to cash in my chips at West Locke Road, where I hoped the mix of forest, wetland, river, and field would produce the four species I needed to reach 100. First to fall was Savannah Sparrow, although they weren't singing and I was lucky to flush them from the side of the road. Second was an Osprey picked up during a random scan of the horizon. And then, as I walked back from the river, a White-breasted Nuthatch called off to my left; the award would have to go to another species. That species was *not* Virginia Rail, which called from the wetland as I continued walking back out. Not a bad species for #100, although it would also have been fun if it had been the nuthatch.

Now it was clean-up time, since the big day adrenaline wasn't letting me quit just yet. In short order, I added Killdeer along West Portsmouth Street, Great Blue Heron at Horseshoe Pond, and Bank Swallows in the fading light at the Steeplegate Mall pond. Sunset was at 8:00 pm, about the time I started driving to my final stop at the Concord Airport. A late flyover by a Merlin was a nice surprise as I walked to the airport fence, and shortly afterward, I heard two Grasshopper Sparrows singing. Also in the dusk chorus were a couple of Savannah and Field Sparrows, a towhee, and a startled robin, but ironically enough, there was not a Vesper Sparrow in earshot.

And so it ended. Despite a 7-hour non-birding gap in the middle of the day, I managed to find 105 species in Concord (plus the ibis!). Who knows what the total would have been if I hadn't gone to the Ren Faire, but I had fun of all sorts on a glorious spring day.

Big Day on May 14

by Logan Anderson, posted 5-16-2023

Every year, I attempt a big day on the weekend of World Migratory Bird Day with the goal of beating the previous

year's record. Last year, I set my personal record in the mountains of Virginia with 127 and this year, I attempted to beat that record with a New Hampshire big day mostly along Route 16. I was able to get 147 species on Sunday with some notable misses, mainly nocturnal birds, and raptors, but was very pleased to beat last year's number. I had a whopping 90 species checklist at Pickering Ponds, my highest checklist anywhere away from Cape May, NJ. I snagged Upland Sandpipers at Pease Tradeport and while looking for the Grasshopper Sparrow across the street, I found a Clay-colored Sparrow singing. Other notables included the Thick-billed Murre at Odiorne and a few Roseate Terns roosting with Common Terns in Hampton Harbor.

Link to the eBird Trip Report:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/129886>

Big Day Record! An Account of a Very Long Day of Birding

by Pam Hunt

New Hampshire's record for the most birds seen in 24 hours stands at 170 species and it was set back in 1997. This article, written by Pam Hunt just after the record was broken, describes that day. It was never published in New Hampshire Bird Records because the year before, Pam had written an article about breaking the Big Day record with 162 species on May 23, 1996 (Spring 1996, Vol 15, #1). It seemed as if the new record might be broken again before the Spring 1997 issue came out, but it wasn't(!), and it hasn't been despite many attempts. The Big Day record of 170 species still stands and we present Pam's article to you now as birders attempted Big Days of all kinds in May 2023.

The spring of 1997 in New Hampshire could only be described as late, not to mention cold and windy. Thus, it was perhaps just as well that we waited almost until the end of May to take a shot at the New Hampshire Big Day record. I had my doubts, however. There just seemed to be no way we could beat last year's phenomenal total [162, see above], especially since we hardly got any scouting in. Nonetheless, Steve Mirick and I got up at 10:30 pm (not that we slept at all!) and drove to Concord to meet Al Strong and Dan Strong at midnight on May 27, 1997. After the obligatory doughnut stop, the Big Day was officially underway.

Around 12:20 am, we had our first bird, Common Nighthawks over the state capitol building, but the second had to wait until we heard a distant Barred Owl in the White Mountains around 2:00 am. Then, it was north through the notch to Cherry Pond and its boreal bonanza. Along the way, we stopped at Trudeau Road to try for saw-whets. There weren't any (no surprise there), but we did get to hear a few

coyotes, and the spruce and fir were beautiful silhouettes against the bright moonlight. A little later, before heading in to Cherry Pond, we actually did get a saw-whet, when Al's keen ears picked up its tooting against the background noise of the local power plant, a definite bonus indeed.

As we approached the parking spot for the hike to the pond, we noticed another car already there and the *frost* on its windshield indicated that it had been there for some time. My first guess was that it could be nobody else but Bob Quinn, another New Hampshire birder who was conducting surveys around Cherry Pond and who had provided us with some excellent staked out birds in the area. Bob it was, since our driving up effectively woke him up, and we were greeted with the immortal words "It's 3:30 in the morning!!" (or something like that). Bob accepted our apologies (although it was certainly time for him to get up anyway – dawn was a mere two hours away!) but refused a doughnut and we were off.

The spot Bob had found the previous week was a newly created beaver wetland along the railroad tracks [Moorhen Marsh] and it did not let us down. Upon our arrival around 4:15 am, we were greeted by two or three American Bitterns, three or four Virginia Rails, two Soras, two or three Marsh Wrens, and, best of all, a Common Moorhen. As the light increased, large numbers of ducks began to fly out of the area and we tallied Ring-necked Duck and Green-winged Teal among the more common species. At this point, I really should refer back to my description of Bob's car, note the word *frost*.

This means that the temperature dropped below freezing at some point during the night and, given that the night is coldest right before dawn, we figured it was pretty damn cold (probably under 30 degrees F). This became abundantly clear as we stood alongside this most excellent wetland and actually even took a serious turn. Steve was not feeling well; he complained of feeling tired ("walked into a wall" was the term he used) and seemed far more lethargic than he should have, even for someone who had half an hour of sleep in the last 20 hours. All he really seemed to want was a doughnut and a nap and neither was available this close to the polar ice cap (I didn't mention the ice cap? What else could explain the cold, since the glaciers had largely retreated from northern New Hampshire the previous weekend.). Conversation later in the day revealed that Steve had actually felt even *worse* than he looked, but when we finally got him his nap and carbohydrate, he perked up quite rapidly.

But I digress. As the light started peeking over the eastern horizon, we decided to head on to Little Cherry Pond, where we picked up a few more species including the increasingly rare Rusty Blackbird. On the way back to the car we wrapped up our northern warbler list with Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, and Mourning. More impressive, however,

was the view to the east over the pond. Through the cold, clear morning air, we had an awe-inspiring view of Mount Washington and the rest of the Presidential Range, all still cloaked in snow and reflected in the almost becalmed waters of the pond. The calls of Common Loons only added to the moment. It is at times like this that going without sleep for 24 hours becomes worthwhile and the crazy pace of a Big Day must simply slow down to accommodate the rest of the natural world.

But not for long. We were actually a little ahead of schedule, and after a quick harrier-less swing by the Whitefield airport, we headed back south. At this point, we already had over 80 species under our belt and felt we had done darn well at Cherry Pond. At Trudeau Road, we wrapped up the northern species list with Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, Pine Siskin, Swainson's Thrush, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (thank goodness, since we normally get lots at Cherry Pond), and Common Raven. Then back through Franconia Notch, where we decided against scanning for Peregrine Falcons in favor of a more reliable spot a little farther south. The latter required a half-hour side trip, but since we were ahead of schedule we thought it was worth a try. It wasn't and we actually got a little behind schedule in the process. Time to head seriously south, slowing down for Laconia's Purple Martins along the way.

We arrived at Pawtuckaway State Park a little after 11:00 am, more or less on schedule, and at a much better time of day than in 1996. All the expected species fell in short order, including Cerulean Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Yellow-throated Vireo. Louisiana Waterthrush was a little harder and, in the end, the only one we got was a single song heard by Al out the car window. The singer steadfastly refused to respond to a tape and we reluctantly left for the coast. Our journey seaward was a circuitous one, however, involving an extended side trip through Brentwood and Kensington in search of cuckoos, pheasant, and Willow and Alder flycatchers. We only got the latter and Steve and I recalled the similar futility of this side trip the year before. Then again, I don't think we got Alder Flycatcher anywhere else later in the day, so go figure.

The tide was almost high, so we worked our way through the high tide shorebird roosts, unfortunately with little initial success. Then, in a toned down repeat of last year's shorebird bonanza, we scanned the grasses at the south end of Hampton Harbor. Here there were shorebirds, and while their numbers were recorded in the dozens rather than the thousands, most of the expected species were there. Our only real miss was Short-billed Dowitcher, and we had a single Dunlin and several White-rumped Sandpipers to compensate. Next task, head north along the coast and look for lingering sea ducks. It took a while, but in the end we

found them all, and a Willet nest to boot, and a tally revealed the unexpected – we were within 12 of a new record, had over two hours of light left, and had easily a dozen good bets for additional species! Steve was so excited that he started to drive away at one point when Dan was still outside of the car.

The needed dozen fell one by one, and, at Rye Harbor, we found two stake outs that tie for bird of the day: a female King Eider (present since the winter) and a male Blue-winged Teal (present since the day before). A detour to Odiorne Point State Park proved pointless and we left the coast for our inland finish. Somewhere in here the pressure finally got to Steve and he held a conversation with the Gumbie toy that he keeps above his rear view mirror. Maybe he hadn't fully recovered from his morning ailment after all. At the Pease airfield, we got Field and Vesper Sparrows and, at 6:56 pm, Upland Sandpiper became species number 164. A new record, but there was still over an hour of light, and we knew that we would not rest until we reached or surpassed 170. So, we were off

Thus began the standard mad-scramble-around-Durham phase that looks to become a tradition in my Northern Route Big Days. This time the scramble picked up, each at a separate spot, kestrel, Willow Flycatcher, Fish Crow (had the nerve to call before we had a chance to try the tape), Blue-winged Warbler (singing, albeit barely, at 7:45 pm), and Black-crowned Night-Heron (good eyes, Dan!). The total now, if you can't do the math, was 169 and with four hours left in the day, we figured 172 was a reasonable goal.

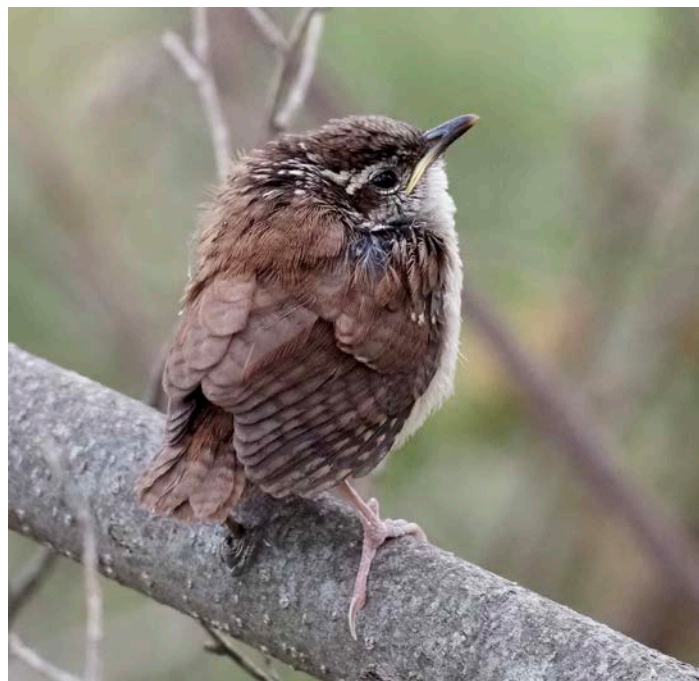
Then things got hard. Great Horned Owls and Pied-billed Grebes could not be found in Durham and a snap decision to try (unsuccessfully) for the latter at the Rochester sewage ponds effectively denied us the possibility of getting it at Cascade Marsh. So, it was on to Clough State Park for whip-poor-will and whatever else. The whips were not cooperative and as the minutes ticked away, we did a mad dash across the park to try one more spot. No goatsuckers, but a Great Horned Owl at 11:50 pm saved the day and our last doughnut (long since crushed) was tossed into the woods to thank the Owl Gods. Appropriately enough, this is the same spot where our 1996 Big Day ended with a saw-whet.

Then Steve and I had to drive for an hour to get back to his house. To keep him awake, I tried teaching him the correct taxonomic order. This process was complicated by my own inability to stay awake and a very bizarre tendency to toss totally inappropriate phrases such as “Fish and Game” and “helping my sister move” into the Charadriiformes. I can only guess that I was dreaming, so it's amazing that we made it home at all. But we did, since I'm writing this (or am I dreaming it?!). Next stop, 175.

Backyard Birder

Carolina Wren Feeds Fledglings

by Kathryn Frieden



A hungry-looking fledgling Carolina Wren by Jim Sparrell.



This adult Carolina Wren perched on a post in our yard in Nottingham. Photo by Roger Frieden.

We have been lucky enough to have Carolina Wrens in our yard all winter and have become accustomed to their many songs and calls, including the trilled “cheer call.” On the morning of May 9, 2023 I heard this cheer call loudly repeated many times and coming from very close by. I

soon located the adult Carolina Wren perched on the corner post of our back deck. It then flew down to the nearby feeder where it plucked out a piece of suet and flew over to the split rail fence at the side of the yard. Then, I was quite surprised and pleased to notice three Carolina Wren fledglings perched along the top rail. The adult fed the first one with the bit of suet and then flew back and forth several more times to continue the feeding. Because it was using the “cheer” call, this was likely the male wren.

The Carolina Wren averages 57 days from the laying of eggs to fledgling independence. They are cavity nesters, sometimes using old pots, vases, tangled vines, or roots. Incubation ranges from 13 to 18 days and the nestlings reach their peak mass by around day nine. They leave the nest at about two weeks, but stay in the area near the nest for another two weeks, usually roosting together.

So, when did the female lay her eggs for her first brood of the season? Counting back from May 9, when I observed the feeding, with the female laying her eggs at least 30 days earlier, the most likely date is in the range from April 1 through April 9. The female could begin a second brood while the male continues to feed the fledglings.

Reference

Haggerty, T. and E. Morton. 2020. Carolina Wren, version 1.1. in *The Birds of the World* (A. Poole, ed.). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY.

Birds and Trail Cameras

by Iain MacLeod

All photos are from the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center trail cameras.

In 2017, Squam Lakes Natural Science Center embarked on a project called Hidden Stories. Through the deployment of 30 trail cameras scattered throughout the 200+ acres of the Science Center property in Holderness, we have systematically monitored the wildlife that uses the forests, meadows and wetlands. Over the five plus years of gathering data, we have collected tens of thousands of images and video clips that have helped tell the Hidden Stories of the wildlife here. An interactive exhibit and website were created that share those stories in great detail and paint a picture of seasonal changes through story maps and interpretation.

The primary focus of the project has been on the mammal species that use the area – being larger and generally slower moving, they are more likely to trigger the cameras and record themselves. Naturalist Eric D’Aleo has spearheaded the project for us and coordinates the volunteers who hike the four corners of the property collecting SD cards and swapping out batteries in all months of the year. Through

mapping the sightings, Eric can see how particular Black Bears move across the landscape, and know how many Coyotes or White-tailed Deer there are and which areas they favor for shelter or hunting.



Barred Owl.

It’s not just mammals that we record, however. Over the years, 54 bird species have been photographed. Eric reports that most of the bird sightings come from video clips – the stills are usually blurry. The cameras all have night vision, so both Barred and Northern Saw-whet Owls have been recorded several times. Mounting cameras near vernal pools has provided many sequences of Barred Owls hunting for amphibians in the spring or taking a bath.

Most of the common bird species we would expect to find here have posed for the camera at least once, but we have also picked up some that we didn’t know were out there like Swainson’s Thrush and Northern Goshawk.

The location of cameras is critical. As mentioned earlier, siting a camera overlooking a vernal pool or really any wetland area is going to increase sightings. Forest clearings, or old logging roads which provide natural highways for animals are good spots for cameras.



Northern Goshawk.



Ruffed Grouse

Eric has placed several cameras near fallen trees with exposed root balls or cavities. These provide great den sites for mammals but also provide perches for birds to pose briefly in front of the camera.

The quality of the images and video clips produced by the cameras is really quite good. There are many different brands to choose from and the technology is improving all the time. These cameras provide another tool for understanding the wildlife around us and offer a glimpse into their hidden stories.

To learn more about the Hidden Stories project visit:
<https://nhnature.org/hiddenstories/>

Iain MacLeod is Executive Director of the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center in Holderness, NH. He is a member of the New Hampshire Bird Records Editorial Team and a former member of the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee. In 2019, he was the very proud recipient of NH Audubon's Goodhue-Elkins Award.

Bird species sighted on Squam Lakes Natural Science Center trail cameras

54 species to date (3-3-2023)

Canada Goose
 Wood Duck
 Mallard
 Hooded Merganser
 Wild Turkey
 Ruffed Grouse
 Mourning Dove
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird
 Great Blue Heron
 Cooper's Hawk
 Northern Goshawk

Broad-winged Hawk
 Barred Owl
 Northern Saw-whet Owl
 Belted Kingfisher
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
 Red-bellied Woodpecker
 Downy Woodpecker
 Hairy Woodpecker
 Pileated Woodpecker
 Northern Flicker
 Eastern Phoebe
 Great Crested Flycatcher
 American Crow
 Common Raven
 Black-capped Chickadee
 Tufted Titmouse
 Tree Swallow
 Red-breasted Nuthatch
 White-breasted Nuthatch
 Brown Creeper

Winter Wren
 Carolina Wren
 European Starling
 Gray Catbird
 Eastern Bluebird
 Veery
 Swainson's Thrush
 Hermit Thrush
 Wood Thrush
 American Robin
 American Goldfinch
 Chipping Sparrow
 Dark-eyed Junco
 White-throated Sparrow
 Ovenbird
 Louisiana Waterthrush
 Black-and-white Warbler
 Common Yellowthroat
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Scarlet Tanager
 Northern Cardinal



Wild Turkeys.

Pickering Ponds Field Trip

On May 14, 2023, Dan Hubbard, with assistance from Zeke Cornell, led a field trip for NH Audubon's Seacoast Chapter to Pickering Ponds in Rochester, NH. Here are a few photos from the day by Rebecca Suomala. The eBird checklist from the trip is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S137701004>



Virginia Rail.



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest.



Yellow Warbler.





American Robin nest.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Birding Chamberlain-Reynolds Memorial Forest, Center Harbor

by Rob Woodward

Birding the Chamberlain-Reynolds Memorial Forest in Center Harbor is a special treat. You can easily spend three to four hours here as you will want to stop and sit on a rock by the lake and just soak in the views. Birding can be quite good; on May 31, 2022, I recorded 55 species, including American Black Duck, Virginia Rail, Winter Wren, and 10 species of warblers. Almost 100 species have been reported at this eBird Hotspot (<https://ebird.org/nh/hotspot/L9910691>). The 169-acre forest is owned by the New England Forestry Foundation who “pursue innovative programs to advance conservation and forestry throughout New England.” The property is managed under a cooperative agreement by the Squam Lakes Association (SLA), whose mission is to preserve the beauty and resources of the Squam Lakes watershed. The SLA maintains the five miles of trails and accepts reservations for the four “back-country” campsites. They even sell firewood on site for campers.

The forest is situated on Dog Cove on the south end of Squam Lake and is accessible by car or by boat. There is a public boat ramp (rare on Squam Lake!) on Route 25B at the south end of Dog Cove where small boats can be launched. There are a few docks on the property to allow boaters easy access. The SLA rents canoes and kayaks at their headquarters on Route 3 in Holderness where you could launch a boat and paddle to the preserve. One of the more interesting features of this property is that it harbors the most extensive stand

of mountain laurel I know of in the Lakes Region, near the northern limit of its range. Easily the single greatest asset of this preserve is the one mile of shoreline on Squam Lake with multiple look-out points where you can view the lake and the mountains of the surrounding Squam Range. It even includes two “sugar sand” beaches that you might enjoy all to yourself on a weekday.

I like to start my bird walk from the east parking lot on College Road. There are only a handful of parking spaces, but if you get there early you will have no trouble. The west lot is just a hundred yards farther down College Road. The lot is at the beginning of East Fire Road. Walk down this road and after 0.2 miles, bear right on Dog Cove Shore Trail. This trail gently descends to the shore of the lake and passes through tall hemlock and white pine. Listen for Winter Wren and Hermit Thrush. Eventually, you come to a small, enclosed cove where to the left you will see a floating loon nest with an incubating Common Loon in season. If you get here in late June, the mountain laurel surrounding this cove will be blooming beautifully.

At 0.7 miles from the parking lot, you will find the start of the Swamp Walk, one of the best wetland boardwalks in the state at 0.2 miles long. The wetland is quite vast, bordered on the northeast by Heron Cove and continuing a long ways to the southwest. Expect to find Alder Flycatcher in breeding season along with Baltimore Oriole, Eastern Kingbird, Swamp Sparrow, and Northern Waterthrush. Based on a recent photograph of a juvenile, we know Virginia Rail breeds here but may need to be coaxed out.

Turn right at the end of the boardwalk for the Wister Point Trail. Here you will enjoy another half mile of shoreline through dense mountain laurel, creating ideal nesting habitat for Black-throated Blue Warbler which breeds here

prolifically. On August 21, 2020, I saw a Black-throated Blue feed a fledgling. The date range for fledged young in the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in New Hampshire* only extends to August 10, making this a late breeding record.

Where the Wister Point Trail meets the Beach Trail you will come to First Beach, a very inviting place to take a cool dip in the lake on a hot summer's day. Next door is Second Beach, similarly tempting. The adjacent rocky shoreline makes for good habitat for Spotted Sandpiper. The broad views of the lake invite a search for Bald Eagle and Common Loon.

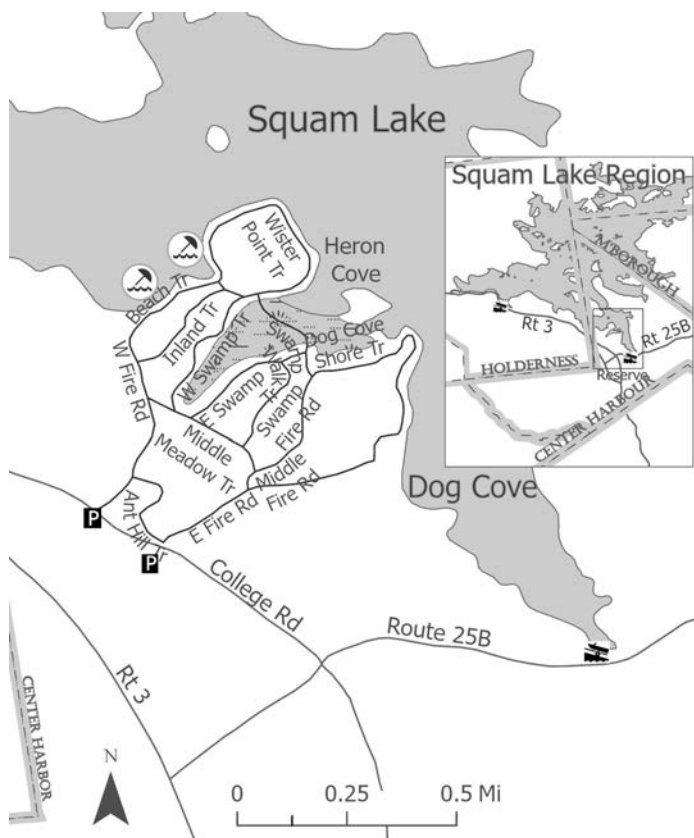


The view of Squam Lake from Chamberlain-Reynolds Memorial Forest by Rob Woodward.

Beyond the Beach Trail starts West Fire Road from which you can either cut over on the Middle Meadow Trail or the Ant Hill Trail. Both trails pass through deep deciduous woods where the expected species found are Blackburnian and Yellow-rumped warblers, Northern Parula, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Scarlet Tanager. The Middle Meadow Trail meets up with East Fire Road and returns to the east parking lot or stay on the West Fire Road and take the Ant Hill Trail to the east parking lot. Along this trail where it crosses a stream, I saw my first Two-lined Salamander, thanks to a salamander workshop led by the SLA. If you continue on West Fire Road, it ends at the west parking lot.

You may want to consider a trip extension to another excellent wetland boardwalk at the Laverack Nature Trail on Hawkins Brook in downtown Meredith. Parking is available either behind the Meredith Village Savings Bank (where the trail begins) on Route 25 near the intersection with Route 3 or in the public parking lot on Route 3 just north of the intersection with Route 25.

To get to the Chamberlain-Reynolds Memorial Forest from Meredith, go north on Route 3 for about three miles. Turn right on Route 25 B. In half a mile, turn left on College Road. The east parking lot is half a mile down on the right across from the second house on the left. A further description of this preserve can be found in the *Birds of the Squam Lakes Region* by Robert Ridgely and Kenneth Klapper, a must read for all New Hampshire birders!



Map by Nora Hanke.

Answer to the Photo Quiz

by Greg Tillman

Knowing the photo was taken during a New Hampshire winter narrows the list of likely possibilities immediately and it's good to start with likely birds first! We also see what surely looks like a scattering of sunflower seeds on the snow, suggesting our bird might be at a feeding station, and our bird seems comfortable feeding on the ground. (Many feeder birds feed on the ground at least a little bit, but not all of them; as you watch your feeders next winter, keep an eye on feeding habits.)

Let's look at the shape of the bird next; I usually turn to the bill first. We can quickly see just from the bill that we're not looking at a sparrow of any sort, or a Blue Jay, or a cardinal. It doesn't look like a woodpecker bill. It's a small bill, yet not small enough to be a chickadee or a titmouse either, or even a stray warbler. Just one feature has ruled out an awful lot of common birds!

The size of the bird confirms most of those conclusions, it looks like a mid-sized bird, clearly bigger than most sparrows, even a bit chunky. Our bird is fairly small-headed and, as we work from beak to tail, we finally see a real field mark, one that does not depend on color at all. Look at that long, pointed tail, giving the bird a tapered, even elegant, look.

There's one common, widespread, year-round New Hampshire bird that has a long, pointed tail like that, and it often feeds on the ground (it also enjoys feeders).

Conclusion: **Mourning Dove.**



Photo Gallery: Star Island in Spring

Star Island at the Isles of Shoals is a wonderful place to view migration. Songbirds migrate at night and stop during the day to rest and feed. When a migrant finds itself over water, it often heads for the nearest land. Migrating songbirds often concentrate on islands because they are surrounded by water and, unlike on the mainland, there are limited places to land. The right conditions can bring exceptional views of migrants. Eric Masterson has been leading spring and fall birding trips to Star Island for many years. Here is a collection of photos from one of those trips in the spring of 2023 on Star Island, NH.

All photos are by Rebecca Suomala May 16-18, 2023, except as noted.



Black-and-white Warbler looking for insects on the side of a building.



Short-billed Dowitcher.



Red-breasted Nuthatch.



Northern Parula.



Gray Catbird.



Blackburnian Warbler.



Blackpoll Warbler.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird resting in the rays of the rising sun.



Bay-breasted Warbler.



Bobolinks by Charlee Breen, 5-13-2023.

photo by Charlee Breen

What to Watch for in Spring

Spring is migration time and different birds arrive at different times. Huge concentrations can sometimes occur, but it's often hard to know where or when. Here are a few events that often highlight the spring season and when to watch for them.

March

- Waterfowl migration is in full swing. Every week can bring different species. Watch for fallouts on open water in rainy weather, especially on large inland lakes. Flooded corn fields can also be quite good. Major river valleys and the coastal plain are the best areas. In warm springs with little ice or snow, the migration can pass through quite quickly and you can miss it.
- American Woodcocks start displaying as soon as the ground is open (or even before). Look for them at the edge of open fields, especially adjacent to wet meadows or brushy swamps. Killdeer often return around the same time.
- Black-capped Chickadees start to sing in late February or early March. Their "fee-bee" song can be mistaken for Eastern Phoebe which don't return until early to mid-April.
- The Connecticut River in mid-March is the best place to check for rare geese such as Greater White-fronted Goose.
- Red-shouldered Hawks return and can be mistaken for Broad-winged Hawks which don't come back until mid-April.



American Woodcock by Christopher McPherson, 4-25-2023, Hollis, NH.

April

- Winter visitors like American Tree Sparrows and redpolls or siskins are usually gone by April. Chipping Sparrows, the tree sparrow look-alike, arrive around mid-April.
- In early April watch for Hermit Thrush to arrive. Veerys and other thrushes arrive later, usually in May.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglets begin to arrive the second week of April. Their song can be confused with Common Yellowthroat which doesn't arrive until the beginning of May and Carolina Wren.
- Watch for Broad-winged Hawks in the third week of April, especially on a warm, south wind. You can follow their progress north in eBird to know when they are getting close.
- The earliest warblers arrive mid-month: Pine, Palm, and Yellow-rumped, followed quickly by Louisiana Waterthrush. The first warblers of the main May wave often appear at the very end of the month, including Black-and-white, Northern Parula, and Black-throated Green Warblers. See the article by Steve Mirick on the timing of Louisiana and Northern Waterthrushes in the Spring 2014 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*.
- Inclement weather in late April can bring fallouts of migrating Horned and Red-necked Grebes as well as winter sea ducks such as Red-breasted Mergansers and Long-tailed Ducks. Look for them on large lakes such as Newfound, Spofford, or Lake Winnepesaukee.
- Tree Swallows are the first swallows to return in early April (and often late March), followed by Northern Rough-winged. Look for huge flocks over waterbodies if there's a cold spell or rainy weather. The Merrimack and Connecticut Rivers, waste treatment plants, and even local ponds can provide quite a concentration.
- House Wrens begin to trickle in during the last few days of April. Wren chatter before that is likely to be Carolina or Winter Wren.

May

- The main push of warblers happens in May and it can be spectacular. Watch for south winds that can bring in a flood of birds. A few of the northern-most species won't peak until later in the month: Blackpoll, Wilson's, and Tennessee.
- Blue Jays are daytime migrants and in some years large numbers go south for the winter and begin returning in early May.
- Our eagerly-awaited Ruby-throated Hummingbirds start showing up reliably in the first week of May.
- The colorful Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings,

and Baltimore Orioles arrive around May 5-10 and often come visit feeders when they first arrive, but then disappear as the weather warms.

- Although some shorebirds arrive by late April, their peak migration isn't until mid-May. Numbers in spring generally pale in comparison to fall, but sometimes you get lucky. Most of the action is on the immediate coast, but as with other waterbirds there are sometimes significant inland fallouts associated with rainy weather.
- Mid-May is the best time to look for terns inland during their migration. Watch for inland Short-billed Dowitchers around May 20.
- Nighthawks return to nest sites around May 20-25 but migrants heading farther north can continue to mid-June.
- Of the small *Empidonax* flycatchers, Least are the first to arrive in early May but Alder, Willow and Yellow-bellied won't arrive until mid to end of May.



Solitary Sandpiper by Kyle Wilmarth, 5-9-2023, Salem, NH.

Submitting Unusual Sightings to eBird

A Quick Review

In eBird, unusual birds are flagged for review. That sighting is then reviewed by a volunteer. It is a huge job. Please help these volunteers by following these guidelines:

What is unusual?

Any record that is flagged by eBird for being rare, early, late, or a high count.

How do you know if a record is flagged?

You will be asked to review the observation and add comments.

What to include in your comments?

A description of the bird e.g., color, markings, size, behavior, bill size and shape, vocalizations.

The following descriptions alone will result in a rejected submission:

- Bird was at my feeder
- First of the year
- Seen well
- Identified by Merlin

Please do not take a rejected record personally. Many good records are rejected not because the observer's identification was incorrect but because the description was insufficient. Sometimes just a few words will do.

For more details, see the article by Steve Mirick in the Fall 2021 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*.

<https://nhbirdrecords.org/all-articles/NHBR%20Fall%202021-Documenting%20Rarities.pdf>



Black-throated Blue Warbler by Scott Young, 5-10-2023, Strafford, 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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New Hampshire Bird Records © NH Audubon February 2024

Published by NH Audubon's Conservation Department



Printed on Recycled Paper

Information at www.nhbirdrecords.org

Spring 2023 Highlights



This Lawrence's Warbler returned to Claremont, NH for the third year. See the Regional Summaries. Photo by Michael Foster, 5-19-2023.



Golden-winged Warbler by Cameron Johnson, 5-20-2023, Weare, NH.

Winter Holdovers



The Mountain Bluebird that spent the winter at Great Bay NWR in Newington, lingered into the spring. Photo by Susan Wisley, 3-8-2023.



Orange-crowned Warbler by Edward Larrabee, 3-25-2023, Appledore Ave., N. Hampton, NH.



Golden Eagle and a Bald Eagle (top) by Diane Seavey, 3-20-2023, Pittsburg, NH.



One of last winter's Varied Thrush stayed until April in Bath, NH. Photo by Elaine Faletra, 3-26-2023.

Spring 2023 Rarities



A very rare spring Baird's Sandpiper by Ken Klapper, 5-5-2023, Sandwich, NH.



Black-necked Stilt by Holly Bauer, 5-18-2023, Meadow Pond, Hampton, NH.



Hooded Warbler by Steve Mirick, 5-13-2023, Odiorne Point SP, Rye, NH.



John Peckham first found and photographed this Summer Tanager on 4-18-2023 at Odiorne Point SP, in Rye, NH (left). By the next day, the bird had lost its tail as shown in the photo (right) by Jim Sparrell, 4-19-2023.

