

New Hampshire BIRD RECORDS



WINTER 2024-25

Vol. 43, No. 4

Increasing in Winter



Red-shouldered Hawk by Len Medlock, 12-30-2024, Exeter, NH. As winters warm, this species is becoming a more regular sight in southeastern New Hampshire from December to February.



Hermit Thrush by Kyle Wilmarth, 1-26-2025, Dover, NH. Read about the remarkable number of winter sightings of this species in the Season Summary on page 8.



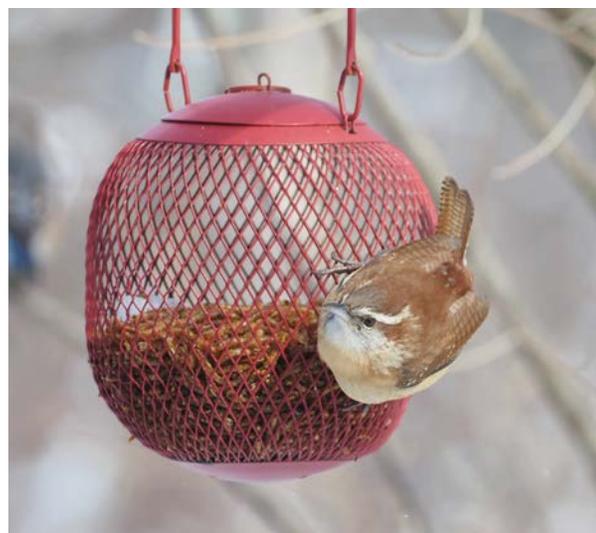
Fox Sparrow by Len Medlock, 12-12-2024, Exeter, NH. Once wintering mostly south of New England, Fox Sparrows are now increasingly found in southern New Hampshire from December to February as winters become milder.



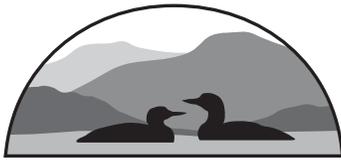
Pine Warbler by Steve Mirick, 12-21-2024, Durham, NH. Learn more about the increase in overwintering Pine Warblers on page 10.



Black Vultures (and one Turkey Vulture on the right) by Len Medlock, 12-15-2024, Exeter, NH. Black Vultures are expanding their range into southern New Hampshire, with scattered winter reports.



Carolina Wren by Caitlin McMonagle on the 2025 Backyard Winter Bird Survey. Read more about this project and the increase in Carolina Wren sightings on page 36.



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Becky on a whalewatch with a few of the many volunteers who worked on New Hampshire Bird Records projects (8-15-2019). From left to right: Marsha Richelli, Diana Stephens, Becky Suomala, Melissa Moore, Nanci Mitchell, and Gray Medynski.

IN RECOGNITION OF Our Volunteers

This issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* is sponsored by Becky Suomala in appreciation of all the volunteers that have helped and supported *New Hampshire Bird Records* during her time as Editor. The publication was made possible by many volunteers who did everything from data collection to office work, writing to reviewing reports, and everything in between. “I am deeply grateful for all that they have done and continue to do.” – *Becky*

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From the Editor

Dear Loyal Readers,

This final print issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* marks a bittersweet moment for our publication. My heart is warmed by the memories, encouragement, and stories you've shared with me over the past few months. After 43 years in print, this is a big change.

This issue celebrates all that is wonderful (and fun!) in the world of birds and birding. I'm reminded of the deep sense of community that birding brings, the shared joy of seeing a rare bird together. Enjoy reading about Robyn Prieto's Big Year, the Twitchers' victory in the Superbowl of Birding, and Fran Keenan's account of hosting a rare bird last winter. You'll also find some excellent sightings featured throughout this issue and Steve Mirick's always-anticipated "Year in Review."

The community spirit that defines New Hampshire birding also inspired the name of our new online home, Joy of Birding. This new project of *New Hampshire Bird Records* will carry that same sense of connection forward, sharing great stories and hopefully bringing our community together in new ways.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the entire *New Hampshire Bird Records* team who helped create this and so many past issues. Your dedication and care have made this publication what it is today. I'm also deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to launching our new online platform, especially Dyanna Smith, Susan Burkhardt, and Kathy Barnes. The site prominently features the beautiful photography of Len Medlock. Thank you, Len, for sharing your work.

I hope you'll be as excited as we are about the opportunities our new online format provides. From full-color photos and interactive maps to "Where to Bird" guides and photo quizzes, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Articles will now be published on a rolling basis, so we can share new stories all year long. If you have an idea for an article or a birding story to tell, please reach out. We'd love to feature your voice.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback. You can reach me anytime at gmcculloch@nhaudubon.org.

To check out the Joy of Birding visit www.joyofbirding.nhaudubon.org and read this issue's feature article, "The Joy of Birding: *New Hampshire Bird Records* Is Online!"

Happy birding and I'll see you online.

With gratitude,



Grace McCulloch,
Editor, *New Hampshire Bird Records*

Photo Quiz

by Greg Tillman



Can you identify this winter bird?

Our quiz species is found throughout New Hampshire during the winter. (Two photos, just one species.)

With that caveat, we *might* be able to identify this bird down to species, but even if we can't, there are some interesting things to discuss!

See the answer on page 35.

Thank You to Donors

We are grateful to everyone who has donated to *New Hampshire Bird Records*, sponsored an issue, contributed to the New Hampshire Bird Records Endowment Fund, or supported the “Twitchers” in the Superbowl of Birding. Your generosity makes it possible for us to continue sharing the joy of birds and birding in New Hampshire, providing valuable information, and maintaining high-quality eBird data. We also extend thanks for the many donations made in honor of Rebecca Suomala, retiring editor of *New Hampshire Bird Records*. These gifts are a fitting tribute to her remarkable legacy.

The following list acknowledges donations received between September 15, 2024, and September 10, 2025. Specific issue sponsorships were recognized in their corresponding issue. If we inadvertently omitted or misspelled your name, please let us know so we may correct the record.

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Red-breasted Nuthatch by Benjamin Griffith, 1-5-2025, Sandwich CBC, NH.

December 1, 2024 through February 28, 2025

by Jim Sparrell, Katie Towler, and Ethan Ring

Editor's Note: Ethan Ring joined Katie and Jim in eBird review this winter. Thank you, Ethan, for helping us keep up with the never-ending review queue. Ethan recently moved south to attend university, and the New Hampshire birding community already misses him. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors, but ask ourselves who will find the Long-eared Owls now?

Average temperatures reported in Concord during the winter of 2024–25 were the coldest since 2014–15. After consecutive winters of record or near-record warmth, New Hampshire saw the return of colder weather and more consistent snow cover in the north. For most of February, central parts of the state had no days above 40°F, with average temperatures about five degrees below normal.

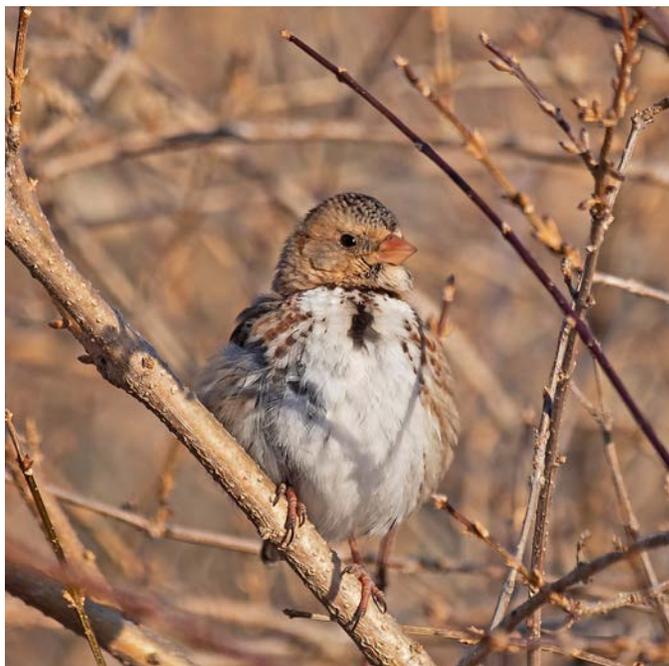
Cold spells in December froze still bodies of water statewide. Mid-month Christmas Bird Count (CBC) teams reported little open water, and as a result waterfowl sightings were down compared to recent years. Despite the cold, the trend of increased sightings of half-hardy species continued. Half-hardy species migrate only as far south as needed to

escape cold temperatures and snow. **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were abundant throughout the state, **Northern Flickers** were widely reported, and **American Robins** gathered in large flocks from south to north. **Red-shouldered Hawks** appeared across southern counties and reached as far north as Grafton and Carroll Counties.



Red-shouldered Hawk by Christopher McPherson, 12-1-2024, Brookline, NH.

With a widespread cone crop and an excellent berry crop, including Mountain Ash, from northern British Columbia to eastern Quebec, winter finches and related species did not move south into New Hampshire. Food sources south of the Canadian boreal forest were poor to average, reinforcing the lack of major irruptions. **Pine Siskins** proved to be an exception, reported throughout the state with the highest numbers in the north and



Harris's Sparrow by Debra Powers, 1-16-2025, Dover, NH.

western areas. A few **Evening Grosbeak** flocks reached as far south as Concord, with good numbers at feeders in the North Country. Other winter visitors, such as **Bohemian Waxwing**, were scarce.

The rarest sightings of the season were a **Glaucous-winged Gull** (second state record), a **MacGillivray's Warbler**, and a **Harris's Sparrow**. Keep reading for the details.

Waterfowl and Loons

Since the Tundra Bean Goose in Portsmouth, Rhode Island chose the right city but the wrong state, New

Hampshire goose watchers had slim pickings. At Hurd Farm, Stuart Varney found and photographed a **Cackling Goose** in mid-December. Two single **Snow Geese** were also spotted in Rye:

one on December 1 at Eel Pond (Robyn Prieto) and another the same day at Central Road (Becky Suomala and Zeke Cornell). Jason Lambert also photographed one in Portsmouth on January 19. Apart from those, wild goose chasers had to leave the state.



Snow Goose by Jason Lambert, 1-19-2025, Portsmouth, NH.

In addition to their traditional wintering spots on the Merrimack River, **Barrow's Goldeneye** were reported from Opechee Bay, the Connecticut River, Lake Winnisquam, and Silver Lake. Robert Dixon reported one from Eliot Bridge in Dover on January 22. He first spotted it from the Maine side, then re-sighted from the New Hampshire side of the Salmon Falls River. The bird lingered for just over two weeks. On February 28, Charles Caron reported a young drake at Eastman's Falls Hydro Station on the Pemigewasset River in Franklin.

A female **Canvasback** spotted by Marjorie Watson on December 22 on Eel Pond likely moved up the road to Rye Harbor where it continued until January 11. A few days later, on January 13, Iain MacLeod found a female Canvasback on Lake Winnisquam.

Great Bay can provide interesting birding during the winter season. Steve Mirick found a **Eurasian Wigeon** there



Canvasback by Jim Sparrell, 1-3-2025, Rye Harbor, NH.

with the expected American Wigeon flock on December 9. Then, in early January when Ethan Ring was scanning for the bird, he was approached by a friendly hunter who asked what he was looking for. Sadly, when Ethan mentioned the Eurasian Wigeon, the hunter pulled out his phone and showed Ethan a picture of himself holding the bird after it had been shot.

On December 14, Ethan found a pair of **White-winged Scoters**, uncommon on the bay in winter. That same day, Steve and Jane Mirick, Ethan Ring, and Kurk Dorsey reported the only **Redhead** of the season.

Jen and Brendan Armstrong found a **Harlequin Duck** in Plainfield in the Connecticut River on December 14 that continued for a week. Harlequins are very rare away from the coast. **Red-throated Loons** were reported from Hinsdale on December 10 (Nate Marchessault), the Connecticut River in North Walpole on December 12 (Jason Pietrzak), and

Spofford Lake on December 12 (Nate Marchessault). On January 1, Iain MacLeod had a **Double-crested Cormorant** at Weir's Beach on Lake Winnepesaukee. Later on January 24, Kyle Jones and Wayne Scott found a single **Ring-necked Duck** on Newfound Lake, which appears to be a first winter record in eBird of this species on that lake. A few late migrating **Gadwall** that Jason Pietrzak reported from the Connecticut River in mid-December lingered in the area until December 25, when Pam Hunt reported them to the south. There was also a Gadwall on Horseshoe Pond in Concord that continued as late as February 1 when it was last reported by Molly Jacobson.



Harlequin Duck by Jim Sparrell, 12-15-2024, Star Island, NH.

Shorebirds

This winter season did not produce any exceptional reports of shorebirds along the coast. Expected species like **Purple Sandpiper** were present in small numbers for most of the winter. Larger numbers (182) were found on the Isles of Shoals during the CBC that took place on December 15. Purple Sandpiper can range from Newfoundland to southern Florida in the winter season. This beautiful species graces this issue's cover.

Modest numbers of both **Sanderling** and **Dunlin** were observed along the New Hampshire coast during this winter season. Sanderling have an extraordinarily wide range in winter which can extend from Newfoundland to Tierra del Fuego on the Atlantic coast.

In January, at Contoocook Lake in Jaffrey, Nora Hanke recorded a video of a **Wilson's Snipe** which represents the third winter record for Cheshire County and the first county record for January. **Killdeer** followed their typical pattern with a few lingering in December and then

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returning with vocal enthusiasm at the end of February. Small numbers of **Black-bellied Plover** lingered on the New Hampshire seacoast in December but were not observed later in the winter season. Two **Semipalmated Plover** just squeaked into the winter season, reported by Steve Mirick on December 1 from Hampton Beach. Likewise, single **American Woodcock**, usually gone by mid-November, were reported from Cheshire (December 10, Nate Marchessault in Hinsdale), Strafford (December 14, Kurk Dorsey in Madbury), and Rockingham Counties (December 14, Ben Griffith at Odiorne Point, Rye) in early December.

Gulls, Seabirds, and Alcids

One of the stunning finds of the winter season was a **Glaucous-winged Gull** found by Ben Griffith at the Rochester Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP) on February 24. Despite persistent observers that day and over the next week, the bird was not relocated. This is the second record for this species in all of New England, with the first being found at the same location in January of 2009 by Scott Young and Dan Hubbard. For the first time in many years,



Glaucous-winged Gull by Benjamin Griffith, 2-24-2025, Rochester WTP, NH. Glaucous-winged Gull in center of photo.

there were no confirmed sightings of Glaucous Gull in New Hampshire during the winter season. Although not seen as a species of concern, it has not been studied as well as some other gull species because of the inaccessibility of its northern breeding locations, from the northern coasts of Alaska and the Canadian arctic all the way to Labrador (Weiser and Gilchrist, 2020). **Iceland Gulls** were reported from Salem, Exeter, and Rochester and throughout the seacoast during the winter season. Individual **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were reported from Rochester and along the seacoast.

There were several **Dovekie** sightings from shore. Timothy

Armstrong found one swimming and bobbing in the surf at Great Boar's Head on January 18, and on January 25, Holly Bauer found one at Ragged Neck on the Seacoast Chapter field trip led by Rich Aaronian. Since this was also the day of the Superbowl of Birding, many teams stopped by to scan the waters for the Dovekie (ultimately two were seen). There were several other coastal sightings, but by far the greatest excitement was from the massive number of Dovekie on the Jeffreys Ledge CBC trip which ended up with a count of 1,484. The trip report states, "Incredible Dovekie show, with majority of birds in one spot layering sea surface in every direction." The largest concentration of birds was in the Old Scantum area. While an amazing number, this count falls short of the New Hampshire record of 1,980 seen on January 4, 2020 on an offshore trip to Jeffreys Ledge.



Dovekies by Leo McKillop, 12-28-2024, Jeffreys Ledge, NH.

In other alcid sightings, **Razorbill** were seen along the coast with a high count of 45 from Odiorne Point State Park (SP) reported by Steve Mirick on December 26. **Thick-billed Murre** reports were scant. Ken Faucher found one at Rye Harbor State Park on December 25 and Steve Mirick found one at Great Boar's Head on both February 8 and 15 in about the same location. While worldwide populations of Thick-billed Murre are not seen as threatened, some Atlantic populations seem to be declining. Frederiksen et al. (2016) suggest, "Threats facing murre include hunting, oil spills, bycatch and oceanic change influencing prey availability." **Common Murre** were counted in good numbers on the Jeffreys Ledge CBC (77), but short of the previous eBird high count of 82 in December of 2021, also at Jeffreys Ledge. Five **Atlantic Puffin** on the Jeffreys Ledge CBC was the high count for this species this winter season.

Northern Fulmar can be exciting birds to watch as

they lock their wings after a few snappy wingbeats and glide around a fishing boat or land on the water. On an Eastman's fishing trip on December 16, Susan Wrisley and Leo McKillop had 225 of them which represents an historic high count for New Hampshire in eBird data. Prior to 1971, Northern Fulmar had not been documented in New Hampshire waters (Keith and Fox, 2013). Northern Fulmars have had a notable range expansion in the Atlantic and started breeding in Newfoundland in the 1960s and 70s.

The name "fulmar" comes from the Norse "foul gull" because it produces a nutrient rich "stinking" oil which it uses to feed its young and also to vomit on predators in self-defense (Nicolson, 2018). One Northern Fulmar was documented as traveling 3,900 miles in two weeks during nesting season. As soon as he returned with his cargo of food/oil, the female left the nest to go on the next search for food for the nestlings.

On the tiny remote Scottish islands of Saint Kilda, Nicolson (2018) suggests that about 12,000 birds were harvested each year, with the approximately 600 gallons of oil obtained in the process used for treating wounds, lighting lamps, and food. The feathers were used in payment to the isles' landlords, the MacLeods of Skye. In 1930, the remaining 36 residents of Saint Kilda requested to be evacuated, and seabirds are no longer harvested there. The average life span of a Northern Fulmar is thought to be 30 years, with the oldest documented bird being 42 years old.

Herons, Eagles, and Hawks to Owls

An **American Bittern** was found at Meadow Pond on January 23 by Becky Suomala and Susan Wrisley while scouting for the Superbowl of Birding. During the actual Superbowl, it took four attempts before their team finally found it again. It was last seen on February 4, with no further winter reports. This area has briefly hosted a winter American Bittern multiple times in the past. One or two **Great Egrets** lingered into December along the seacoast before they wisely left before the winter progressed.

Certainly, one of the most dramatic reports of the winter season was Russell Ward's observation of a **Golden Eagle** attempting to take a Great Blue Heron at Bellamy Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Dover, which he also managed to photograph! See his Field Note on page 21.

Black Vultures were seen again throughout southern parts of the state from the known vulture roost in Exeter to Bellamy Woods in Dover. They were also reported from Rollinsford, Derry, Walpole, and Chickering Farm in Westmoreland. There were reports from December 1 through February 28 suggesting that they do successfully overwinter

in the state. Prior to 2010, winter records for Black Vultures in New Hampshire are scant.

There was at least one **Snowy Owl** along the seacoast in early February. A Facebook report noted

that an owl seen in November

was unfortunately hit by a car early in the winter season. There were two documented reports of **Long-eared Owls** with photos in February (one by Veronica Tully and an additional Facebook report). **Short-eared Owl** reports were less frequent this year with single birds observed at Tullando Farm in Orford, Bellamy River WMA, and Hampton Beach State Park. The Orford bird, found by Catherine Holland on January 2, is the first record of the species in eBird for Grafton County.



Short-eared Owl by Catherine Holland, 1-2-2025, Tullando Farm, Orford, NH.

Woodpeckers to Waxwings

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were recorded in high numbers once again this winter, with more than 300 sightings reported in eBird. Widespread sightings were concentrated in southern and central regions, though a number were reported in Grafton and Carroll Counties to the north. There were no reports from the northernmost region in Coos County. This half-hardy species has continued to be a regular presence in winter.

With more than 500 reports in eBird, **Northern Flicker** is among this season's most abundant half-hardy species. Sightings were mostly in the south, though a few reports came in from Grafton and Carroll Counties. Groups of up to four were seen in various southern locations, including four observed at Bellamy River WMA in Dover on January 23 (Sheila Graydon).

An **American Kestrel** observed in Pittsburg on December 18 (Jack Swatt) is only the third winter record for Coos County according to eBird and Keith and Fox (2013). Other sightings of this species in southern and

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central regions were sporadic, with no reports made from Rockingham County.

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was seen at a backyard bird feeder in Londonderry on February 22 and 23 (Michelle Trant). This was the only sighting for the season of this species found sporadically in New Hampshire. A winter resident of central and southern states, Red-headed Woodpeckers have seen a dramatic drop in numbers in the last 50 years due to habitat loss and changes in food supply.



Red-headed Woodpecker by Michelle Trant, 2-22-2025, Hazelnut Ln., Londonderry, NH.

An **Eastern Phoebe** found on December 1 at Elm Brook Recreation Area in Hopkinton (Daniel Calder) was seen there through January 10. After a very strong showing of this species the previous winter, there were only two other reports of Eastern Phoebe this winter, from New Hampton (January 4, Robin Gray) and Hampton Falls (January 16, Greg Tillman). Both were reports of single birds seen on one day only.

Northern Shrike were found at a number of sites throughout the state, with sightings reported from all ten counties. Last year, this species was only seen in five counties. The places where repeat sightings were made over a period of weeks were Bellamy River WMA in Dover and Portsmouth International Airport at Pease in Newington.

Two **Marsh Wrens** found in December at the Hinsdale Setbacks (December 3 by Hector Galbraith) were seen again in this spot by a few other birders. They were last reported on January 1. In his eBird report, Hector comments that in view of last winter's reports, this may indicate a small over-wintering population of Marsh Wrens at this location. Another was seen in Stratham on December 13 (Steve

Mirick). Though not as numerous as last winter, **Winter Wren** sightings were still widespread this winter, with 250 reports for the species in eBird from much of the state, with the exception of northernmost regions.

Hermit Thrush, a half-hardy species, made a good showing again this year with widespread reports from southern and central regions, and a few sightings in Grafton and Carroll Counties in the north. Notably, one was found on Star Island on December 15 on the Isles of Shoals CBC.

A favorite winter visitor that brings birders to the North Country, **Bohemian Waxwings** were infrequent this year and were seen only in low numbers. A flock of 21 was observed in Colebrook on January 16 (Aubrie Giroux). Scattered sightings of small flocks and single birds, primarily in northern counties, followed this report. Bohemian Waxwings were not seen in Gorham until the end of February, historically a reliable spot for this species. The largest flock of the season was 51, observed there on February 24 (Martha Wilson).



American Pipit by Cameron Johnson, 12-24-2024, Rye Harbor SP, NH.

Pipits, Finches, Sparrows, and Blackbirds

American Pipits were found consistently throughout the season at expected locations on the Seacoast and at the Rochester WTP, with the highest counts found at Ragged Neck in Rye.

Pine Grosbeak sightings were not widespread. Scattered reports in mostly small numbers came in primarily from the northern counties. High counts observed were ten in Pittsburg (December 15, Glenn Chretien) and 11 in Pittsfield (January 31, Andrea and George Robbins).

After the irruption of **Evening Grosbeaks** two years ago, reports were not as widespread this year, though the species was seen regularly in the north and in larger flocks than the previous winter. Many flocks of from 25 to 75 birds were observed, with a high count of 150 recorded on January 7 in

Colebrook (Aubrie Giroux). For comparison, the high count last winter was 28.

Only two reports of **Redpoll** were entered in eBird this winter season, a report of two in Lancaster on December 14 (Susan Reynolds) and two on February 14 in Keene (Kathleen Gavin). It was obviously not an irruption year for this species, with flocks remaining in the northern boreal forest. This is the lowest count for this species in winter in a number of years.

After an astonishing 1,700 reports of **Red Crossbill** in eBird the previous winter, this winter season saw only 47. These reports came in from Coos and Grafton Counties with only a few exceptions. The highest count was a flock of 61 seen in Jefferson on December 21 (Katrina Fenton).

White-winged Crossbill sightings were also down substantially, with just 18 reports in eBird compared to 125 last winter. These reports were likewise centered in northern counties, with only a couple of observations recorded in the south. The high count was a flock of 22 seen in Errol on December 19 (Lori Charron et al.).

Pine Siskins were seen consistently through the winter, though not in large flocks. In December, reports came primarily from the north. January and February records were more widespread across the state, with the largest flock observed in Pittsburg on January 16 (Aubrie Giroux).

American Goldfinch, usually seen throughout the winter, were present in strong numbers throughout the state. Notable is a high count of 400 at a backyard feeder in Warren on February 23 (Elaine Faletta).

Dark-eyed Juncos were not seen in unusually high numbers this winter as they were the previous. Two notable sightings of the **Oregon Junco** sub-species were reported from Wilton on December 24 (Scott Lemire) and Hollis on January 18 (Jill Arabas).



Dark-eyed Junco, Oregon subspecies, 2-22-25 by Eric Masterson, Hollis, NH.

Lapland Longspurs are regular winter visitors, though not seen in high numbers. This year sightings were concentrated at Hampton Beach State Park, with the species present throughout the season. A high count of eight was observed on January 1 (Johnny Owens and Sam Mroz), an unusually high count for this location. Longspurs were seen at a few other seacoast sites and a few reports came from inland locations in Penacook, Walpole, Hollis, and Orford. As is typical, this species was found in the larger flocks of **Horned Larks** in the same locations. The high counts for larks were recorded at Hampton Beach State Park (175 on January 12, Wayne Scott et al.), Hollis (124 on January 20, Katie Franci), and Walpole (105 on February 2, Jason Pietrzak).

Sparrow sightings this winter included a **Chipping Sparrow** reported by Tom Gumbart coming to a feeder in Franklin all three months of the season. Other sightings of single individuals of this species came in from Durham, Loudon, Hampton, Portsmouth, and Newmarket, in December and January. **Lark Sparrows**, occasional visitors to New Hampshire, are usually found in the fall during migration. One reported by Jason Pietrzak in Walpole on December 8 is notable for the winter season, one of fewer than ten winter records in eBird for New Hampshire.



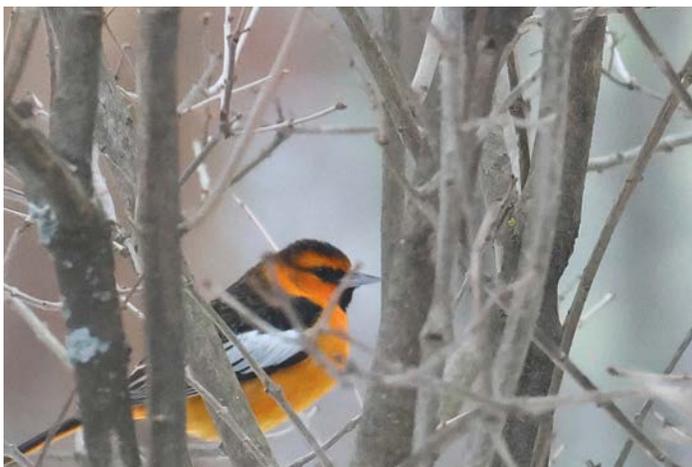
Lark Sparrow by Jason Pietrzak, 12-8-2024, Pinnacle Ln., Walpole, NH.

On January 13, Magill Weber found a **Harris's Sparrow** adjacent to the Bellamy River WMA in Dover, a fifth state record and second winter record (see more on this Patagonia picnic table effect in the Field Notes on page 21). Harris's Sparrows are normally found in winter in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and into Nebraska. A generous homeowner welcomed the many birders who came to see this sparrow far from its typical range. The very cooperative bird was present through the end of February and into the spring season.

WINTER SEASON

Red-winged Blackbirds were reported throughout this season, consistent with an increased winter presence for this species in recent years. Numbers in December and January were low, with a few flocks of up to 30 birds reported in southern counties. This suggests many of these birds may have been overwintering and did not migrate. Low numbers continued through February, with just one larger flock of 20 reported on February 26 in Exeter (Dave Kellam). With cold and inclement weather for much of the month, blackbirds did not make an early return.

Eastern Towhee, a half-hardy species not always seen in winter, was reported all three months of the season. One reported by a homeowner in Sutton on December 13 was seen through January 1 (Eric Derleth and Cindy House). Another homeowner in Henniker observed this species for two weeks in January, and another homeowner for two weeks



Bullock's Oriole by Steve Mirick, 12-8-2024, Hackett Hill Rd., Hooksett, NH.

in February in Kensington.

A **Bullock's Oriole**, a rare species for New Hampshire, was first seen coming to a backyard feeder in Hooksett on November 4 by Cindy Pfaff. This bright bird delighted the many birders who observed it. This was the first sighting of this species in the state since 2021 and is one of fewer than ten state records.

Baltimore Oriole is a common summer resident in New Hampshire. Winter sightings remain notable. One reported coming to a feeder in Exeter on December 5 remained present through February 11 (Karen Dudra, see her Field Note about hosting this bird on page 23). Other single individuals were found on December 8 (Christopher McPherson) and January 3 (Steve and Jane Mirick), both in Rockingham County.

A **Summer Tanager** reported at a backyard feeder on December 6 in Derry was another rare and exciting find for winter (Fran Keenan). The bird stayed until January 6 and

was seen by many birders, with more than 35 reports entered in eBird. Thanks go to the homeowner who welcomed birders to view this bird. You can read her account on page 23.

Warblers

After recent winters of record-setting numbers of warbler species seen in the state, numbers were substantially down this winter presumably due to colder temperatures and rounds of snowstorms early in December. According to eBird, six species of warbler were found this winter versus a total of 13 species last year.

Lingering birds included an **Orange-crowned Warbler** seen by Chris McPherson and David Parry on December 14 in Hampton during the CBC. Steve Mirick and his CBC team found a **Nashville Warbler** in Greenland, also on December 14. Greg Tillman and his team reported a **Palm Warbler** in Stratham on the same date.

Other **Palm Warbler** sightings came in from the Hampton WTP (December 1, Steve Mirick, and December 16, Dan Hubbard, **Western sub-species**) as well as a few other locations in Rockingham County. On January 16, Holly Bauer observed a Palm Warbler at Plaice Cove in Hampton that was seen by many birders and last reported on February 22.

Scattered **Yellow-rumped Warbler** sightings came in from Rockingham and Grafton Counties and one from Star Island, seen on the Isles of Shoals CBC on December 15. A homeowner in Hanover observed a **Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's sub-species)** at her feeders on December 2 (Angela Plague). The bird was reported again from the same location at the end of February. This sub-species is found irregularly in New Hampshire with fewer than a total of 50

reports in eBird. It was last seen in the state in 2022.

Last year birders were treated to **Pine Warblers** seemingly everywhere throughout the winter. This year just a few were reported in southern counties. One was reported in Coos County by Ann Griffin, observed at her feeders in Lancaster through



Summer Tanager by Fran Keenan, 2-1-2025, Derry, NH.

January 8. An anecdotal report of two overwintering Pine Warblers came from homeowners in Rye who observed the birds at their feeders all three months but did not record them in eBird.

One of the most exciting finds of the season was the **MacGillivray’s Warbler** discovered by Cameron Johnson at Bellamy River WMA in Dover on January 12, a fourth state record. Delighting birders who came from all over New Hampshire and neighboring states, this intrepid bird was seen over two weeks, persisting through cold nights and a major snowstorm. The bird was last reported on January 26. Read all about MacGillivray’s Warblers in the article on page 19.

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2024 Birds of the Year Awards

by Stephen R. Mirick

Originally posted to the NHBirds email list, 1-2-2025.

Editor’s Note: All data is from eBird and Keith and Fox (2013), unless noted.

In 2024, 328 bird species were reported to eBird in New Hampshire. This is roughly eight more species than last year and on the high end of the average since 2010 (typically 310 to 330 species per year). One new species was added to the official State List: Bridled Tern, bringing the total to 420 species.

There were many exciting birds in 2024, though I only added one new species to my personal list—the Bridled

Tern brought me to 400 species... briefly. Unfortunately, the American Ornithological Society’s Checklist Committee continues to lump species, and I lose them as fast as I get them! The loss of Hoary Redpoll as a distinct species dropped me back to 399. Maybe the next year will bring me back up.

Big Year Record

Robyn Prieto took the prize for the best “Big Year” with a record-setting 316 species recorded in New Hampshire. Congratulations Robyn! You can read more about her

County Totals and Top County Birders in 2024			
County	Total Species	Top Birder	Individual Total
Rockingham	305	Steve Mirick	273
Strafford	233	Robyn Prieto	200
Hillsborough	222	Nora Hanke	194
Grafton	220	Wayne Scott	205
Cheshire	217	Nate Marchessault	191
Merrimack	212	Pam Hunt	193
Carroll	201	K Klapper	162
Coös	201	Lori Charron	174
Belknap	197	Rob Woodward	174
Sullivan	194	Jen Armstrong	185
Statewide	328	Robyn Prieto	316

incredible year on page 14.



A first state record! Bridled Tern by Cameron Johnson, 7-13-2024, Isles of Shoals, NH.

Bird of the Year Awards

(my humble opinions!)

Bird of the Year: Bridled Tern

Found by several Tern Biologists on White and Seavey

Islands on July 9, 2024, this bird (fortunately) stuck around on the island and hung out with the huge number of nesting Common and Roseate Terns until at least August 4. Despite its regularity, it was a very difficult bird for birders to chase as the island is difficult to access and it stayed in a hard to view portion of the island. Most people who saw it were on small private boats. Bridled Terns are a tropical, pelagic species and are typically found in the Caribbean with major breeding sites in the Bahama Islands and Greater Antilles. This is a first state record.

Editor's Note: The same individual (likely) returned to White and Seavey Islands for the Summer of 2025. Visit the new New Hampshire Bird Records website for details on this record and more.

Bird of the Year: Runner Ups

(in no particular order)

Loggerhead Shrike

One (or two!?). The first was an individual found by Iain MacLeod on April 15 in Laconia (and seen by many!). The second (or maybe the same?) was found much further away up in Dummer by Lori Charron. This species has been on the decline for decades in the northeastern United States and is now very rare. There are very few records over the last 40 years.



Chestnut-collared Longspur by Donna Keller 5-19-2024, Otter Brook Lake, Keene, NH.

Chestnut-collared Longspur

A stunning male in *full breeding plumage* was found by Donna Keller on May 19 in Keene. It is only the third state record, and by far, the nicest looking!



Northern Hawk Owl by Rebecca Suomala, 2-17-2025, Pittsburg, NH.

Northern Hawk Owl

This spectacular owl was first reported by Lori Charron and Aubrie Giroux on February 12 in Pittsburg. This beautiful northern owl rarely ventures south into the United States, but when it does, it creates quite a stir! Although present for about three weeks, it was in a very difficult to access location.....and a long drive for most of us!

Spotted Towhee

One in Franconia was first reported on January 14. Thanks to Ginny Jeffryes for getting the word out on this bird and allowing birders to visit; however, I don't believe it was always cooperative! It was seen through January 20 and is the fifth state record.

Cave Swallow

Seven total migrating birds were seen by Steve and Jane Mirick in Hampton on November 9 as part of a regional influx this fall. There are lots of prior reports in New Hampshire for this charismatic swallow from the southwest, but not in recent years.

Black-necked Stilt

This beautiful bird was found by Brett Hillman in Rye on May 4. It only stayed for one day, but was seen by many. It is only the fourth state record and the first "chaseable" bird.

White-winged Dove

Photographed at a private feeder in Gilford by Ken Lindberg and Jude Schultz on August 17 (a fifth state record).

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck

An incredible flock of 22 birds was found on June 10 in Epping. This was an enormous flock for this species, which is becoming more and more regular in the northeastern United States. This is the fourth state record for the species.

Cerulean Warbler

A territorial male was found in Hinsdale on May 13 by Robyn Prieto. This is an historical site for this declining species. Let's hope they nest and continue to return here!

Purple Gallinule

A bizarre record was reported by Elaine Gauthier of a Purple Gallinule walking through her back yard in Franklin, with photos! This is a fifth state record for this strange southern species which could show up anywhere!

Black Skimmer

One Black Skimmer was reported out on Star Island on September 28. It was the first record for the island, despite numerous records from the mainland (mostly following hurricanes).

Yellow-headed Blackbird

One bird was found by Kurk Dorsey in Durham on October 20 and seen by a lucky few!

South Polar Skua

A NH Audubon boat trip on September 3 was a tremendous success as it found a South Polar Skua sitting on the water. It allowed for great views and was only the second confirmed record for New Hampshire. The first record was almost exactly six years earlier, also on a NH Audubon trip. As if that wasn't enough, the boat found another South Polar Skua (different plumage) only about 20 minutes later in



South Polar Skua by Leo McKillop, 9-3-2024, NH waters between Isles of Shoals and Jeffreys Ledge.

Massachusetts waters!

Long-tailed Jaeger

The NH Audubon trip wasn't satisfied with *just* a South Polar Skua, so it was fantastic to get a Long-tailed Jaeger as well! Although there are more records for this species, it is still a very rare species in New Hampshire waters and the first record since 2011!

American White Pelican

I'm not sure if there were one or two of these! One was first seen by Cameron Johnson on August 29 in Hampton and not seen again. Then another (or the same?) bird was found in Hampton Harbor on October 4 by Tony Vazzano! Fortunately, this bird stuck around (off and on) for a few days. There are only perhaps ten records or so for American White Pelican in New Hampshire.

Long-eared Owl

Ethan Ring found not one, but two different roosting Long-eared Owls during 2024. One on April 7 and the other on November 11! It took me 40 years to find my first for New Hampshire and now this 16/17-year-old birder has found two before his 18th birthday!

Editor's Note: Please do your best to minimize disturbance to Long-eared Owls. These birds are particularly vulnerable, which is why their records are hidden in eBird. If you are fortunate enough to find a roost, keep the site quiet and undisturbed to protect the owls. Ethan Ring did an excellent job at responsibly observing the species.

Yellow-throated Warbler

One was at feeder in Exeter through January and February. Now becoming more regular in winter, this bird was nonetheless fairly cooperative and was seen by dozens of birders during its stay!

Prothonotary Warbler

One was found by Paul Lacourse in Exeter for a one day wonder. It was seen by many. There are only perhaps ten or so records for this species in New Hampshire.

Bullock's Oriole

Bullock's Orioles are rare in New Hampshire, but a nice adult male is even more unusual! This adult male was first reported by homeowners in Hooksett and word got out on November 15. It stayed throughout much of the winter and was reported on NH Audubon's Backyard Winter Bird Survey mid-February. Of some interest, a few birders were able to record the bird from both sides of the street, recording it for both Merrimack County (Hooksett) and Hillsborough County (Manchester)!



Bullock's Oriole by Harris Stein, 11-17-2024, Hooksett, NH.

Varied Thrush

Not one, but two this year! One was found by Rich Frechette on January 19 and seen by many....apparently not terribly healthy. Another was found in Hanover by Joseph Ransdell-Green on April 11.

Rarities Continuing from 2023

Painted Bunting

The adult male continued throughout the winter in Manchester. Long-distance views due to crowded neighborhood, but still a cool bird! It was last reported on April 9!

Ash-throated Flycatcher

Possibly the same bird from Bicentennial Park in December (see the Winter 2023-2024 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records*), this bird appeared on January 6 at the Hampton Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP). Sadly, it likely perished in a heavy snowfall that night.

MacGillivray's Warbler

This bird in Hollis in 2023, continued and was last reported on January 6.

New Record Late Dates

Wilson's Warbler

This bird survived through January 6 at Hampton WTP. The previous record late date for New Hampshire was December 17, 1983, in Exeter.



Wilson's Warbler by Steve Mirick, 1-6-2025, Hampton WTP, NH.

Orchard Oriole

A female at Goss Farm in Rye was last spotted on November 1. The previous record late date for New Hampshire was September 22 in Chester.

Summer Tanager

A female at a feeder in Derry was last reported on January 6, 2025. The previous record late date for New Hampshire was October 19 in Rye. Read more about this sighting on page 23.

I apologize in advance for any errors or omissions—there were so many exciting birds this year, it was hard to keep up!

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Skipping Class for a Pelican: Big Year 2024

by Robyn Prieto

As 2023 was coming to a close and I was putting some thought towards what birding-related resolutions I wanted to set for the New Year, an incredibly bad idea quickly came to mind: what if I tried to break the state Big Year record in 2024, during my junior year of college?

Encouraged by my friends, who pointed out that it's *probably* better to spend hundreds of hours looking for and chasing after birds in one's junior year than one's senior year, I immediately jumped into the planning phase. I spent the first few days of the year recording only typical feeder birds as I poured over more than a decade's worth of eBird sightings in New Hampshire. I put together a spreadsheet with month-by-month target birds and goal numbers. This made it easier to get a clear picture of which birds I needed to focus on, which ones might take a lot of luck, and which ones I could expect to just get along the way. The record of 308 species set by Lauren Kras in 2009 and tied by Steve Mirick in 2022 was an intimidating bar to set as my target, but all of that research and planning gave me hope. It seemed that in the past few years since the COVID-19 pandemic, as the birding community had continued to grow, the number of rarities being found in New Hampshire every year had gone up considerably. After 12 straight months of doing my best to balance constant birding and occasional rarity chasing with college classes five days a week, I ended the year with 316 species. These were seen entirely within the borders and offshore waters of New Hampshire in 2024.

Getting to that number involved a state-wide effort, with visits to nine of ten New Hampshire counties (sorry Carroll, I just never made it up there!). Just like I had hoped, 2024 was another year peppered with spectacular rare birds. After hundreds of miles spent driving from one rarity to the next, I can say that this Big Year was not sustainable nor environmentally friendly. In future years, I'll be doing my best to stay a little closer to home. However, I was glad to have the opportunity to give this big adventure of New Hampshire birding a shot and to get to see the many fantastic birds found by birders throughout the state on my way to that final record-setting number. Below is a month-by-month summary of my Big Year effort, with target birds, goal numbers, fun stories, and cool surprises.

January

(End of Month Goal: 120 Species)

Going into the first month of the year, I knew I wanted

to reach as high a number as possible. However, it quickly became apparent that it was very hard to set specific targets this early. I set a loose goal of about 120 species by the end



Black-headed Gull by Steve Mirick, 1-6-2024, Rye, NH.

of the month and hoped to get as many of our winter specialties as possible, such as alcids, waterfowl, and finches, to limit what was leftover by December. I ended up with 135 species, thanks to the unseasonably warm and dry winter weather that persisted well into January and the wonderful assortment of great rarities that showed up! On January 3, my first day of the year at the coast produced the **Harlequin Duck** and **King Eider** that had been continuing. These are two difficult ducks that can make or break a high year total effort. I took it as a sign of good things to come. I never saw either again all year! I was able to finally catch up with the **Black-headed Gull** at Odiorne Point State Park on January 6, and on January 12, I found my only **Redpoll** of the year.

Then came the first onslaught of major rarities. A gorgeous male **Painted Bunting** at a feeder in Manchester on January 13 was a colorful addition to the typical January list. It was also the first bird of the year that I had no prior expectation of getting. Another feeder chase on January 17 in Exeter provided the first of two **Yellow-throated Warblers** for the year. This was the beginning of a trend where many of the year's rarities were seen in the private yards of enthusiastic homeowners who were happy to invite birders.

Just the next day, on January 18, I made my first long-distance chase of the year. I traveled two hours, up through



Yellow-throated Warbler by Jim Sparrell, 1-19-2024, Exeter, NH.

the White Mountains to Franconia to *another* private feeder, for a **Spotted Towhee**! After a brief chat with two puzzled Franconia police department officers, it was a long wait in the bitter cold before I finally got a very quick view of the bird, but enough to be sure and make it count. Things didn't stop there. A **Variied Thrush** in Peterborough on January 20 was another fantastic early addition, and a long-awaited life bird for me after many failed attempts to see the species previously in New Hampshire. Finally, on January 31, I caught up with one of the two **Short-eared Owls** that had been wintering along the coast, a little after sunset in Hampton. All in all, January was a much better start than I had hoped for. I was very curious to see if the trend of constant rarities might continue from there.

February

(End of Month Goal: 150 Species)

With the chaos and excitement of the start of the year out of the way, it was nice to ease into the typical slow pace of February birding. I set the goal for the month at 150 species (a cumulative goal including the previous month's total). This was just 15 more after my January total. I took things slowly as I worked on tying up the loose ends of what regular winter birds I had missed the month before. On February 5, I picked up **Thick-billed Murre** in Rye, a much-needed alcid that tends to be easier in the late winter and another bird that, while not all that rare, I would only see once all year. Then on February 5, an impromptu trip with my partner to Lyndeborough resulted in my only **Golden Eagle** of the year, which had been wintering on a property in the area. This bird was a spectacular early pickup that would save me a ton of time hawkwatching in October and November. It felt extra special when we realized the area it had been frequenting was adjacent to the small family farm my partner worked on for several summers as a teenager. I watched the eagle from the overlook provided by the back sheep pasture, while he was able to catch up with his old employer.

Four days later, when word got out about a **Northern Hawk Owl** on the Canadian border in Pittsburg, I immediately began one of my two longest chases of the year, 3.5 hours one way. But when I got there, the bird was on the



Northern Hawk Owl by Leo McKillop, 2-16-2024, Pittsburg, NH.

Canadian side! Thankfully, it did eventually fly over to New Hampshire, making for an excellent year bird and my first ever in the state. From there, things slowed down quite a bit, as the number of birds around at that point in the winter was running out. A **Canvasback** on Great Bay on February 26 finished out the month with another difficult duck, setting the stage for the waterfowl-focused early spring ahead. As February ended, I was at 152 species, only two birds above my original goal for the month.

March

(End of Month Goal: 170 Species)

I started March with three goals in mind: ducks, swans, and geese. Hoping to focus on waterfowl and pick up Eurasian Wigeon (which has become very tough in recent years!). I also hoped for a handful of the rare geese or a Tundra Swan (infinitely more unlikely, but it's good to have lofty goals!). I scoured Great Bay and farm fields everywhere picking through hundreds of the typical species for the rarer alternatives. Unfortunately, these efforts proved almost entirely in vain. The only rare waterfowl I picked up all month was a **Greater White-fronted Goose** in Charlestown on March 10, and it wasn't found by me. It was nice, however, to see the first signs of spring. Returning **Piping Plovers**, **Tree Swallows**, **Eastern Phoebes**, and more were all lovely, if expected, additions to the growing list.

The sudden and extremely unexpected early spring pickup of a **Lark Sparrow** on March 25 at a private feeder in Milford, was another great bird to get out of the way ahead of fall migration. March proved to be pretty slow. I finished the month at 168 species, two short of the goal of 170 I had envisioned after my strong January and February starts. However, I still felt that I was going at a good pace. I was anxious to see what the first of the two busiest months of the year might bring next.

April

(End of Month Goal: 215 Species)

My goal for April was simple: to get as many spring migrants as possible and as early as possible to make May a little less overwhelming. The total species goal was set at 215, most of which I expected to get in the last week of the month. Spring migration is always an exciting time for birding, but even more so on a Big Year, when there's a constant stream of year birds to give you a momentum boost and keep you on your toes. Species like **Blue-headed Vireo**, **Broad-winged Hawk**, and **Louisiana Waterthrush** were ones that I knew I would get several times in the next few months but were still quite exciting to add to the tally. I tracked down other relatively easy birds that are a little more location-specific too, like **Purple Martin** along the coast,



Loggerhead Shrike by Benjamin Griffith, 4-15-2024, Laconia, NH.

Upland Sandpiper at Pease airport, and **American Bittern** at a marsh in Lee.

On April 15, I dropped everything at a moment's notice to chase the **Loggerhead Shrike** that Iain MacLeod found in Laconia, adding Belknap to the county map for the year. It was my only major rarity in April. This was the first chaseable record of Loggerhead Shrike in the state in decades, and certainly not a bird I would have ever dreamed of getting for the year. I ultimately ended April with 220 species on the dot, a number made possible by the ever-earlier arrival dates of many summer resident species.

May

(End of Month Goal: 270 Species and a Cerulean Warbler)

May is my favorite month of the year. I was very excited to get into the thick of spring migration birding and see what I could find. I calculated that I needed at least 50 more species in May to remain on a good pace, an end of month goal of 270. I was ready to spend all my time scouring flocks of warblers, shorebirds, thrushes, and more to get there. Another significant goal of mine for the month was to find a Cerulean Warbler, a bird that was somewhat more reliable when the record was set in 2009, and a personal favorite species of mine. Things started off well. A fantastic migration day in Hinsdale on May 2 yielded 13 new



Prothonotary Warbler by Dan Prima, 5-9-2024, McDonnell Conservation Area, Exeter, NH.

species, and although none were all that rare, the experience of seeing hundreds of migrants coming into the trees along the Connecticut River at sunrise is one of my favorites from the year. Then came the rarities, a **Black-necked Stilt** found by Brett Hillman on May 4, two **White-faced Ibises** on May 6, a **Yellow-breasted Chat** found by Steve Mirick on May 7, a **Prothonotary Warbler** found by Paul Lacourse in Exeter on May 9, and a **Tricolored Heron** found by Ed Norton on May 11 made for an action-packed start to the always busy month.

On May 13, I made my attempt for **Cerulean Warbler** at Wantastiquet Natural Area in Hinsdale,



Cerulean Warbler by Donna Keller, 5-13-2024, Wantastiquet Mt. Natural Area, Chesterfield/Hinsdale, NH.

hoping to score the difficult warbler at a former breeding location before full leaf out made it any harder. It was a success! Within a couple of hours, I was able to track down a gorgeous bright blue male darting around the canopy. It was my best personal find for the year, and a bird that was enjoyed as a lifer by many over the next several weeks.

Further quick pickups from there of **Least Bittern** and **Mississippi Kite** were a big relief, as these very local breeders can sometimes be hard to find. They were great to have seen on the early side before they hunker down with young. Donna Keller's spectacular **Chestnut-collared Longspur** in Keene/Roxbury on May 19 was another stunning and unexpected addition, particularly as the bird was in full breeding plumage! The highlights kept coming: **Gray-cheeked Thrush** in Deerfield on May 21, **White-eyed Vireo** in Dover on May 22, and **Acadian Flycatcher** in Nottingham on May 29 kept the excitement going all the way through to the end.

I decided to try to end the month on a final high note. I was sitting at 278 species on the morning of May 30 and missing enough boreal birds to push it over the edge. I drove up to Dixville early for **Bicknell's Thrush**, then spent the remainder of my day in Errol trying historically good spots for **Black-backed Woodpecker** and **Spruce Grouse**, eventually turning up both. Thanks primarily to the incredible string of rarities throughout the month, I was now entering the summer slump at 281 species... just 28 birds from a new record!

June, July, and August

(End of August Goal: 300 Species)

The slow months were here! With spring migration behind me, and not all that many birds left to get, I knew that the next few months would be painfully slow as I waited for the fresh excitement of the fall. Rather than setting monthly goals, I instead decided to aim for 300 species by the end of August, when shorebird migration would be the first sign of things picking up once again. I focused on seabirds in June, picking up the typical shearwaters and **Wilson's Storm-Petrel**. The only significant rarity of the month was the incredible flock of 22(!) **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** in a backyard in Raymond on June 10.

Then came one of the longest gaps of the year. My next year bird would not be until July 18, when on my third attempt (and first involving a private boat) I was able to catch up with the first state record **Bridled Tern**. This bird spent much of the summer at the White and Seavey Islands tern colony. Undeniably the rarest bird of the year, it was another life bird for me and one that was well worth the time and effort taken to eventually get it. On July 28, another trip to the Isles of Shoals yielded an **Atlantic Puffin** off of Star Island, one of a few that had been lingering in the area for a couple of weeks.

As expected, with August came shorebirds. On August 16 I added the continuing **Baird's** and **Western Sandpipers** at Plaice Cove in Hampton, on August 28 I found a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at the Deerfield Fairgrounds, and on August 29 I skipped class to chase my 300th species for the year, a **Hudsonian Godwit** in Hampton Harbor.

I picked up two more birds in the last couple of days of the month, too. Ben Griffith alerted me to a **Long-billed Dowitcher** in the Hampton saltmarsh, and I successfully scoured Woodmont Orchard in Hollis for a **Dickcissel**. With only the fall months left to go, it seemed a new record was in sight, just seven birds away.



Baird's Sandpiper by Benjamin Griffith, 8-17-2024, Hampton, NH.

September

(Only Seven Species to Go!)

With so few possible birds remaining, and so little space between me and my year-long goal, the targets from this point forward became very specific. Rather than thinking about species totals, I now was thinking about individual species. For September, that meant **Connecticut Warbler**. This skulky and elusive warbler is undeniably a pain to see in New Hampshire, but with little else left to target, that was where my efforts went. I spent nearly every day before class checking historically good spots near the University of New Hampshire campus in Durham, before eventually finding one at the Spinney Lane/Durham Reservoir trails on September 19. It was one of only two that would be seen there that fall!

Before that, though, came the second chase that took me nearly all the way to Canada. This time it was for a **Red Phalarope** in Stewartstown. I finished up my last class on Friday at noon and sprinted back to my car, immediately making the 3.5-hour one-way drive to Back Pond, where Lori and Paul Charron were waiting to help me get on the bird. After a little effort, I was able to get distant views and horrible photos of the bird in the evening light. After driving all that way, I headed south. As cool as it was to see a Red Phalarope so far inland, I had evening plans at 9:00 p.m. in Keene and made my way back south as fast as possible. I had told my partner I was making a “quick stop” on the way after class for a bird! However, with these and a couple of other pickups, I was now sitting at 308 species as September ended... just one bird away.

October, November, and December

(One Bird Away!)

It was not long into October before the record-breaking bird came along. Tony Vazzano’s amazing find of an



American White Pelican by Holly Bauer, 10-4-2024, Hampton Harbor, NH.

American White Pelican on October 4 in Hampton Harbor (the second in the state in 2024!) would do the trick. It was, however, playing hard to get. It disappeared just a couple of minutes before I arrived. Since I had once again skipped class for a bird, I was determined to not give up, and after much stress, I caught up with the bird as it drifted slowly and leisurely up a marsh channel off Beckman’s Island in Seabrook. Later it returned to the harbor again and was enjoyed by more birders. I was at 309 species. I never imagined I would get a pelican for the record-breaking species, but I was thrilled to have done it. The goal that felt lofty and intimidating at the start had been accomplished, and I still had much of the fall to look for more birds on top.

I dedicated most of October to fruitless efforts to find a LeConte’s Sparrow, but an exciting two year-bird day on October 20 with **Blue Grosbeak** and **Yellow-headed Blackbird** in Charlestown and Durham (respectively) meant that I was now at 311 species. In November, I added a **Cackling Goose** in Concord on November 1, a **Bullock’s Oriole** at a private feeder in Hooksett on November 16, and my long-awaited first **Snowy Owl** of the year in Hampton on November 17. This brought my list to 314. Still, things didn’t stop there. On December 7 I added **Summer Tanager** at a feeder in Derry, a bird I had tried for twice in the spring and missed. The final bird I added to my list was a **Eurasian Wigeon** on Great Bay on December 9, my 316th species.

Doing a state Big Year was a truly incredible experience, though one that was so taxing I cannot imagine I will ever do it again! After birding in the state for 12 years, starting when I was ten, a year as intense and thorough as this one really highlights just how much birds and birding in New Hampshire have changed. I struggled with species like Saltmarsh Sparrow and Great Horned Owl, only seeing each a couple of times. We’ve lost several great locations too, like access to the dikes at the Exeter Wastewater Treatment Plant, and some of the vantage points onto the Hampton Saltmarsh. Not all the changes are for the worse, though, as the ever-growing number of exciting rarities found by the ever-growing number of excited birders makes year lists like this possible. My hope is that now someone else can come along and get 317 species or higher. There are plenty of birds I missed, like South Polar Skua and Long-tailed Jaeger on NH Audubon’s September pelagic trip, and Ash-throated Flycatcher and MacGillivray’s Warbler in the first couple days of the year. Personally, I think I’ll be taking things a little slower and enjoying the birds around campus for a while.

MacGillivray's Warbler in New Hampshire

by James Freitas



The MacGillivray's Warbler's furtive nature made it difficult to photograph. Photo by Steve Mirick, 1-16-2025, Bellamy Wildlife Management Area, Dover, NH.

On January 12, 2025, Cameron Johnson was at the Bellamy Wildlife Management Area searching for a Golden Eagle reported by Russell Ward the previous day. While scanning the area, he flushed a small yellow bird and initially wondered if it might be a late Palm Warbler. Yet, the habitat didn't match, and neither did the bird's behavior.

"It was flying between thick pockets of grasses and staying low and quiet, which was how I would expect a MacGillivray's Warbler to behave," said Cameron. MacGillivray's Warblers are notoriously elusive, typically found sneaking through dense brush.

When he attempted to relocate the bird, it emerged briefly and made a few chip calls. Cameron managed to snap "a few in-flight shots to confirm a MacGillivray's Warbler!" He never did find the Golden Eagle, but discovering a MacGillivray's Warbler, an exceptional rarity for New Hampshire, was more than enough reward.

A Western Warbler, Far From Home

The MacGillivray's Warbler (*Geothlypis*

tolmiei) is a bird of the West. Its breeding range spans from southeastern Alaska and the Yukon south through much of the western United States, with its eastern edge reaching into western Nebraska, South Dakota, and Kansas. Wintering grounds stretch as far south as Costa Rica and Panama.

Despite being well outside its normal range, the MacGillivray's Warbler has shown up in New England with surprising frequency. According to eBird, Massachusetts has 22 records, Maine has six, and New Hampshire now has four (see Table 1). Vermont, interestingly, has no MacGillivray's records reported in eBird.

Why Are We Seeing More?

The Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (in *Bird Observer*, 2024) has suggested that these recent sightings may be "a sign of increasingly warm winters." In New Hampshire, three of the four sightings have occurred in winter—January or late December. Warmer winters may be allowing vagrants traveling off course during migration to persist long enough to be found by birders. These warmer winters are also likely responsible for the big increase in December sightings for many other species of more common warblers which should have left the region by winter.

It's also important to consider increased birder activity. A rare bird can only be recorded if someone is there to see it. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, there were an estimated 96 million birders aged 16 and older in 2022—about 37% of the population. The more birders there are looking for a rarity, the greater chances there are of finding one! At least three of the Massachusetts reports have come from around Boston....where there is a huge number of active birders!

Year	State	Town	Period	Observers
2025	New Hampshire	Dover	January 12–26	Cameron Johnson
2023–2024	New Hampshire	Hollis	December 23 – January 6	Christopher McPherson
2021	Maine	Rockland	December 18	Evan Obercian
2020	Maine	Monhegan Island	September 17	Howie Nielsen et al.
2017	New Hampshire	Charlestown	November 25–27	Dylan Jackson
2017	New Hampshire	Rye	September 9–11	Ben Griffith, Lauren Kras and Jason Lambert
2015	Maine	Kettle Cove, Cape Elizabeth	November 27–29	Luke Seitz et al.
2010	Maine	Steuben	September 12	Jethro Runco
2010	Maine	Metinic Island	September 27	Leopold
2009	Maine	Falmouth	December 19–22	E. Hynes

Identification Tips

Keep an eye out for a MacGillivray's Warbler when birding in fall and early winter. Many recent sightings have been males, which are easier to distinguish with confidence (look for black lores and variable dark mottling on the lower throat of the male MacGillivray's). This warbler has a gray hood and lacks wing-bars. At first glance, it may resemble Connecticut or Mourning Warblers; however, Connecticut Warblers have a complete white eye-ring, while MacGillivray's Warblers display broken white eye-arcs above and below the eye.

Mourning Warblers lack both an eye-ring and eye-crescents, helping to distinguish them from MacGillivray's. Females are paler overall. Despite their secretive behavior, they can sometimes be very vocal in winter with a subtly distinct chip note that may betray their presence.



Note the broken white eye-crescents above and below the eye of this immature MacGillivray's Warbler. Photo by Steve Mirick, 9-4-2017, Rye, NH.

Chris McPherson originally noted the MacGillivray's Warbler he found on December 23, 2023 as a MacGillivray's Warbler/Mourning Warbler, not getting a good enough view to definitively tell the difference. Yet, he was persistent, finding and photographing the bird again on December 26, confirming the rarity—a good reminder to be patient and take a second look at lingering warblers.

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Field Notes Winter 2024-2025

Kathryn Frieden, Editor

Christmas Eve Cooking with Raptors

by Jim Sparrell. Post to NH Birds email list 12-24-2024.

On Christmas Eve I was making a butternut squash soup for lunch and lamenting the swelling flock of House Sparrows I was compelled to watch outside the kitchen windows. One lone Song Sparrow and a handful of White-throated Sparrows were some consolation. Then there was a scuffle on the roof—not Santa as it turned out. A Red-tailed Hawk grabbed a pigeon and landed on



an arbor in the backyard. The Red-tailed Hawk had been stopping by almost every day. I had thought it was sizing up the squirrels. I stepped out onto the deck to see if I could get a good angle for a photo. Seconds later, a mature Bald Eagle swooped down, harassing the hawk to try to grab the pigeon only a few feet away from me. I didn't get a photo of the hawk and only got an obscured one of the eagle. I was back indoors finishing the soup, when an immature Red-shouldered Hawk flew in and landed. I did get a couple of shots of it before it flew. Here's hoping that you all had fun holidays with good food, family, and friends; and that most of the drama happened outside!

The Red-shouldered Hawk stayed just long enough in Jim Sparrell and Katie Towler's yard in Portsmouth, NH to get its photo taken on Christmas Eve, 2024.

Red-tailed Hawk on the Hunt

by Evy Nathan. Post to NH Birds email list 12-22-2024.

I've never seen this happen before, but I was looking out into the yard through my window on this ten-degree day and saw a large bird fly by. It was a Red-tailed Hawk, and it landed in the neighbor's yard above a large squirrel nest. Presently, it dove feet-first into the nest, flapping its wings overhead. Two squirrels made a frantic exit from the bottom of the nest and ran lickety-split down the tree. The bird climbed out of the nest without a squirrel and flew away. What squirrel could relax thinking its nest was safe on a freezing day, when sharp talons can reach down seemingly out of the void at any time?



This massive squirrel nest wedged into the tree branches was not the safe haven the squirrels would have hoped for. Photo by Evy Nathan in Kingston, NH on 12-22-2024.

Golden Eagle in Dover

by Russell Ward

Editor's Note: Russell Ward visited the Bellamy River Wildlife Management Area in Dover on January 10, 2025, and had a remarkable experience that triggered a chain of events as described in the next Field Note. His Golden Eagle sighting is the first recorded at this location.

I was walking the perimeter trail that day which allows you to see the backwater tidal marsh and then later, the main river. As I walked past the marsh, I could hear the very loud sound a heron often makes when taking flight after being flushed. In this case, rather than a single loud call, the call was repeated over and over. It seemed far more emotional, for lack of a better term. I could see movement across the marsh and sprinted ten or 15 steps closer. That was when I saw the two birds locked together on the ground—a Great Blue Heron and a Golden Eagle!

I was able to take a series of quick shots with my camera



Russell Ward was using an 800 mm lens when he took this photo of a Golden Eagle atop a Great Blue Heron at the Bellamy River Wildlife Management Area in Dover on 1-10-2025.

before the birds separated. The heron looked exhausted and sat back on its legs for 15 to 20 minutes. The eagle had retreated to a large tree and sat resting as well. For the next 40 minutes the eagle continued to watch the heron, and I was sure it was going to make another attempt at it. But then, the heron stood upright, gathered its strength, and took flight toward the main river. The eagle stayed a few more minutes and then took flight as well. Based on my distance from the birds, around 80-100 yards, I do not believe I was a contributing factor to this event. I think the heron was just more of a challenge than the eagle was ready for.

Patagonia Picnic Table Strikes Again

by Kathryn Frieden

Many of you may recall the excitement in December 2023 when Steve Mirick found a Virginia's Warbler at Bicentennial Park in Hampton. Several other rare and unusual species were then found at that location because so many birders came to see the Virginia's Warbler. The Winter 2023-24 issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* included an article by Melissa Moore about the "Patagonia Picnic Table Effect," a phrase stemming from an event in Patagonia, Arizona, back in 1971 in which a cascade of rare birds was found near an actual picnic table.

As Steve Mirick noted in an email to NHBirds, the Golden Eagle sighting "set the stage for another 'Patagonia Picnic Table Effect' of mega-rare birds at Bellamy Wildlife Management Area in Dover:

1. Russell Ward finds and photographs the **Golden Eagle** on Friday, January 10.
2. Cameron Johnson chases after the Golden Eagle and finds a **MacGillivray's Warbler** on Sunday, January 12.

3. Magill Weber chases after the MacGillivray's Warbler and finds a **Harris's Sparrow** on Monday, January 13.”

Does anyone have a guess where the next picnic table event in New Hampshire will be?

House Finch With Orange Coloration

Editor's Note: For further information about orange feathers in red birds see the Backyard Birder article by Brenda Sens in the Summer 2018 issue of New Hampshire Bird Records.



On January 23 Bruce Conti took photos of two quite different House Finches that were visiting his yard in Nashua. This bird has the usual rose-red coloration associated with House Finches.



This House Finch has a more muted, orange-tinted coloration. The color of the feathers varies by the proportions of different carotenoids in them. This can be influenced by genetics, diet, subspecies, and molt.

Northern Shrike Coughs Up a Pellet

by Kathryn Frieden

On January 17, Steve Bennett found a Northern Shrike at Pease International Tradeport near Short Street in Newington. This is one of the most common locations in New Hampshire to host this winter visitor, but when he returned the following day, he saw something that was quite unexpected. On January 18, he posted the following



Steve Bennett took this unusual photo of a Northern Shrike egesting a pellet in Newington, NH on 1-18-2025.

to the NH Birds email list: “The Northern Shrike continues in Newington in the brushy field across the street at the end of the Pease runway. Today I watched it cough up a pellet, a behavior I did not know shrikes exhibited. Just goes to show that you are never too old to learn something new.”

I suspect that many of us, both old and young, are also learning of this behavior. According to *Birds of the World*, pellet formation and egestion is related to the presence of a crop and the size of the bird's gizzard. The shrike has a small gizzard and no crop, so will egest, or “cough up” a pellet within an hour of eating, at least several times a day. During the winter the Northern Shrike's diet consists mostly of birds and small mammals. Pellet size varies with diet and is largest after the shrike has just eaten a bird.

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Mallard vs. Hawk—A Bird Spectacle

by Kirk Elwell. Post to NH Birds email list 2-17-2025.

My wife and I stopped by Bell Aveune in Exeter this afternoon to check out the Mallard “show” on the Little River. There were one or maybe two American Black Ducks and a few probable hybrids but the other approximately 300 were male and female Mallards. We were just starting to leave when all the ducks basically “stood to attention” and started to nervously swim around in the narrow stream. Just then a juvenile Red-tailed Hawk swooped down and grabbed an adult male. The Mallard pulled hard and got the hawk into the water. The hawk got back out briefly with the duck, but

the Mallard fought back and again pulled the hawk into the water and then under the water! The hawk gave up and flew off. It was a pretty cool spectacle, not to mention the spectacle of seeing about 300 ducks all crowded into the mostly frozen river!

An Unusual Winter Friend

by Karen Dudra

I'd never seen Baltimore Orioles on our 12-acre,



Sophie at "her" feeder in Exeter, photo taken by Karen Dudra on 1-20-2025.

pine-dense condominium association grounds, but then, just after Thanksgiving in 2024, a small immature female arrived at the feeders off our back deck. She would deliver endless entertainment, offer a profile in spunkiness, and lead us to find bird-loving surrogates to feed her when we traveled in February to Costa Rica. She would help a team win "The Superbowl of Birding" and teach us about oriole feeder behavior. (Starlings, take note, this is one tough cookie.)

We named her "Sophie," and she stayed with us until April 23, 2025, surviving single digit nights and fierce snowstorms, a small lesson in adaptability and toughness. On Mother's Day, three weeks after Sophie's last mealworm visit, a glorious male Baltimore Oriole showed up, the first male we'd ever seen at our feeders. Like Sophie, he was small, and I couldn't help but wonder, "Are you her nest mate?"

We'll be watching to see if she returns this fall, but honestly, I hope she doesn't. Why? Because an Oriole named Sophie deserves a tropical winter.

A Rarity and a Bonus Owl in Our Derry Yard

Photos and story by Fran Keenan.

December 6, 2024, a Friday I had taken off work, I was startled by what I saw through the dining room window. My husband and I are competent birders and know most of the species that visit our yard. This medium-sized yellow/olive bird with a brighter yellow throat and slight russet-tinged crest on the hanging platform feeder, however, I did not recognize. What is this bird? I felt a buzz of excitement. I got a couple of photos and emailed them to my "bird confessor," my sister in Maryland. A very good birder since childhood, she texted back that it looked like a female Summer Tanager. In Derry? In December?



The Summer Tanager Fran Keenan discovered on 12-6-2024, Derry, NH.

After comparing the bird to Summer Tanager photos on the *All About Birds* website, I posted my sighting with photos to eBird and then to the NH Birds Google Group moderated by Steve Mirick. I didn't realize how unusual all of this was or how it would enliven my month until early the next morning



Eastern Screech-Owl by Fran Keenan, 12-7-2024, Derry, NH.

when I found an email from Steve. "That's a mega rare sighting," he enthused. "Are your feeders visible from the road and would you allow for birders to visit?" Of course we would share the bird! How could we not?

Steve asked if he could share our address. "Sure. Why



Fran Keenan with Steve Mirick, Dan Prima, and Jane Mirick (left to right).

not?” I said, although I wondered what that would mean. Steve and his wife Jane were among the first birders to arrive. Within five minutes, after seeing the tanager, eagle-eyed Jane Mirick also spotted an Eastern

Screech-Owl (red morph) sleeping in a nearby tree. We likely would have missed the owl completely if the tanager had not drawn such a crowd of skilled birders.

Thanks to our neighbors at Water’s Edge Salon and Spa, people were able to stand across from our yard. For days, when I opened the shades first thing in the morning, birders were already clustered across the street in down parkas training expensive camera lenses and binoculars on our yard. In the first two days, 26 birders came by. By the end of the month, I had tallied close to 60 visitors. We went out to meet most of them. It was fun! We chatted with NH Audubon biologists Pam Hunt and Becky Suomala and other names we knew from the NH Birds Google Group, several couples from Massachusetts, a science teacher from Pinkerton Academy HS, and even my husband’s retired physician. The sighting soon appeared on the Rockingham County Rare Bird Alert email. Becky Suomala created an eBird hotspot for our address. (I wonder, will that help us sell our house someday?)

Of course, our neighbors were curious about the activity. We spoke to the owner at the salon and clued in the fire department across the street. We had to tell a few people they couldn’t park at the salon but otherwise there were no problems.

It surprised me how often people congratulated us as if we had done something to bring the bird to our yard. That was pure luck, but I did feel responsible for trying to help her weather the New Hampshire winter when she should have been in Mexico or Central America eating bees, wasps, and fruit. The best I could do was crumbled suet and mealworms with blackberries mixed in, a menu I maintained for the month she was with us.

The tanager obligingly showed up to make the December 14 Christmas Bird Count for the Manchester area. Richard Bielawski ran the Derry section and helped me with the required rare bird documentation form.

Our celebrity bird generally alternated between the suet cake with mealworms and the platform feeders. It vocalized many mornings, so we knew she was still around. We cheered her. During a few extremely cold days, she hung out on

the heated (and steaming) bird bath in our front yard. On December 23, for instance, it was only 4 degrees Fahrenheit in the morning.

January 6, a month after she appeared in our yard, was the last day she was seen. Several people suggested she finally flew to a warmer place. Although highly unlikely, it would be a happy ending. We’re so happy she spent some time with us. The experience made us feel very connected to the New Hampshire birding community.

Inaugural Jeffreys Ledge Christmas Bird Count

by Eric Masterson

The vast bulk of my birding takes place during spring and fall, and so perhaps with this at least partly in mind, I decided to test out a new Christmas Bird Count (CBC) route last December to Jeffreys Ledge, 20 miles off the coast of New



Leo McKillop on the inaugural Jeffreys Ledge Christmas Bird Count. Photo by Eric Masterson.

Hampshire. If successful (and considering the near certainty of encountering puffin I considered success guaranteed) I hoped to add a day to my desultory winter birding calendar. More importantly, however, I hoped to establish the tradition of a new CBC in one of the less well-birded parts of New England: the Gulf of Maine in winter. Even in the age of eBird when it seems like we have more data on bird abundance and occurrence than ever before, there is a clarity to a constant effort survey. It provides a unique window into the shifting sands of wildlife populations, especially concerning some of New England’s less frequently encountered species.

To ensure calm weather, without which winter pelagic trips are a thoroughly unpleasant experience, I adopted the protocol used by Ben Griffith to good effect for scheduling the Isles of Shoals CBC by offering the trip on the best day during a two-week window in late December. The conditions cooperated on Saturday, December 28. With the irrepressible Steve Mirick on the microphone, 21 people joined me aboard the UNH Gulf Challenger for a half day’s birding on Jeffreys Ledge with low winds and temperatures rising into the 40s (Fahrenheit). I placed the center of the 15-mile circle



Dovekie by Cameron Johnson.



Iceland Gull by Debra Powers.



Dovekies by Cameron Johnson.



Common Murre by Leo McKillop.

on the edge of the ledge just north of New Scantum to make sure that we did not overlap with the aforementioned Isles of Shoals CBC and counted all birds on the outbound leg only to avoid duplication.

Below is a list of the 12 species and counts we saw, however I will summarize by saying that the Dovekies stole the show, with an estimated count of approximately 1,500 birds concentrated in one spot on Old Scantum. This was a wonderful experience for everyone except the person trying to count the birds, an experience which caused me to reconsider the strategy for the next outing. I'm a big proponent of the wisdom of the crowd, the idea that a collective opinion is more accurate than a single opinion. On the next trip, I am going to employ duplicate counters and take the average.

Oh, and we saw puffins! Watch for a repeat of the trip this coming December/January.

Editor's note: You can view the full eBird checklist at: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S206958613>. All photographs in this article are from the trip.

Species Observed

- 13 Common Eider
- 4 Long-tailed Duck
- 5 Atlantic Puffin
- 25 Razorbill
- 1,484 Dovekie
- 77 Common Murre
- 30 large alcid sp.
- 84 Black-legged Kittiwake
- 28 American Herring Gull
- 16 Great Black-backed Gull
- 4 Iceland Gull
- 40 Northern Fulmar
- 6 Northern Gannet

Photo Gallery: Backyard Raptors

Raptors are top predators in New Hampshire's ecosystems, but they are also a regular presence in our neighborhoods. Species such as Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks are drawn to the abundance of small birds at backyard feeders, while larger raptors like Red-shouldered Hawks and even Bald Eagles occasionally make surprise appearances. These sightings offer a glimpse into the adaptability of raptors and the important roles they play, even in human-dominated landscapes.



Colleen Prieto was amazed to have had such a wonderful visitor. She welcomed this Bald Eagle to her backyard in Deerfield on 1-27-2025.



Sabil Asnaani was only ten years old when he took this photo of a Cooper's Hawk in his back yard on 12-1-2024. Could you have identified this bird when you were that age?



Jen Armstrong photographed this Sharp-shinned Hawk on 2-9-2025 during the Backyard Winter Survey in Claremont. What an exciting yard bird!



This Red-shouldered Hawk photographed on 1-20-2025 by Dan Prima in his Raymond yard looks a little cold.

Birding Group Forges Bonds Beyond Birding

by Meera Mahadevan

Editor's Note: For many, birding is about more than just the birds—it's also about community and learning together. Who knows? Maybe it will even inspire you to start your own weekly birding group.



A few of the "Thursday Birding Girls" by Joyce Austin.

When Stratham resident Joyce Austin relocated to the south for the winter 10 years ago, she came back to New Hampshire with an idea. With the help of fellow birder Kathy Carson of Fremont, that idea today has not only blossomed but has helped them and others become better birders and fostered meaningful friendships in the process.

Austin wanted to replicate something she experienced at her winter home in southwestern Utah's Mojave Desert: attending a weekly bird walk organized by Red Cliffs Audubon. She said the repetition helped her not only plan for the week, but the continuity helped her learn about birds and birding. So, after mulling it over and talking to people, she created a weekly birding group in the Seacoast area of New Hampshire in the summer of 2022. It started with just three or four people made up of friends and acquaintances. As news spread about the group in the birding community, the roster quickly climbed to 30 people as everyone wanted to be added to the email list.

"The secret is to do it every week and to communicate clearly with people about that," said Austin. "It's the consistency. That's what keeps it going. If you go look at birds all the time, that's how you learn about them. Once you've seen a bird do something ten times, chances are you're going to remember it."

The group today stands at 20, after Austin and Carson whittled it down to a manageable number. A core group of about eight to ten birders diligently meets every week, rain or shine, even in the winter, at trails in the Seacoast area of New Hampshire.

They brainstorm which trail to hike each week and make arrangements via email to meet. Austin organizes the outing and sends emails in spring, fall, and summer and Carson takes on the tasks in the winter while Austin is away. The weekly emails are titled "Last Thursday and Next" where they write a beautiful summary that reviews what they saw the previous week and provides details on time and place to meet for the upcoming week. They also usually include a link to an eBird list of the birds they saw.

Over time, the birders have developed a fondness and respect for each other and have become a tight knit group of friends who enjoy spending time together. "It's really like a group of friends at this point," said Carson. "It's not so much like the Southeast Land Trust or NH Audubon where we're trying to be any big, huge thing. We just want to go birding together. It's nice. Sometimes we go out for a cup of coffee afterwards."

They don't have an official name yet and informally refer to themselves as the Thursday Ladies Group or the Thursday Birding Girls. The group consists mostly of beginning birders with the exception of Holly Bauer, Secretary and Field Trip Coordinator for the Seacoast chapter of NH Audubon.

Many of them are retired from varied professions ranging from teaching to medicine to social work and live in the Seacoast area. At least two members of the group live near Alton and drive about an hour to be with the group. They all say the collective wisdom of the group is one of the best aspects of the walks and that it's not uncommon to spend 15 or 20 minutes discussing a bird's wing bar or other details to help identify a new bird, said Karen Claxton, one of the group members who attends the walks regularly.

"The one word that describes our group is community," said Maura McManus, another group member who began as a new birder just a few years ago. "One of the parts I find most fun is if we find a bird we cannot identify, everybody has an input in identifying it. It's a group effort."

They say it was sheer coincidence that the group happens to consist of all women and that they never stipulated that a man cannot join. Unlike fishing or hunting, which tend to lean more male, bird watching is split almost evenly among genders, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In addition to birding, some members of the group have attended other outings together as opportunities arose. For instance, some of them took a bird photography class together at Hunt's Photo & Video in Manchester. They ventured out to Mass Audubon's Ipswich Wildlife Sanctuary



Birding together by Joyce Austin.

last December and experienced feeding chickadees and titmice from their hands which (while magical) lent itself to a discussion among the group of whether it was the right thing to hand feed wild birds. Some of them have also gone on overnight trips together to Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge in Whitefield, NH, and to Star Island in the Isles of Shoals. Along the way, they said they have learned so much not only from each other but from master birders they run into on the trails like Dan Hubbard and Alan Murray and from teachers like Matt Tarr, and Eric Masterson.

For the past two years, one of the crowning events for the women's group has been a potluck luncheon held at a member's house where turnout has been great. At the end of lunch, the women share a slideshow of some of the spectacular photos they've taken.

As for the future, Austin and Carson said they hope their group will continue its closeness and camaraderie and hope to perhaps add trips to Cape May, NJ, or Costa Rica someday.

"Kathy (Carson) and I say we are so lucky to have this group," said Austin. "The people who show up are like minded; they are interested in birds and in being outdoors. It's a great group of smart, curious women. I just feel like once a week, I get to be in the great outdoors with wonderful people. Who could ask for anything more."

Superbowl of Birding XXII: 2025

by Kathryn Frieden and Rebecca Suomala

January 25, 2025, dawned cold and clear with first light at 6:35 am. It was the morning of the Superbowl of Birding and we, the "Twitchers Out of the Rye" had already been out in the dark and cold since 5:00 a.m.! It was six degrees

Fahrenheit on the car thermometer when we started, and it only warmed up to 28 degrees during the entire day, and I am going to keep going on and on about how cold it was for this whole report! (Just kidding, I will not mention it again because Becky says 28 degrees is not that bad for a January winter day.) The Superbowl of Birding is a friendly but intense competition run by the Massachusetts Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center every January. Birding teams compete for prizes in several categories, counting bird species within Essex County, MA and/or Rockingham County, NH. The "Twitchers" pioneered the idea of a Townie Award by limiting the area of birding to only one township, originally Rye, NH. We have birded in other towns since 2019, hence the "Twitchers Out of the Rye" team name.

The success of the day really hinges on work done prior to the starting time of 5:00 in the morning. A big thank you to Captain Becky Suomala for all her hours of planning and scouting, along with help from driver Susan Wrisley and navigator Jenna Rosen. A very special thank you as well to Holly Bauer for hosting us with a gourmet dinner and comfortable beds on Friday night, and then with a warm lunch stop on Saturday afternoon complete with feeders to watch (although the hoped-for Red-winged Blackbird never materialized).

We were competing for the Townie Award and once again chose Hampton. Last year we had no owls, so this year we decided to try some new owling spots. At 5:00 in the morning, right on time, we started on Gale Road with Susan whistling the call of the Northern Saw-whet Owl. At 5:09 a Barred Owl flew in and landed on a branch above our heads, its outline just visible in the pre-dawn darkness. We were off to a great start! After several other owling stops with the usual whistling, hooting, and screeching, three of us were able to hear the hoot of a Great Horned Owl on North Shore Road. This satisfied the competition rule that the majority of



The Twitchers, after finding an American Bittern. Becky Suomala, Kathryn Frieden, Susan Wrisley, and Jenna Rosen (left to right). Photo by Steve Mirick, Captain of the Fourth and Longspurs who they helped find the bittern.

the team members must identify each species, so we now had two owls on our list. (That's 200 percent more than last year!)

By 7:01 am, the official time of sunrise, we already had a respectable number of songbirds along with an American Crow. It was now time to be at the shore to greet the high tide. We started at Plaice Cove because American Pipits had been seen there off and on since January 10. This was an important species to get since it is a five-pointer. Sure enough, we not only saw five pipits, but there was a lot going on out on the water and we added 16 more species to our list. We were doing really well despite missing the three-point bonus on the pipits.

Competition rules state that you must call a five-point sighting in to headquarters so other teams have a chance at it. Periodic announcements of five-point birds are posted to the NHBirds email list which we (and other teams) monitored. If you are the first team to call in a five-point species you get a three-point bonus. Becky thought that waiting for sunrise to look for the pipits was a good strategy, but the Broadwings team had done its homework and discovered the pipits arrived well before then and they were on hand to get the three-point bonus.

Another important species that we wanted to find was the American Bittern (also a five-pointer) that Susan had spotted at the north end of Meadow Pond when she and Becky were scouting on Thursday. Susan had even seen it through the reeds from the moving car! We zipped up High Street to the area where it had been for a quick look but, alas, no bittern. However, we did manage to flush out a Great Blue Heron, which is a good three-point species.

The next activity on our plan was to do a "Big Sit" as an added competition category at Hampton Beach State Park. On the way south to the park, we stopped briefly at Henry's Pool off Winnacunnet Road to look for the Common Merganser that had been scouted there earlier in the week. The pond was completely frozen over, but thankfully the merganser was still there on the other side of the road in a little bit of open creek water. It is always satisfying when a "scouted" bird stays put for the day of the competition! One of the conditions affecting this year's competition was the limited supply of open fresh water due to the recent cold snap. This made it harder to find species such as freshwater ducks, and birds that fish, such as Belted Kingfisher.

At Hampton Beach State Park we did not see many species, but the ones we did see were important. We got our first alcid of the day—a three-point Razorbill that Jenna spotted. Three specialty species for the park (and all worth higher points) were thankfully present: Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, and Lapland Longspur. After 30 minutes of "sitting," it was time to move on, so we drove over to Hampton Harbor for high tide and took a quick look from



American Pipit by Susan Wisley.

two spots—the State Marina and the mudflats. Jenna spotted a flock of Dunlin (another three-pointer) in the grasses on the far side of the harbor, and we managed to complete our trifecta of scoters. We had seen Black Scoter and White-winged Scoter while sea scanning at Plaice Cove, so it was a relief to find a Surf Scoter in the harbor. Two elegant Greater Scaup rounded out the findings.

We had three important locations to keep checking where high-scoring birds had been scouted. One was the north end of Meadow Pond where we had already looked for the American Bittern. Another was High Street Cemetery where a five-point Chipping Sparrow had been coming to a feeder. The third was the Old State Road Covered Bridge near Hurd Farm where a Wood Duck had been hanging out with a group of Mallards in the small area of open water on either side of the bridge. As we headed inland Susan commented that we needed to see some raptors. Within a minute, a Northern Harrier



American Bittern by Susan Wisley, photographed during scouting.

soared over the nearby marsh providing us with great looks. And then a few minutes later, a Red-tailed Hawk flew over, so now we really could not complain about a lack of raptors. We ended up with a grand total of eight red-taileds for the day, including this watchful pair.

On our way inland we went to Tide Mill Road where we drove slowly along to look and listen. Rolling down our windows, we all immediately heard the welcome ti-ti-ti of a Golden-crowned Kinglet, a species that can be hard to find in Hampton. After arriving at High Street Cemetery, we spent 30 minutes looking for the Chipping Sparrow, but no luck. However, Susan spotted a Turkey Vulture flying overhead, an excellent four-point sighting! Our last stop before lunch was at the bridge off Timber Swamp Road where we saw



Twitichers on the beach by Jenna Rosen.

plenty of Mallards but no Wood Duck. It was, however, nice to see the Fourth and Longspurs team there!

Lunch at Holly Bauer's was fun, tasty, and warm, but then it was out into the field again looking for more

birds. Bicentennial Park, known for attracting winter rarities, was not as useful this winter due to much needed repair work being done on the parking lot. It was, however, still a good spot to do some sea watching. We found another alcid—a Black Guillemot—and two Red-necked Grebes, but no unusual gulls. At least we did see plenty of Rock Pigeons, which was important because we were famous for missing them back in 2018 when we were still the “Twitichers in the Rye.” Luckily, Jenna got a documentation shot which we could send to the donor who threatened a \$5 penalty if we missed them! During the afternoon we did a lot of crisscrossing and back-and-forthing, looking for new species and checking locations for important scouted birds. It was on our fourth trip to Meadow Pond that we finally found the American Bittern. We knew it had to be there because the “Broad-Wings” team had seen it (and scooped us again on the 3-point bonus). After following a snowy trail into the marsh along the edge of some reeds, we saw the bittern just sticking out from a nearby point of land. This was our highlight sighting of the day, but we had to be careful celebrating so as not to fall into the mostly frozen marsh.

After the relief of finding the American Bittern, we headed down to Ashland Street in the southern-most section of Hampton, just south of the Route 1A bridge. We had two goals for this stop—Sanderlings and a Red-throated Loon and we found them both. Feeling quite pleased with ourselves, we went out to High Street Cemetery for our fourth and last chance at that elusive Chipping Sparrow. No sparrow, but we did see a Northern Flicker which is a three-pointer.

As the afternoon was winding down, we made one last try for the Wood Duck. No luck, but we were surprised to see the Mallard and American Black ducks settling down for the night in leaves under large rhododendron bushes on the bank above the water.

We decided to finish our day of competition at Glade Path, which extends

out into Hampton Marsh. From there we could look south over the marsh, view the water tower on Church Street, and watch a stand of trees where it was possible a Short-eared Owl could be roosting, waiting to surprise us at dusk. No owls flew out, but we did see two Bald Eagles overhead. Sunset was beautiful at 4:40 pm, and the sky was darkening as 5:00 pm and the end of the competition approached. Then, just as we began the drive back down Glade Path, a Peregrine Falcon, a three-point bird, flew in and landed on the top of the water tower! Alas, it was 5:03 pm and the competition was already over. Who, in their youth, has not answered just one more question after time was called during a standardized test? Well, we did the right thing, of course, and (sadly) did not add the peregrine to our list.

All in all, it was a great day of birding, competition, and companionship. To top it off, we won the Townie Award with 65 species (our second highest ever total) and 109 points! The American Bittern was a new species for the Twitichers. Three other species were new for us in the town of Hampton: Black Guillemot, Winter Wren, and American Pipit. The wren, pipit, and Lapland Longspur were seen for only the second time ever. There are three shorebird species that are usually present somewhere on the coast during the Superbowl: Dunlin, Purple Sandpiper, and Sanderling. This is only the second time we have had all three expected species; the only other time was in Rye and last year we missed all three.

Of course we had our misses. It is some consolation that no one else found the Chipping Sparrow or the Wood Duck on competition day. Pileated Woodpecker and Red-winged Blackbird had both been found during scouting, but did not appear as hoped. Brown Creepers can be a challenge in Hampton but how did we miss Hairy Woodpecker and Cooper's Hawk?

Editor's Note: Thank you to everyone who made this an even more meaningful event by supporting the team with a donation. We raised \$6,143 for New Hampshire Bird Records and NH eBird review.



Greater Scaup by Becky Suomala.

Birding Downtown Dover

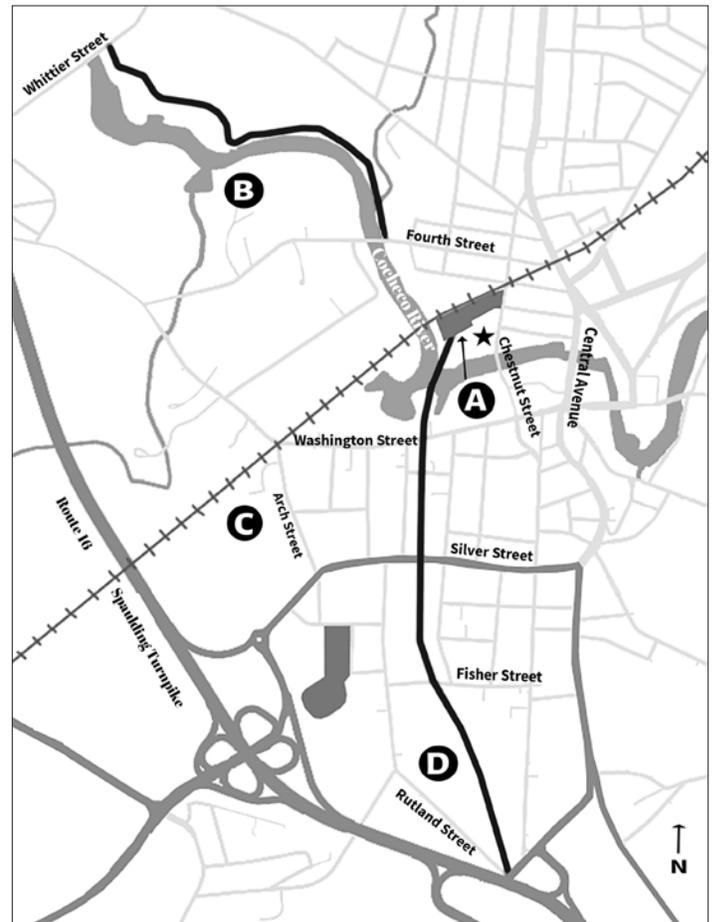
Article and photos by Cameron Johnson.

Downtown Dover may not be your first thought for prime birding locations, but it was the place I first grew to love birding when I moved here four years ago. It isn't always the easiest place to bird, and like a lot of more urban birding areas the places to find the birds can be disconnected and not immediately obvious. I have spent a great deal of time scouting the Dover Community Trail in search of every potential piece of habitat, no matter how small, where a bird might pop up.

This section of the trail is about 2.3 miles long, running from Whittier Street to Rutland Street. It follows the Cochecho River until 4th Street where you have to cross residential streets to reach the Dover Transportation Center, after which the trail runs south to its terminus. There is parking for the trail located at the Dover Transportation Center, as well as on-street parking on Washington Street and a small number of spots at the 4th Street Bridge.

In the center of the trail is the Transportation Center and the Walking Bridge, as well as the part of the river that runs to Central Avenue. This area is a great place to find Northern Rough-winged Swallows, as well as occasional Barn, Tree, and Cliff Swallows. A decent number of Northern Rough-winged Swallows breed in the outflow pipes that let out under the Central Avenue bridge, and dozens of these birds can be observed flying from the walking bridge during the summer. This is also the best area to find Black-crowned Night Herons, usually roosting in trees along the river during the day. During winter evenings you may hear the singing of Eastern Screech-Owls after sunset from the walking bridge, and during winter days this is a great place to track down flocks of Cedar Waxwings and occasionally even Bohemian Waxwings. On summer evenings, the chimney at the Loyal

Map by Cameron Johnson. Note: the darkest line is the Dover Community Trail that runs through the center of Dover. Use this map to orient yourself and enjoy discovering hidden gems. Several of the places Cameron mentions are on streets not on the trail. These are still worth the visit!



Downtown Dover Key:

- A: Transportation Center and Walking Bridge (best parking and access to trail, just be sure to park in the designated spaces)
- B: Cochecho River and North Spur Marsh (accessible by boat only)
- C: Friesian Street Thickets (off Arch Street, not part of the Community Trail)
- D: Restoration Church Parking Lot and Field (south end of the Community Trail)
- ★: Loyal Order of Moose Lodge (huge Chimney Swift roost)



Friesian Street Thickets (see C on map).



Cochecho River (see B on map).

Order of Moose Lodge hosts one of the largest Chimney Swift roosts on the Seacoast and hundreds of swifts can be seen circling as they come in to roost for the night.

One of the most enjoyable ways to bird the Community Trail is by boat. There is unfortunately no good public access to launch a kayak or canoe, but if you park at the 4th Street Bridge you should be able to find a suitable place to disembark at the riverbank. Along the water, you will find plenty of waterfowl: Mallards, Wood Ducks, American Black Ducks, Canada Geese and even an occasional Gadwall or Northern Pintail. In the spring and fall, warblers will flock in the thickets abutting the river and you will often find Osprey, Cooper's Hawks and Broad-winged Hawks patrolling the river in search of prey. Make sure to keep an eye out in spring for shorebirds; this is a fantastic spot for Solitary Sandpiper, as well as Spotted and the occasional Least Sandpiper.

In this northern section of river, there is a spur marsh that is excellent habitat for many of New Hampshire's resident marsh-dwelling birds that is only accessible by boat. Virginia Rails breed here, and Northern Waterthrush can be found in decent numbers from spring to fall. Occasionally, a Marsh Wren or an American Bittern make an appearance, but the relatively small size of this area means they usually do not stay long. There is also a great variety of non-bird wildlife: Common Snapping Turtles, American River Otters,

raccoons, and beavers all call this area home.

Your best chance at finding something rare would be at the Friesian Street Thickets, which is an undeveloped plot located off of Arch Street. In the spring, many warblers and other passerines can be found at the end of Friesian Street deep in the thickets, while in the fall they seem to like the more open area closer to Arch Street. I have had Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Brown Thrasher, and Orange-crowned Warbler here in the fall, and in the spring of 2024 I had a White-eyed Vireo, one of only a few records from Strafford County.

The final important area is the parking lot of the Restoration Church and the southernmost portion of the Community Trail. There is a large field here, that combined with the thickets along the edge of the trail and parking lot, create perfect sparrow habitat. Lincoln's, White-crowned, Savannah, Swamp, Chipping and Song Sparrows, as well as Dark-eyed Juncos can all be found here. This is a superb spot for warblers in the spring, including one day when I had a Wilson's, Bay-breasted, and Tennessee Warbler all in the same flock! This is also one of the places to find American Woodcock in the spring, peenting in the open field and even occasionally performing their aerial displays in the evenings. North of here along the trail, after crossing Fisher Street, there is an area that seems to be perfectly situated to attract rare overwintering birds. I've had winter Yellow-bellied

Sapsuckers, Hermit Thrushes, Winter Wrens, and even a Black-and-white Warbler!

Over the years of birding here, I have managed to find a surprising 150 species of birds on the Community Trail. It has been one of my favorite spots to photograph from and where I have gotten many of my favorite shots of common and uncommon species alike. I'm out here nearly every day, so if you see me walking my dog or with my bins and camera peering into some shrubs, feel free to give me a wave and ask "see anything interesting today?"

Editor's Note: Please note that the trail is open to both bicycles and pedestrians. If you want to learn more about the Community Trail and its history, visit www.dover.nh.gov/government/city-operations/planning/community-trail/.

Birds from Dover Community Trail



White-eyed Vireo, 5-22-2024.



Bohemian Waxwing, 4-5-2024.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 10-10-2024.



Virginia Rail, 9-2-2022.

What to Watch for in Winter

Editor's Note: Winter is for the sea ducks! At least, that's how I like to think of it. I love going to the beach in the winter or walking along a rocky coastline and looking at sea ducks.

While winter can feel quiet in the birding world, a closer look reveals plenty of seasonal treasures—Horned Larks foraging in fields after a fresh snowfall, flocks of Snow Buntings swirling like snowflakes, and the occasional Snowy Owl. The New Hampshire coast offers the greatest diversity in winter, with something to see on nearly every outing. Inland birding can be more variable, but in some years, we're treated to the arrival of "winter finches" invading from the north in large flocks. These irruptions are unpredictable and may require a trip north of the White Mountains to find species like Evening Grosbeak and Pine Siskin.

Keep an eye on open water for lingering waterfowl and on rivers where birds gather in unfrozen sections. A few half-hardy species (those that occasionally overwinter in small numbers) might surprise you during a mild season. Unexpected visitors such as orioles, towhees, or Yellow-breasted Chats sometimes turn up at feeders, so keep your binoculars and camera ready to document rare sightings.

Though winter may seem quiet, it's full of birding excitement. Look forward to seasonal events like the Christmas Bird Counts, the Superbowl of Birding at the end of January, and NH Audubon's annual Backyard Winter Bird Survey, held on February 14 and 15, 2026. See articles on each of these events in this issue.

December

- Wintering sea ducks and other waterbirds arrive and will stay all winter. For some species, it is the only time we see them in New Hampshire: Long-tailed Ducks, scoters, Horned and Red-necked Grebes and Red-throated Loons.
- Purple Sandpipers are one of the few shorebirds that winter along the coast. Watch for them in rocky areas, not sandy beaches. They blend in very well and are often easiest to find at high tide in Rye or the jetty at the outlet of Hampton Harbor.
- American Tree Sparrows arrive from the north, taking the place of Chipping Sparrows. Dark-eyed Juncos join them at feeders.
- Greater Scaup gather in large numbers (1,000 or more) on Great Bay. Try looking from the Great Bay Discovery Center or the Osprey Cove trail in Greenland, or Adam's Point in Durham. You will want



Snow Buntings by Kyle Jones, 1-26-2025, Gamblen Farm, Haverhill, NH.

a scope as birds can be distant.

- Barrow's Goldeneye are sometimes seen with large flocks of Common Goldeneye. Stark Landing on the Merrimack River in Manchester can be one of the best spots to see them, but one or two are also usually in Laconia if there is open water, and sometimes at the coast or Great Bay.
- Hampton Beach State Park usually hosts a flock of Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, and an occasional Lapland Longspur. Farms along the Connecticut River Valley from Westmoreland to Walpole and open areas near the Berlin Regional Airport in Milan are also good places to check for these species.
- Northern Shrikes can appear anywhere in the state but good places to check are the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Newington or Airport Marsh in Whitefield.
- In milder winters, look for lingering birds including Gray Catbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds, and even a few warblers like Pine and Yellow-rumped.
- Moore fields on Rt. 155A in Durham is a great place to look for unusual geese (such as Snow Geese), mixed in with flocks of Canada Geese.

January

- If the fishing boats are still running (e.g. Eastman's Docks, Seabrook), an offshore trip can produce Northern Fulmar, Black-legged Kittiwake, Dovekie, Common Murre, and an occasional puffin or Thick-billed Murre. These species are rarely seen from shore and a boat trip is often required to see them.
- Razorbill and Black Guillemots are the most likely alcids to see on the ocean from shore. Scan from pullouts such as Pulpit Rocks and Seal Rocks in Rye, Rye Harbor State Park, Hampton Beach State Park, or Seabrook Beach. Great Island Common in New Castle is also a good spot for Razorbills.
- White-winged Gulls (Glaucous and Iceland) visit in the winter but are seldom reliable on any given day.

Hampton Harbor and Rochester WTP (only open on weekdays) are the most likely places to find them.



Snowy Owl by Cameron Johnson, 2-8-2025, Hampton Beach State Park, NH.

- The best places to look for Snowy Owls are Rye Harbor State Park and Hampton Beach State Park. Numbers vary each year and they can be absent some winters.
- Winter finches, such as Pine Siskins or Common Redpolls, can arrive in big flocks or not at all. Watch for them at feeders and stands of birch trees with catkins.
- As rivers and lakes ice up, Bald Eagles gather at remaining open water on the major rivers, the largest lakes, and the coast. Great Bay is a winter hotspot for eagle watching, and eagles are regular along the Merrimack River from Concord to Nashua, as well as southern stretches of the Connecticut River, and the Lakes Region.

February

- Check fruit trees for waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks. Cedar Waxwings are the most common. Downtown Gorham and Plymouth, NH, are especially good places to look for Bohemian Waxwings which are typically seen in Coos County. Pine Grosbeaks appear in some years but typically in low numbers.
- Black-capped Chickadees start to sing their spring “fee-bee” song making it easy to think that your Eastern Phoebes are back, but they won’t return until April.
- Hinsdale can be one of the first places for returning waterfowl as open patches appear on Lake Wantastiquet above the dam on the Connecticut River.
- Short-eared Owls can occasionally be seen at the seacoast or the Dillant-Hopkins Airport in Swanzey in winter but are more likely as we transition from February to March.
- South winds can bring the first influx of Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles. If there is some open ground the first Killdeer and American Woodcock may arrive in the southernmost parts of the state.
- Barred Owls can be heard in late February. Listen for their “who-cooks-for-you-who-cooks-for-you-all” calls as their courtship begins. A moonlit night is ideal for owling.

Corrections

Just like how identification mishaps can happen, believe it or not, we do make mistakes! The following corrections were found after the issue was published. Small typos are not included, but accuracy of data is important. Please let us know of any inaccuracies you find in any issue so we can correct the data.

Winter 1987-88

p. 20 Kinglets through Starlings, first paragraph, last sentence should end as: “...week in early January” not February.

Winter 2019-20

p. 11 Right column, Pipits, Finches, Sparrows and Orioles to Blackbirds section, the first sentence should be “Woodmont Orchard in Hollis” not “Nashua.”

p. 18 The Dickcissel on 01/16 was observed by J. Pettipas and S. Wisley only, not D. Hubbard.

p. 25 The first line in the Table should be “White-crowned Sparrow” not “Black-headed Gull” and the data in all columns should be zero except for the column “Cst” which is correctly given as 2. The Total should be “2”, not “5”.

Fall 2020

p. 16 Right column, a Leach’s Storm-Petrel sighting mentioned on page 7 was inadvertently omitted: 10-26, 1, Little Boar’s Head, N. Hampton, S. Mirick

p. 19 Left column, a Lincoln’s Sparrow sighting mentioned on page 12 was inadvertently omitted: 11-02, 1, Wild Rose Ln., New Castle, P. Chamberlin

p. 31 Left column, first full paragraph, the fourth line should say “exception of five years” not six.

Spring 2021

p. 5 Right column, in “Heron” section, second line should read “on May 2 by Zachary Coughlin” not Zacary.

p. 15 Left column, Eastern Kingbird paragraph, 7 lines from bottom of page should say “(not migrating) tallied by Rob Woodward during his survey around Turkey Pond in Concord...” not from a field in Concord.

Fall 2021

p. 4 Left column, Magnificent Frigatebird photo caption, all instances of the year should be 2021, not 2022.

p. 4 Right column, The Frigatebird Connection, first sentence, JoAnn O’Shaughnessy’s first name is mis-spelled.

p. 6 First sentence should read: “Inland Red and Red-necked Phalaropes are also...”

Winter 2021-22

p. 6 Right column, last paragraph, the article on the Glaucous Gull “Glockenspiel” appears in the Spring 2022 issue, not in this issue.

p. 10 Right column, first full paragraph, second sentence should read “...banding data and writes in Maine Birds.” The last section of the web address for the publication should include a dash:

“...purple-finch-winter-movments” (no “e” in move)

p. 17 Right column, bottom photo caption should read “...and the siskin above.” not goldfinch.

p. 19 The captions for the two photos in the right column are swapped.

p. 34 right column, last sentence of last full paragraph is missing a word: “...highs totaled 39 which is a typical...”

Spring 2022

p. 12 Left column, first sentence, should read First Connecticut Lake, not Second.

p. 12 Left column, first paragraph, the 50+ Blue Jays were migrating along First Connecticut Lake, not Second.

Summer 2022

p. 5 Tricolored Heron photo was by Jeanne-Marie Maher, not Jean-Marie.

p. 8 Willet photo was by Benjamin Griffith, not Griffiths.

Back Cover Title should be Summer 2022 Rarities, not 2023.

Fall 2022

p. 2 From the Editor is for FALL 2022, not SUMMER

p. 6 Ross’s Goose photo was by Ed Norton, not North.

p. 8 Bottom half of page, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Snowy Egret sightings by Brett Hillman, not Bret.

p. 11 Right column, second bullet, Lesser Yellowlegs sighting was by David Forsyth, not Davis.

p. 15 Left column, The Results, sixth line, a Cackling Goose in Carroll, not Cheshire.

p. 20 Left column, under Data Sources, the CBC Data reference should be deleted.

p. 30 Bottom photo caption should read: “at the Isles of Shoals by Rebecca Suomala.”

p. 35 Wood Duck photo is by Toby Sackton, not Slackton.

Back Cover Title should be Fall 2022 Rarities, not 2023 and the Ross’s Goose photo was by Ed Norton, not North.

Winter 2022-23

p. 4 Right column, the rarities listed above the Pink-footed Goose photo should include Rufous Hummingbird,

not Ruby-throated.

p. 5 Last full sentence, replace “Katie and I” with “your Winter Editors” (the summary was written by both Jim and Katie).

p. 9 Right column, next to last paragraph should begin “Winter finches, when they were found, stayed primarily in the north this winter” not “A good food crop...”

p. 11 The following was inadvertently omitted: “A Prairie Warbler that stayed into January was a first January record for the state.”

Spring 2023

p. 10 White-eyed Vireo photo caption should not include the word GRANT.

p. 11 Last line, the Summer Tanager was found by John Peckham, not Pecknam.

Summer 2023

p. 16 & 17 The Common Nighthawk photos are all by Rebecca Suomala of the nest on the roof at Heritage Heights in Concord and show the female incubating the eggs and the two eggs.

p. 19 Last paragraph, second line should read “...at the top of an evergreen tree...” not a pine (it’s a spruce or a fir).

Winter 2023-24

p. 12, 14, 26, & 35 Apologies to Chris McPherson for mis-spelling his name in the photos he took on each of these pages.

Spring 2024

p. 22 Right column, last bio paragraph, the words “and Erik Buxton Land Intern” should be deleted.

Summer 2024

p. 24 Unusual Parents, first paragraph, Pam Geiger, not Gieger.



Sanderlings by Jim Sparrell, 2-22-2025, Hampton Beach State Park, NH.

Answer to the Photo Quiz

by Greg Tillman

Even with two silhouettes for this quiz, this might be a little tough. Remember, though, this is a winter quiz, and the description said these birds can be found throughout the state in the winter. We'll rely on that to help narrow down our candidate pool.

I wanted to show both of these pictures, with two different poses, to help show how much we can intuit about a bird just from behavior and general impressions. Almost any of our perching birds can assume the “standard” alert and upright pose, but for some birds, that is not their usual posture. If we watch for a few minutes, we often see a more preferred pose: woodpeckers facing a tree trunk, for example, or wrens with their tail cocked. Seeing the same bird perched upright can even throw our identification efforts off track.

In this case, it feels like the upright bird is stretched out, alert, maybe even alarmed, and the horizontally perched bird might be foraging, gleaning insects. Not all of our insect eaters are gleaners, and the posture from one photo is not conclusive, but the first step in identifying a bird is to narrow down the candidates, and with a posture like that, this bird already seems more warbler-like than flycatcher-like.

Let's turn to some more concrete features. This bird is quite small—small enough to perch on pine needles! Something like a goldfinch or a redpoll might manage to use needles as a perch, but that small, finely pointed beak is not the beak of a finch, or small sparrow.

The beak looks a bit small even for many warblers, although a few might fit, but let's not forget that this is a winter quiz. I'm going to re-invoke this quiz's requirements and say that although a lingering warbler or two is certainly possible anywhere in New Hampshire, even in winter, there is really no warbler that is “found throughout the state” in the winter. (In the field, of course, you don't get to do that! Location and season can help suggest likelihoods, but they rarely let you rule out a whole group of birds altogether.)

So, ruling out warblers, sparrows, and finches, there are only a few small winter residents remaining that we can consider. Nuthatch, kinglet, chickadee, creeper, and wren are possibilities, but that bill is way too small for a wren or a creeper. The pose really suggests nuthatch, and Red-breasted Nuthatches are pretty small, but even Red-breasted Nuthatch would have a longer, stouter bill (proportionately) than this little bird.

By elimination, it seems we're looking at a kinglet or a chickadee. If we were in the field, then at this

point we would have successfully narrowed down the pool of possibilities. We've used size, shape, behavior, and time of year and selected three likely candidates. In the field, we would move on to plumage-based field marks, not to mention call notes, and the identification would resolve itself pretty easily.

However, as an exercise, let's continue a little further with the silhouettes we have. I think the overall shape rules out New Hampshire's chickadees. Chickadees are bigger-headed and longer-tailed than this bird. The upright pose, especially, shows a shape that is not quite right for a chickadee. One big caveat here is that I already know the answer, though, and I should say that one expert I sent this to *did* feel like chickadee was a good fit! So there is no shame in calling this a “chickadee/kinglet sp.”

In any case, if we do rule out chickadee, then I think we can all agree that this bird is shaped just right for a kinglet, down to that very fine pointed bill. Again, this would be an easier identification in the field, where the very small size of a



Golden-crowned Kinglet by Jim Sparrell, Odiorne, 10-29-2022.



Golden-crowned Kinglet by Jim Sparrell, Portsmouth, 11-13-2023.

kinglet is more readily apparent.

So, if we're looking at a kinglet, can we determine if it's Ruby-crowned or Golden-crowned, just by its shape? Well... probably not? However, like warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets don't really meet the criteria of being found "throughout the state" in the winter. (And I think the theoretical challenge of trying to separate our two kinglets solely by shape really exceeds the scope of this quiz!)

Conclusion: We're looking at a Golden-crowned Kinglet. Other than a hummingbird, they are the smallest woodland bird in New Hampshire, noticeably smaller than even warblers and chickadees. Just a bit smaller than Ruby-crowned Kinglets, their ability to survive New Hampshire winter nights is something to marvel at.

One final note I'll make here is that arbitrarily excluding warblers is, of course, not something you should really do in practice. There are some warblers, like Orange-crowned Warbler or perhaps Tennessee Warbler, that have shapes and foraging styles similar to kinglets, and that do sometimes linger in New Hampshire into the winter. Though you certainly don't want to be identifying lingering winter warblers by shape! In the field, the Golden-crowned Kinglet's noticeably smaller size and striped head would be key to confirming its identification.

Tracking Change Through the Backyard Winter Bird Survey

by Grace McCulloch



American Tree Sparrow by Grace McCulloch.

Every February, hundreds of New Hampshire residents look out their windows, fill their feeders, and take part in NH Audubon's Backyard Winter Bird Survey (BWBS). What began in 1987 as a way to track the state's common feeder birds has grown into a powerful tool for understanding long-term population trends and how birds are responding to a changing world.

Here is a taste of these changes with three strikingly different stories about adaptation, loss, and fluctuation in New Hampshire's winter landscape. Who knows? Maybe these stories and join in the upcoming will help inspire you to participate in the upcoming survey weekend, February 14 and 15, 2026 (Valentine's Day Weekend).

Carolina Wren: Expanding Northward

In the last few decades, Carolina Wrens have made a remarkable range expansion into New Hampshire. Prior to the 1990s, they were a rarity here, but today they're regular visitors south of the White Mountains. Warmer winters have enabled this northward push, though their populations remain vulnerable to severe cold snaps that can cause dramatic die-offs. Still, their resilience is clear: a record number were reported in 2025.

Backyard Winter Bird Survey data show their numbers have increased by about 13% per year, even after accounting for changes in participation. Bird feeders likely play a role in their success, offering much-needed food during the most challenging months. It's easy to see why they've become favorites at feeders, with their bold personalities and buzzy calls brightening winter days.

Backyard Tip: Offer suet, peanut hearts, and mealworms near dense shrubs or brush piles, where wrens can find quick shelter from predators and cold.

American Tree Sparrow: Declining Winter Visitor

Nicknamed the "Winter Chippy," American Tree Sparrows migrate south from the Arctic each fall to spend winter in New Hampshire. BWBS data, however, show a concerning decline. Reports have decreased by about 4% per year.

This downward trend likely reflects widespread habitat loss. Across North America, agricultural intensification and forest maturation have reduced open, weedy areas where these sparrows feed and shelter. While still regular winter visitors, their numbers

today are far below what observers reported just a few decades ago.

Backyard Tip: Leave seed heads standing in your garden through winter and offer sunflower or Nyjer seeds on platform feeders to attract these flocks of gentle, ground-feeding sparrows.

Evening Grosbeak: The Rise and Fall of an Irruptive Finch

If you birded in the 1980s, you might remember the days when dozens of Evening Grosbeaks crowded backyard feeders across New Hampshire. Since then, their numbers have plummeted by roughly 8% per year in BWBS data. This mirrors a 92% global population decline since 1970.

Evening Grosbeak numbers in New Hampshire winters are closely tied to spruce budworm outbreaks in eastern Canada, which occur roughly every 40 years. When spruce budworm is abundant, Evening Grosbeak populations can spike dramatically. You can see the last peak at the end of the most recent outbreak in the graph.

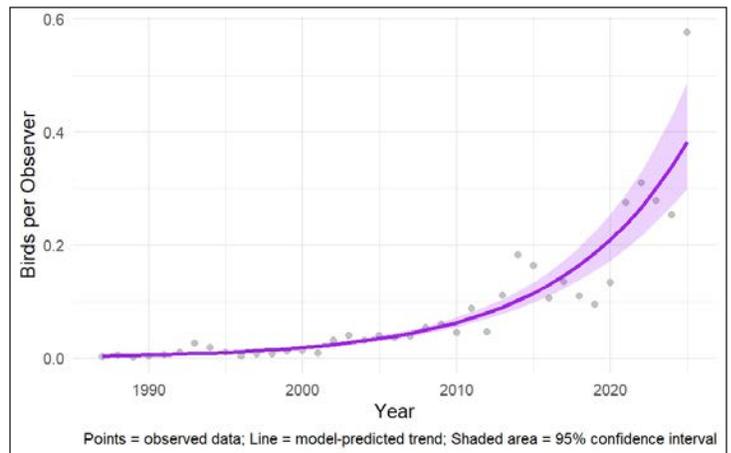
As an irruptive species, their numbers also fluctuate widely from year to year. In New Hampshire, most individuals are winter visitors from breeding grounds in Canada, with only a few local breeding records. Whether Evening Grosbeaks will rebound to their former abundance remains uncertain, though if the historical pattern holds, another spruce budworm outbreak may bring a resurgence.

Backyard Tip: Offer black oil sunflower seeds or chips on sturdy feeders and plant native fruiting trees to provide natural winter food sources.

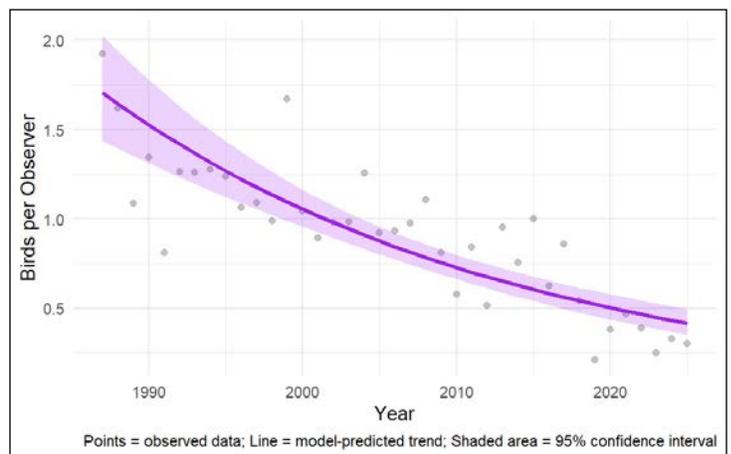
Join in the Fun

Together, these three species tell the story of change, some adapting to warming winters, others struggling as landscapes changed, and still others fluctuating in cycles tied to distant forests. Thanks to decades of Backyard Winter Bird Survey participation, we can see these trends unfold and better understand how New Hampshire's birds are responding to the world around them.

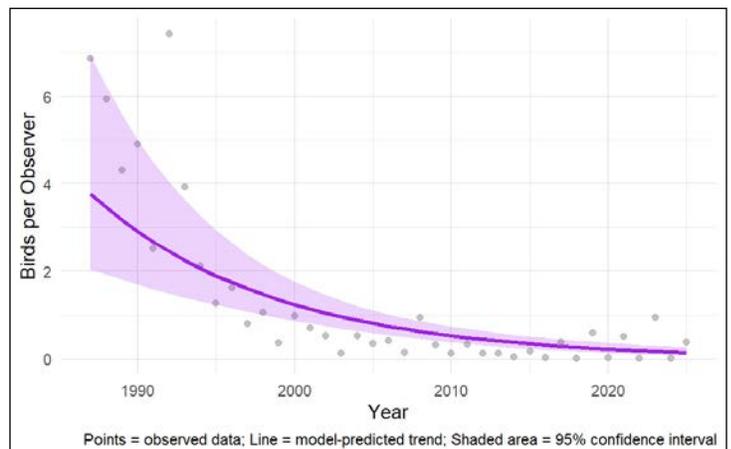
Learn more about participating in the Backyard Winter Bird Survey at www.nhaidubon.org/bwbs and join in the upcoming count, February 14 and 15, 2026. We will be announcing a new project website in the new year that showcases these trends and more. Stay tuned for an announcement on the Joy of Birding website, www.joyofbirding.nhaidubon.org



Carolina Wren, 1987–2025. The dark line shows the trend over time predicted by our statistical model, while the shaded area shows where we are 95% confident the true trend lies. Gray points are the numbers of Carolina Wrens actually observed in participants' backyards, averaged per observer. You will see that there are 0.5 birds listed. This does not mean half a bird was observed but rather that was the average number in a given year!



American Tree Sparrow, 1987–2025. The dark line shows the trend over time predicted by our statistical model, while the shaded area shows where we are 95% confident the true trend lies. Gray points are the numbers of American Tree Sparrows actually observed in participants' backyards, averaged per observer.



Evening Grosbeak, 1987–2025. The dark line shows the trend over time predicted by our statistical model, while the shaded area shows where we are 95% confident the true trend lies. Gray points are the numbers of Evening Grosbeaks actually observed in participants' backyards, averaged per observer.

The Joy of Birding: New Hampshire Bird Records Is Online!

by Grace McCulloch



About The Joy of Birding

The Joy of Birding is the new online home of *New Hampshire Bird Records*, published by NH Audubon. It features articles, photos, research, and field stories that celebrate New Hampshire's birds and birding community.

Explore at www.joyofbirding.nhaidubon.org.

It's official. *New Hampshire Bird Records* is online! After years of celebrating and documenting birds and birding across New Hampshire, this beloved publication has taken flight in a brand-new digital format: the Joy of Birding.

It's been a journey to get here, and I am thrilled to share the results. While I know some readers will miss the print publication, I encourage you to explore the new site with an open mind. I hope you will be pleasantly surprised.

The Joy of Birding is more than a new website. It's a living, growing space for New Hampshire's birding community. Just as *New Hampshire Bird Records* has long been a record of the state's birds, the Joy of Birding continues that legacy while opening new possibilities.

Over the past year and a half, I've come to see *New Hampshire Bird Records* not just as a publication, but as a community. The Joy of Birding was designed with that in mind. It is a community resource that showcases *your* stories,

photos, and experiences. So please, explore the site, share it with friends and family, and consider contributing your own birding adventures!

Visit www.joyofbirding.nhaidubon.org or scan the QR code in this article to check it out.

Explore the Joy of Birding

The Joy of Birding has all of the same great content as *New Hampshire Bird Records* and more. Instead of being published quarterly, new articles will appear throughout the year. No more waiting for the next issue! You will find something new on the site each month. The easiest way to catch up on recent posts is to scroll down the homepage to the carousel titled “**The Latest.**”

You can also dive deeper into category pages:

Birding the Year: Discover what each season has to offer, from monthly birding highlights to seasonal summaries with top rarities and notable sightings. A year of birding, all in one place. To get started, check out *November Birding Highlights*, *Summer Season Summary 2025*, and Ashton Almeida's *May Migration Challenge*.

From the Field: Tag along on wild chases, field trips, and adventures. These are the stories that capture the joy (and the occasional chaos) of birding in New Hampshire. Start with *Discovering a Lark Bunting and a Birder*, *Interview with a Birder—David Govatski*, *A Tailless Red-winged Blackbird Named Bob*, and *A White-faced Song Sparrow*.

Research Spotlights: Be inspired by the science behind the sightings. Explore bird research, participatory science projects, species spotlights, and long-term monitoring efforts happening across the state. Don't miss articles from the archive like *Help Your Chickadees*, *The Color of Feathers: A Bird's Eye View*, *Species Spotlight: Ash-throated Flycatcher*, and *Canada Jay Study*.

Level Up Birding: Sharpen your ID skills, explore bird



The Joy of Birding home page. Explore all the new online home has to offer at www.joyofbirding.nhaidubon.org. Black-throated Green Warbler by Len Medlock.

behavior and sounds, and test yourself with interactive quizzes. Here's where the fun really begins, now with color photo quizzes. Try *Black-bellied Plover vs. American Golden-Plover*, *A Mystery Sandpiper*, *A Rare Bird?*, and *A Mystery Female*.

Where to Bird: Find your next favorite birding hotspot. Let local birders be your guide to locations across New Hampshire, with favorite spots and insider tips. You can even explore an interactive map to find a place near you. Current articles include *Dover Community Trail*, *Pawtuckaway State Park*, *Horseshoe Pond in Merrimack*, and *Seabrook Town Forest*. More locations are being added regularly. Have a favorite birding spot? We'd love to feature it!

Get Started Birding: New to birding or new to birding in New Hampshire? This section has everything you need to know from beginner guides to bird alerts and expert tips. Start with *Getting Started with eBird*, *Get Connected: Birding in NH*, *What Is a Rare Bird and How to Report It?*, and *The Merlin App: Pitfalls of Summer*.

Looking Back and Ahead

The archives are open! Explore over 40 full issues of *New Hampshire Bird Records*, now available online. Meet the editorial team and learn how you can contribute your own stories and photos. Details are available online under "Contribute Your Story."

The Joy of Birding is available free of charge to everyone, helping to make birding stories and science more accessible to both new and seasoned birders alike. **We're also developing a dedicated email newsletter to share the latest articles and features. Be sure to sign up on the website so you never miss an update. You will see this sign up on the side bar of the home page.**

A New Chapter

The launch of the Joy of Birding marks both a new beginning and a continuation of what *New Hampshire Bird Records* has always stood for: community, curiosity, and a deep love of birds. For decades, readers have opened each issue eager to see what others had discovered and to share in the wonder of New Hampshire's birdlife. That spirit of connection remains at the heart of this new platform.

Moving online allows the Joy of Birding to reach more people, share discoveries as they happen, and showcase the remarkable photography and experiences that define birding in New Hampshire. It's a space that will grow and evolve over time.

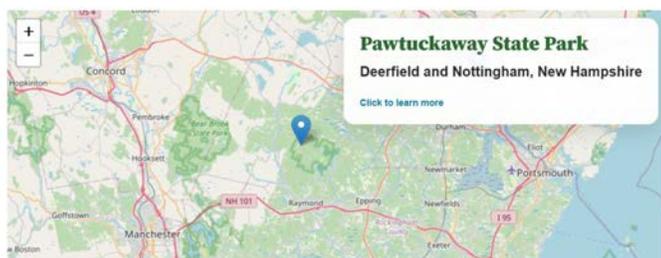
I hope you'll join us there to explore, contribute, and continue writing the story of birding in New Hampshire together.

Visit www.joyofbirding.nh Audubon.org or scan the QR code to check it out.



Where to Bird

Find your next favorite birding hotspot. Discover where and how to bird across New Hampshire. Let local birders be your guide with favorite spots and insider tips.



Discover new places to bird with our interactive map. Visit www.joyofbirding.nh Audubon.org/where-to-bird/ to learn more and read new where to bird articles. We will be adding new articles regularly!

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New Hampshire Bird Records Endowment Fund

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

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

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

For more information, contact the Editor.



Belted Kingfisher by Steve Mirick, 1-6-2025, Rye Harbor, NH.



Northern Harrier by Benjamin Griffith, 12-1-2024, Strafford County Farm, NH.

Rare Bird ALERT

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Abbreviations Used

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

New Hampshire Bird Records is published by NH Audubon's Conservation Department. Thank you to the many observers who submit their sightings to NH eBird (www.ebird.org/region/US-NH), the source of data for this publication. All records are subject to review by the NH Rare Birds Committee and publication here does not imply future acceptance by the RBC.

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Winter Sights



Cedar Waxwing by Len Medlock, 2-2-2025, Greenland, NH.



Snow Buntings by Benjamin Griffith, 1-20-2025, Hampton, NH.



Snowy Owl by Leo McKillop, 2-8-2025, Hampton Beach State Park, NH.



Short-eared Owl by Catherine Holland, 1-2-2025, Tullando Farm, Orford, NH.



American Pipit by Jim Sparrell, 12-28-2024, Rye Harbor State Park, NH.



Evening Grosbeak by Aubrie Giroux during the 2025 Backyard Winter Bird Survey weekend.

Winter 2024-25 Rarities and Unusual Species



Summer Tanager by Steve Mirick, 12-8-2024, Derry, NH. Read about Fran Keenan's exciting find in her article on page 23.



Harris's Sparrow by Kyle Wilmarth, 1-26-2025, Dover, NH. A fifth state record and only the second winter record, discovered by Magill Weber. Read about the series of events that led to this find on page 21.



Long-eared Owl by Victoria Tully, 2-17-2024, Rockingham County, NH. Long-eared Owls are among New Hampshire's most secretive owls and are highly sensitive to disturbance. This makes Victoria's photo especially noteworthy. When encountered, they should be given plenty of space and observed from a distance.



American Bittern by Leo McKillop, 1-29-2025, Meadow Pond, Hampton, NH. A rare sight in winter. Read about Becky Suomala and her team counting this bird during the Superbowl of Birding on page 27.



Glaucous-winged Gull (center) by Benjamin Griffith, 2-24-2025, Rochester Wastewater Treatment Plant, NH. This was only the second state record. Read more about the sighting on page 6.



Rare in New Hampshire, this Red-headed Woodpecker was photographed by Michelle Trant, 2-22-2025, Londonderry, NH. See page 8.