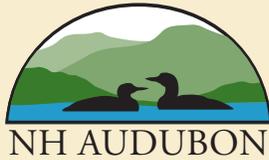


**NEW HAMPSHIRE  
AUDUBON**

*Afield*  
Spring 2025





NH AUDUBON

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**FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK**

As spring emerges with Black-capped Chickadees and Northern Cardinals starting to sing on sunny mornings, it is fitting that this issue of *Afield* highlights wildlife that bring us the most vibrant colors of the year. Every year, we focus more and more on pollinators—that group of wildlife species that help our native plants persist by carrying pollen from flower to flower. Most of these species are insects, although many vertebrates share this function, too. Butterflies and moths are some of the most colorful of this group. Learning about these beauties and tracking their movements tells us more and more about our natural cycles.

Our work at NH Audubon includes tracking and documenting birds of all stripes and colors, too! From the recovery of raptors to the concerning decline of some songbirds, we are continually learning how these patterns inform solutions, ensuring we take action to protect habitat, whether deep in the woods and wetlands, or in backyards and urban settings. NH Audubon’s work, like wildlife, knows no boundaries.

Another critically important theme running throughout this issue is how we connect people to nature. Diverse stories herein include: celebrating Becky Suomala’s retirement from her over 35 years of service to NH Audubon, joyful exploration at our nature day camps,



working with our valued community science volunteers, and teaching timber management for wildlife. The list is long and impactful.

Finally, please make sure you take a look at our year end financials and our popular: “Year in Numbers” pages. It is wonderful to see another year of financial success at NH Audubon. Our ongoing sustainability as an organization is thanks to your support. We are proud that you share belief our mission, and we intend to stay the course and continue making progress, no matter what!

Enjoy this immersion into our recent work as you enjoy the emergence of spring in our beautiful state.

See you out there,

Doug Bechtel, President

**Cover Photo:**

*Often, when you are out surveying one species, you are gifted with sightings of others. This American Copper perched cooperatively on low vegetation while I was out doing bird surveys in Concord. What a treat for me!*

*The American Copper butterfly is a small, brightly colored butterfly commonly found in fields, meadows, and gardens. It has striking orange wings with black spots on the upper side and a grayish underside with an orange band along the edge. With a wingspan of about 1 inch, it’s easy to miss but a delight to spot.*

*These butterflies are active from spring through fall, and you’ll often see them fluttering close to the ground, feeding on nectar from wildflowers. Their caterpillars primarily feed on plants like sorrel and dock. Despite their small size, American Coppers are tough and can thrive in a variety of open, sunny habitats.*

—Diane De Luca

For more on butterflies, see pages 3-10.

## Highlights from the Second Annual

# Capital Area Butterfly Survey

by Diane De Luca, Senior Biologist



After a very hot and humid July, participants in the second Annual Capital Area Butterfly Survey were fortunate to enjoy favorable weather for our day of butterfly searching. These surveys are part of a nationwide effort through the North American Butterfly Association to track butterfly populations and gain insight into how habitat and weather changes affect them.

On July 27, six teams comprising 36 participants spread out across the Capital Area, surveying 19 different sites. Together, we counted 981 individual butterflies, representing 38 distinct species. The day was full of memorable moments, with each team returning eager to share their exciting stories.

### BUTTERFLY HIGHLIGHTS

Several teams reported sightings of the delicate American Copper, which perched cooperatively for photos. Ninety-three Crescent butterflies congregated in an open area of the Boscawen Town Forest. At the Karner Blue Conservation Area, observers were delighted to spot six Karner Blues, along with several Edward's Hairstreaks and a Coral Hairstreak. The Karner Blue is a highly specialized butterfly that relies on healthy pine barrens habitat for survival. Populations of this species have declined drastically due to the widespread loss of pine barrens and oak savannahs. Listed as endangered by the USFWS in 1992, efforts to restore both the Karner Blue population and its native pine barrens habitat are ongoing. New Hampshire Fish and Game, in collaboration with numerous federal partners, continues

to work toward conserving this critical habitat and the species that depend on it.

A few rarities were also recorded. One team encountered a Giant Swallowtail resting quietly on the ground, allowing for close observation. As the largest butterfly in North America, with a wingspan of 4 to 7 inches, the Giant Swallowtail has been expanding its range northward in recent years, likely due to the warming climate. Another team, guided through the grassy areas of the Concord Airport, spotted a Variegated Fritillary. A Buckeye made an appearance at the Pembroke National Guard property, while a Common Sootywing was observed in the Concord Community Gardens. Buckeyes, a migrant species, have been increasingly spotted in the Northeast. Since they are intolerant to cold, they migrate south for the winter. These are just a few of the day's many shared highlights.

### BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

Closer to home, the Capital Area Butterfly Survey is part of an ongoing effort led by Heidi Holman of New Hampshire Fish and Game (NHFG) and UNH Cooperative Extension to collect data on butterflies across the state. New Hampshire Audubon is excited to be collaborating with NHFG and other partners to collect long term data on butterfly species through the Butterfly Monitoring Network. Formed in 2022, this Network "promotes awareness of butterflies, provides a community for learning, and engages volunteers



*Crescent Butterfly (above), by Diane De Luca; one survey team exploring the Locke Road area in Concord (top), by Dyanna Smith.*



Another team of butterfly observers find a cooperative Gray Hairstreak (above), by Diane De Luca; Giant Swallowtail (below), by Rebecca Suomala.

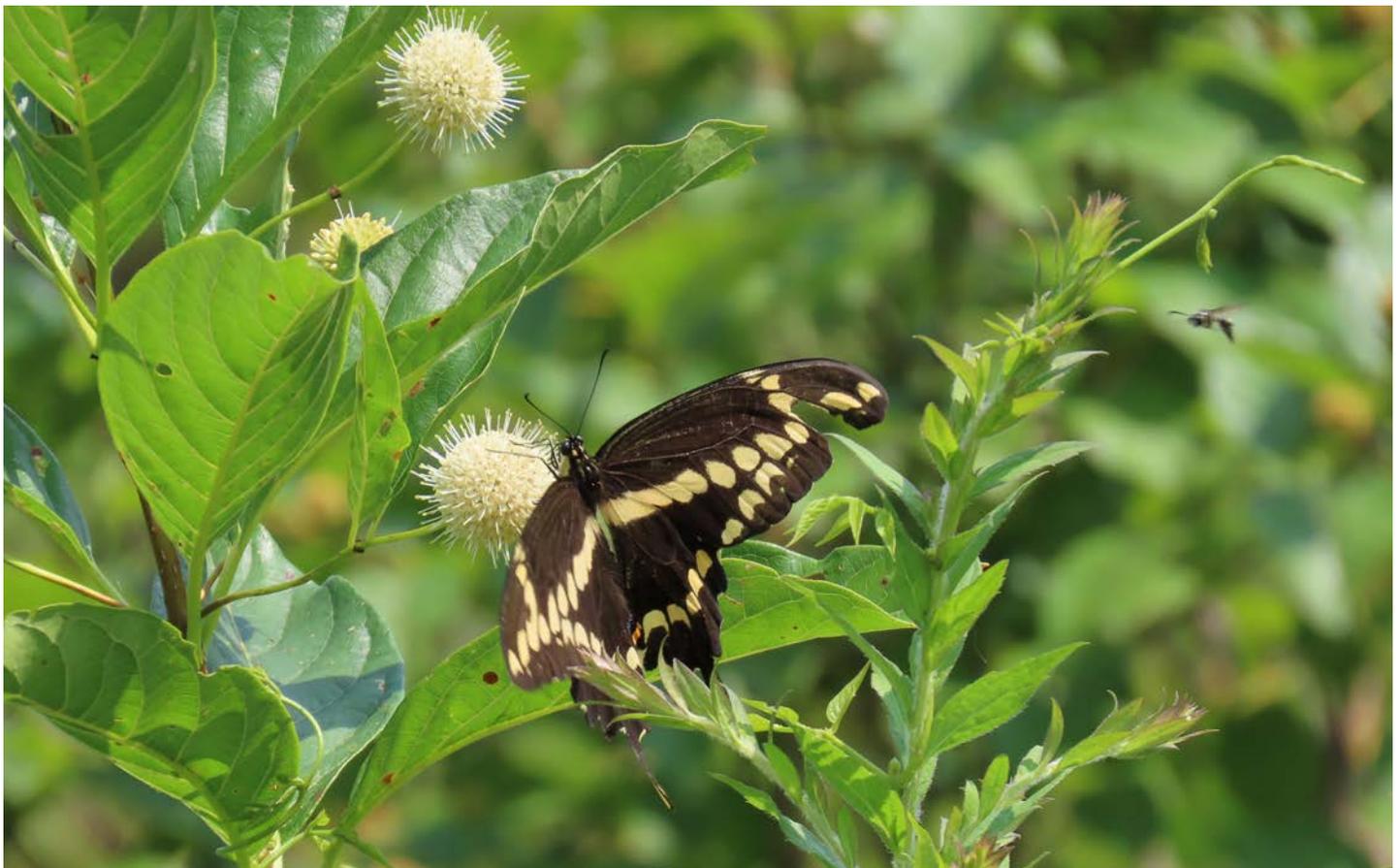
in identifying and counting butterflies across New Hampshire.” During the winter and spring, the partners offered online and field trainings across the state, reaching more than 500 butterfly enthusiasts. This learning culminated in the seven statewide Butterfly Surveys (up from 2 surveys in 2022!).

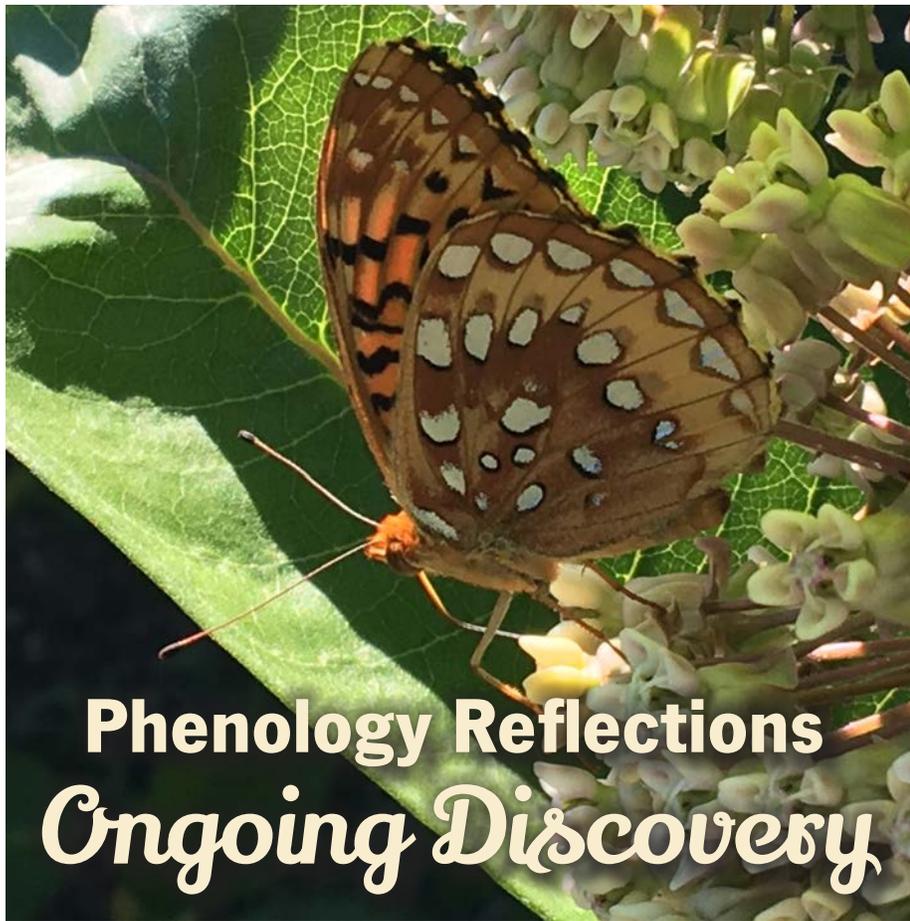
In addition to the July survey, butterfly enthusiasts are encouraged to share their sightings to the NH Butterfly Monitoring Network iNaturalist Project ([inaturalist.org/observations?project\\_id=128419](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?project_id=128419)) or on eButterfly ([e-butterfly.org](https://www.e-butterfly.org)) whenever you observe butterflies around the state. With all the growing interest in butterflies, sightings on iNaturalist have more than doubled in the last two years. This long term data will add to our knowledge base and help support butterfly conservation across the state. We encourage you to get involved!

### THANKS

*Thanks to everyone who participated in our second Capital Area Butterfly Survey. A special thanks to our team leaders: Levi Burford, Heidi Holman, Vanessa Johnson, Steve Mirick, Andrea Robbins, Becky Suomala, and Mark Suomala. Additional thanks to Heidi Holman of New Hampshire Fish and Game for all her leadership and dedication to butterfly conservation here in New Hampshire!*

*Thanks also to the Butler Foundation, the Benjamin Couch Trust, and the Gertrude Couch Trust for their support of the butterfly trainings and surveys.*





# Phenology Reflections Ongoing Discovery

*photos and story by Diane De Luca, Senior Biologist*

When I first became interested in birds and birding, I was fortunate to have incredible mentors who fueled my passion, nurtured my curiosity, and guided me on my learning journey. This passion grew into a lifelong career, providing opportunities to share my love for birds with others, engage in conservation projects, and continually expand my knowledge.

The long-term phenology observations at the Deering Wildlife Sanctuary have brought me full circle to my early birding days, though now I'm observing a different suite of species—most recently, butterflies. Once again, I've had the privilege of learning from generous mentors who have introduced me to the fascinating world of butterflies and other insects, revealing their beauty and intricate behaviors. These experiences remind me of the value of close observation and its importance in documenting long-term ecological changes.

For the past twelve years, we've made consistent phenology observations of identified species at the Deering Wildlife Sanctuary. These observations provide a baseline for the sanctuary and contribute to a national database managed by the National Phenology Network (NPN). The strength of NPN's database lies in its rich, long-term datasets collected across wide areas, which are crucial for researchers studying species' vulnerabilities to climate change and how these changes affect ecosystems. This data also helps inform management strategies that promote resilience in the face of climate change.

In recent years, butterflies were added to the suite of species

observed at Deering. This aligns with the statewide effort to document butterflies, expand knowledge across New Hampshire and the region, and support conservation initiatives.

## 2024 BUTTERFLY HIGHLIGHTS

### *Mourning Cloak*

In the early days of spring, one of the first butterflies we often see is the Mourning Cloak. On March 13, 2024, during a brief warm spell, I recorded my earliest sighting of Mourning Cloaks along the edge of a wooded dirt road, coinciding with my earliest recorded ice-out on Black Fox Pond, just two days earlier on March 11. Weather data show that the winter of 2023-24 was the second warmest in the last 156 years, with average temperatures nearly six degrees above normal.

Even with a warmer-than-usual winter, how do these butterflies emerge so early, sometimes even before March ends? Where do butterflies go in winter, and what survival strategies do they employ? These early sightings serve as a reminder of the remarkable resilience and adaptability of these delicate creatures.

The Monarch and American Lady are among the few butterflies that migrate south when cold temperatures arrive in the Northeast. Most others, like the Mourning Cloak, overwinter here in New Hampshire. The Mourning Cloak's early spring emergence is possible because it spends the winter in its adult form. These butterflies find sheltered spots to overwinter, such as crevices in rocks or beneath tree bark. Protected from freezing temperatures by glycol—essentially a natural antifreeze—they slow down their metabolic processes to remain dormant until spring.



*Mourning Cloak butterflies were observed on the early date of March 13 (above). By early July, Great Spangled Fritillaries were abundant. It was not uncommon to see more than a dozen alighting in a small cluster of plants (top).*



*As temperatures warmed through May, Tiger Swallowtails began to appear.*

Tiger Swallowtail, Black Swallowtail, and Spicebush Swallowtail—all large, showy butterflies that brighten pollinator landscapes throughout the summer.

By mid-April, Eastern Pine Elfins were visible along the edges of the dirt paths winding through White Pine dominated areas of the Deering Sanctuary. The Elfins are small, predominantly brown butterflies that are easily overlooked. Close observation reveals a distinct reddish-brown patterning although binoculars or a camera are often needed for these details. The larva will feed on the needles of White

Pine, with adults nectaring on the early flowers of blueberry, huckleberry and leatherleaf.

As temperatures warmed through May, Tiger Swallowtails began to appear. The numbers swelled in mid-May, coinciding with the peak bloom of nectar sources like violets, lilacs and cherry blossoms. A walk along the wooded road that winds through the sanctuary, and observations across the pocket fields, revealed Tiger Swallowtails in large numbers. The Canadian Tiger Swallowtail is a striking butterfly distinguished by its large size, bright yellow wings with bold black striping. It was previously considered a subspecies of the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail but was determined to be a species in 1991, and is the most prevalent tiger swallowtail in New Hampshire.

### **Great Spangled Fritillary**

Some butterflies, remarkably, overwinter as eggs or caterpillars. The Great Spangled Fritillary is one such species, laying its eggs in late summer near the base of violets, its primary host plant. The newly hatched caterpillars then spend the winter sheltered in leaf litter or soil surrounding the violets. When spring arrives and violet leaves start to emerge, the caterpillars begin feeding on the fresh growth, continuing their development.

By early July, Great Spangled Fritillaries were abundant. This large, striking butterfly, with bold orange-brown wings accented by black spots and a distinctive row of silvery white spots on the underside, is particularly drawn to milkweeds, especially swamp and common varieties. It's not uncommon to see more than a dozen alighting in a small cluster of plants, adding vibrant movement to the garden.

As adult butterflies, Great Spangled Fritillaries are vital

### **Eastern Pine Elfin & Tiger Swallowtail**

Many butterflies form a chrysalis in late summer, remaining dormant until spring. Those that overwinter in this stage find sheltered spots among tree branches, within dense shrubbery, or beneath overhangs. Like the adult Mourning Cloak, they produce glycol to prevent freezing and can slow down their development. As temperatures rise in spring, the chrysalides resume growth, hatching just as nectar resources become available. In New Hampshire, butterflies using this strategy include the Eastern Pine Elfin, a small, often-overlooked butterfly of the pine forests, along with the Canadian



*By mid-April, Eastern Pine Elfins were visible along the edges of the dirt paths winding through the white pine dominated areas of the Deering Sanctuary.*



*By early July, Great Spangled Fritillaries were abundant. It was not uncommon to see more than a dozen alighting in a small cluster of plants.*

### **Dun Skipper**

Joining the Great Spangled Fritillaries atop the milkweeds were large numbers of Dun Skippers. The Dun Skipper is a small, unassuming butterfly with brownish-black wings and little in the way of distinctive markings. More than once, I counted in excess of 50 Dun Skippers in close proximity.

As the Great Spangled Fritillary, the Dun Skipper overwinters in the larval stage, rolled up in the leaves of its host plants. As it warms in spring the larvae will pupate and emerge as adults. The larvae feed primarily on host plants of grasses and sedges, and they are found across a wide range of grassy habitats including open woodlands, old fields, and wetlands. The adults will often be found nectaring on milkweeds and mints, and other flowering plants.

### **THE FUTURE**

Numerous other butterfly species were observed at the Deering Sanctuary in 2024, with the highlights noted above offering just a snapshot of the diversity present. Continued, long-term observations will help establish a valuable baseline for tracking population trends and documenting changes over time.

### **THANKS**

*Grateful thanks to an anonymous donor for supporting the New Hampshire Audubon Phenology Project.*

pollinators for many flowering plants in their habitats. They are part of a complex ecosystem, with adult butterflies serving as food for birds and caterpillars sometimes feeding predatory insects. Their dependence on violets makes them sensitive to habitat changes, particularly the loss of meadows and open woodlands, where these plants thrive.



*Joining the Great Spangled Fritillaries atop the milkweeds were large numbers of Dun Skippers.*

# 2024 Monarch Tagging

## Advancing Inland Migration Studies

by Diane De Luca, Senior Biologist

The Monarch butterfly has seen dramatic population declines since the early 1990s, leading to extensive conservation efforts across the United States. While traditional adhesive tags have offered some



insights into migration patterns and informed these efforts, the Motus Project, using its lightweight nanotags, provides more detailed data on their fall movements and travel speeds. The Motus Project is a global migration tracking system that uses a network of automated radio receivers to detect nanotags attached to migrating animals. This technology enables researchers to gather detailed data on migration routes, speeds, and behaviors, enhancing conservation efforts and identifying critical habitats for protection

In 2024, New Hampshire Audubon continued our commitment to Monarch butterfly conservation with an intensified focus on inland tagging. Building on the foundational knowledge acquired in previous years—59 tags deployed in 2022 and 50 tags in 2023—we deployed 21 nanotags this season to gain a deeper understanding of the migratory behavior of *Danaus plexippus*. This year's efforts aim to deepen the understanding of Monarch migration patterns and highlight the importance of collaborating with partners to collect comprehensive data along the entire Monarch migration route.

*Tagged Monarch showing nanopin and antenna. Photo by Lindsay Herlily.*

## Methodology: Weight Assessments and Tagging Techniques

A novel aspect of our 2024 tagging protocol involved meticulously recording both the field weights of the Monarchs and the weights of the butterflies directly before application. This dual measurement approach may provide insight into fluctuations in the butterflies' weight over the course of a day.

Each individual was weighed using precision scales upon capture in the field and again in the tagging room, allowing us to evaluate any changes in weight related to potential tagging stress and normal daily weight fluctuations. The nanotags, which weigh approximately 0.13 grams, represent a significant addition to the overall mass of the butterfly.

Following these weight measurements, we employed a standardized tagging procedure that minimized handling time to reduce stress on the butterflies. The tags were affixed to the underside of the abdomen, allowing for both secure attachment and minimal impact on mobility.

## Observations and Data Collection

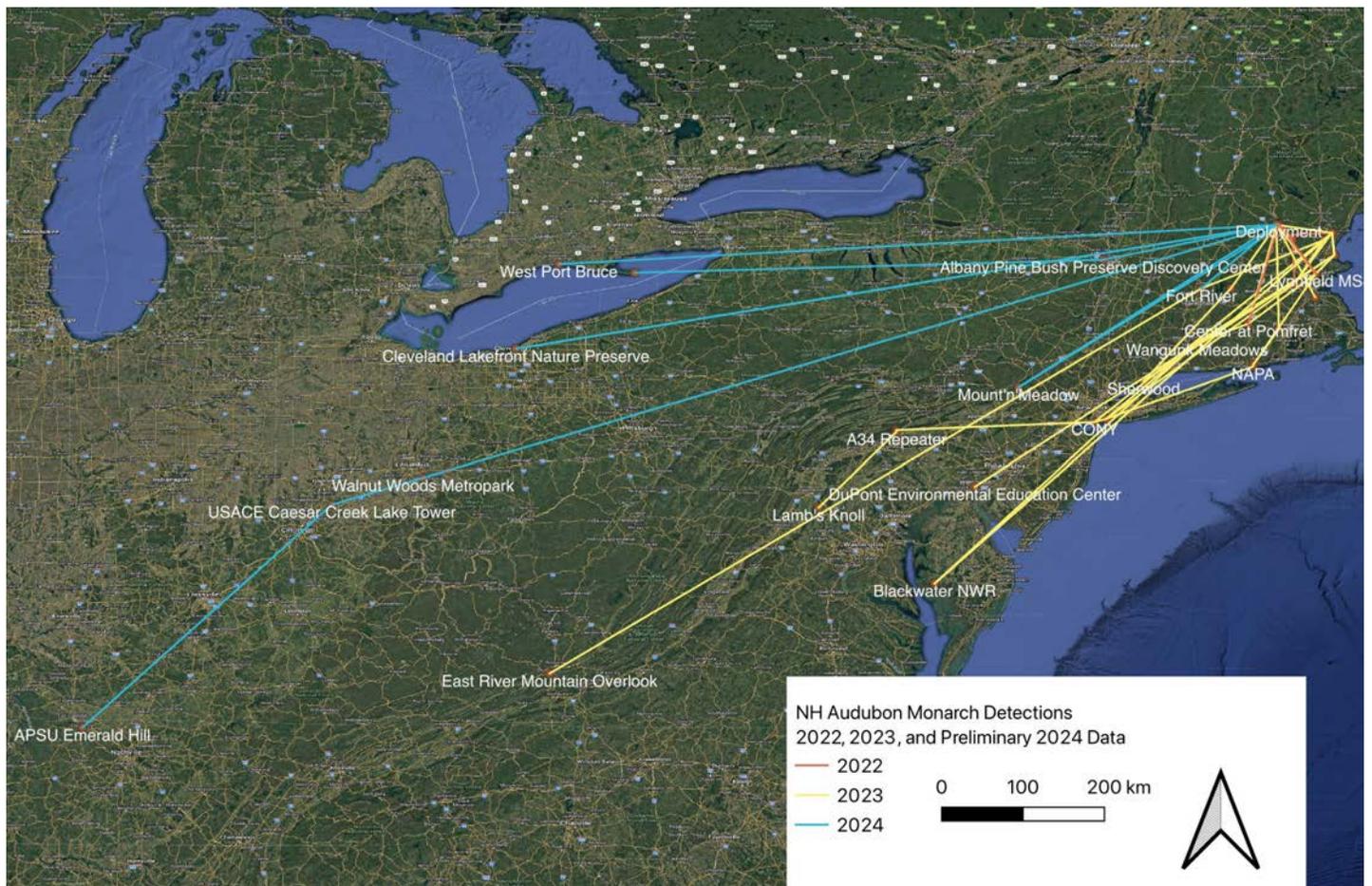
Preliminary observations are shedding light on the intriguing behaviors of the tagged Monarch butterflies. Tags deployed this season have been detected with approximately a 10-day lag from their actual migration dates. What is fascinating is the westward trajectory of these tags, prompting questions about their

migration routes. While it is important to remain cautious—particularly given the detection anomalies we experienced in 2021—this year's detections involve tags with three different burst intervals, a factor that may lend credibility to their authenticity.

The pulse data from these detections appear robust, showing low background noise and tight tolerances on the burst signals. However, skepticism remains regarding the remarkable distances being reported, particularly the 600 miles in four days by a Monarch first detected in Hebron, OH, suggesting a daily average of 150 miles. While this is an impressive distance, it challenges established data on Monarch migratory capabilities, which typically indicate a maximum of around 100 miles in one day.

Wind patterns observed during the tagging periods may have influenced migration trajectories this year. Considering the weather conditions in mid-September during the tagging and release effort, it's feasible that the butterflies were lifted by thermals, benefiting from a strong easterly tailwind that propelled them quickly westward. Such environmental factors could play a significant role in shaping Monarch migration routes.

Several detections align more closely with established migratory literature, providing a sense of validation for the seemingly improbable distances reported. The strong pattern emerging across the array of tags suggests a shared migratory experience. We will continue to analyze these detections as they are confirmed by Motus to determine credibility.



*The 2024 Monarch butterfly migration routes reveal intriguing westward movements, with some butterflies covering up to 600 miles in just four days. Preliminary data shows robust signal detections and suggests environmental factors like strong easterly winds may have influenced these unexpected trajectories.*

## Training and Collaboration

A critical component of our efforts this year involves developing materials to train our southern collaborators for their upcoming tagging initiatives. To facilitate this, we will be using photos and videos taken during the 2024 tagging effort to create instructional videos documenting our methodologies, including detailed visual guides on butterfly handling, tagging procedures, and data collection techniques. By sharing our protocols, we aim to enhance the consistency and effectiveness of tagging efforts across different regions, fostering a collaborative network dedicated to Monarch conservation.

## Importance of Habitat Connectivity

As we continue our research, understanding habitat connectivity remains paramount. The deployment of nanotags not only aids in tracking individual movements but also sheds light on the ecological significance of various landscapes utilized by Monarchs during migration. Identifying these critical habitats is essential for guiding future conservation efforts.

## The Path Forward

NH Audubon is playing a pivotal role in advancing Monarch butterfly conservation through its involvement in the Motus Project, leading efforts to tag Monarchs with lightweight nanotags, enhancing tracking capabilities and collecting detailed data on migration patterns. By collaborating with various partners, we are building a broader understanding of Monarch behavior, habitat needs, and conservation strategies, ultimately aiming to protect and support these essential pollinators throughout their migration routes. The insights gained from this year's tagging efforts will undoubtedly inform both local and regional conservation strategies.

## Call to Action

To support Monarch conservation, we encourage community involvement through the following actions:

- ☼ **Plant Native Milkweed:** Essential for Monarch caterpillars, species such as Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) and Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) are crucial for larval development.
- ☼ **Cultivate Nectar Plants:** Promote the planting of late-blooming nectar sources, particularly asters and goldenrods, which are vital for sustaining migrating Monarchs.
- ☼ **Engage in Community Science:** Participate in community science projects like Monarch Watch and Journey North to aid in population monitoring and habitat assessment.
- ☼ **Advocate for Pollinator-Friendly Practices:** Encourage local nurseries and land managers to prioritize the cultivation of native plants and the creation of Monarch-friendly habitats.

Through collective action and ongoing research, we can work toward a sustainable future for Monarch butterflies and their



*Volunteer Lindsay Herlihy releases a tagged Monarch next to the pollinator meadow at McLane Center. Photo by Lucy Murayda.*

extraordinary migratory journeys. Thank you for your support as we advance this critical work!

## Thank you

*The Monarch tagging effort was supported by a Competitive State Wildlife Grant and grants from the Butler Foundation, the Benjamin Couch Trust, and the Gertrude Couch Trust. The success of the Monarch tagging season was made possible by the many dedicated and diligent volunteers that gave of their time and energy to make it happen. Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to these volunteers: Lindsay Herlihy, Sandy McIntyre, Lucy Murayda, Ellie Peabody, and Pam Freilich.*

# Triennial Grassland Bird Surveys



story and photos by Pamela Hunt, Senior Biologist

*An adult Grasshopper Sparrow at the Concord Airport bringing food to its young.*

Roughly every three years I try to update population information for two of New Hampshire's threatened grassland birds: the Grasshopper Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlark. In 2024 I visited several airport sites and the old Manchester landfill, while a group of dedicated volunteers surveyed most of the other key grassland bird locations in the state, primarily in the Connecticut and Merrimack Valleys and just inland from the Seacoast. In the end, some 30 sites were checked at least once, with a few other records coming from eBird.

The primary site for Grasshopper Sparrows in the state continues to be the Concord Airport, where I estimate there were a record 21 territories in 2024. For comparison, when surveys at this site were first implemented in the early 2000s there were only 10-12 pairs in most years. Lest you think 2024 is some sort of fluke, I found 18 territories in 2018, so the increase appears real. If you add in the other 6-8 sites where this species occurs, the statewide population is in the range of 45-55 pairs, almost double that of 20 years ago. Much of that increase is from Concord, but some is from new sites we didn't know about when surveys began. The most reliable locations are airports and capped landfills, but now and then a male Grasshopper Sparrow will show up in an unexpected spot for a year or two before disappearing. These might be birds dispersing from one of the core populations, but they don't persist if they can't find a mate.

Although meadowlarks are more widespread, they occur in much lower densities, and most sites support only one or

two pairs (the Pease Airport has 4-5). As a result, the statewide population of this species is lower than that of the sparrow—estimated at 30-40 pairs. Close to half of these are in the Connecticut Valley, with the Seacoast coming in a close second (thanks largely to Pease). As with the Grasshopper Sparrow, some sites will have meadowlarks in one year but not the next, which makes it hard to get accurate population estimates at three-year intervals. For example, meadowlarks successfully nested at the Concord Airport in 2024 after being absent from that site since 2019. The opposite was true for Elm Brook Park in Hopkinton, which hosted the species since at least 2017, but not the last two years.



*Adult Eastern Meadowlark at the Manchester Landfill.*

# Seacoast Purple Martins Set Another Record

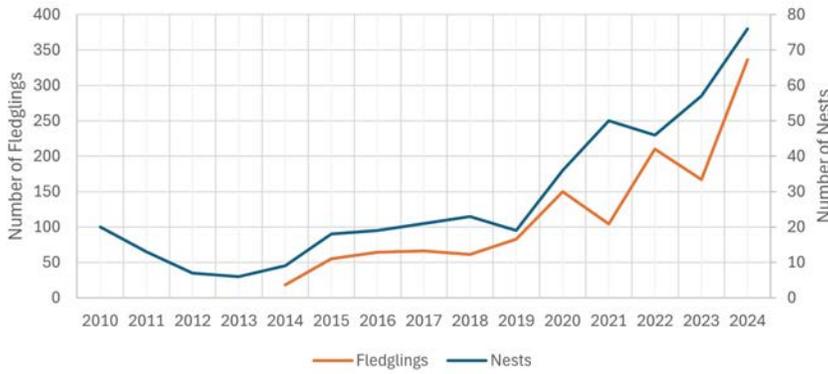
story and photos by Pamela Hunt, Senior Biologist

After a slight set-back in 2023 due to weather extremes, the Seacoast's Purple Martin colonies had a banner season. New records were set in all the measures we track for this state-threatened species, including nests (76), eggs laid (390), and young fledged (336). While good weather is part of the story behind this success, we were also able to expand two colonies by adding nesting gourds to the existing arrays, which alone accounts for 12 of the new nests this year. The small colony at the Portsmouth Country Club also essentially doubled in terms of both nests (from 3 to 5) and fledglings (from 10 to 20). There is still room for growth at this colony, but the others are filled to capacity, and it's time to look into more expansion sites. Waiting on the other side of Great Bay is a gourd array at The Nature Conservancy's Lubberland Creek Preserve, so maybe 2025 is the year that martins find it!

*The Purple Martin project is funded by private donations and a grant from the Butler Foundation. It is run primarily by a very dedicated team of volunteers who maintain the gourds and monitor the martins. We are always looking for new recruits to help with these tasks, so if interested please contact me!*



Purple Martins in NH: 2010-2024



*Purple Martins  
at the Goss Farm  
Colony in Rye.*

# More Mixed News for Cliff Swallows

*story and photo by Pamela Hunt, Senior Biologist*

2024 marked the fourth year of monitoring at a subset of New Hampshire's threatened Cliff Swallow population, again with a focus on three colonies in the Lakes Region (one in Holderness and two in Tamworth). While productivity at the two Tamworth sites is typical for the species (70-90% of nests produce young), the number of nests at one of them continues to decline (from 17 in 2021 to only five in 2024). I am increasingly worried that birds will not return to this colony in 2025. The news was better at the other two Lakes Region sites. The other colony in Tamworth grew from eight to 11 nests, largely because the swallows finally started using the man-made clay nests we installed there at the beginning of 2024. At the final site, the Burleigh Farm in Holderness, a perennial issue involves nests falling from the silo before young have a chance to fledge. This continues to happen, but the good news is that a pair took up residence in one of the clay nests installed in the previous fall and was successful, as was a pair that shifted from the problematic silo to inside a nearby barn. Getting birds at this colony to use safer sites is key to improving success here, and we hope to put up more clay nests in time for the 2025 season.

In the north country, Cliff Swallows appear to have had a banner year at the state's largest colony along Tabor Road in Pittsburg. While visits were sporadic over the summer, I estimated 65 nests there on an early August visit, roughly half of which were in clay nests. It also appears that swallows recolonized the Pittsburg School after two years of absence. But on the downside, the colony on the Androscoggin River bridge in Milan may have dropped significantly: from roughly 20 nests in recent years to less than ten in 2024. Colonies do relocate occasionally, so it's possible these birds have shifted to a different structure in the area. As always, observers are encouraged to look for Cliff Swallow nests when they see this species from late May through early August, since this is often how new colonies are located. And if you visit a known colony, take a little extra time to see if you can count the nests and enter it into eBird.

*The Cliff Swallow study is funded by grants from the Blake-Nuttall Fund and the Butler Foundation. Special thanks go to volunteers who monitor the Pittsburg, Holderness, and Tamworth colonies.*



*A Cliff Swallow using one of the artificial nests installed at the Burleigh Farm in Holderness.*

# A Winter Snapshot:

## Reflecting on the 2025 Backyard Winter Bird Survey

by Grace McCulloch, Community Science Project Leader

A huge thank you to everyone who participated in NH Audubon's 38th annual Backyard Winter Bird Survey on February 8-9, 2025! This long-running participatory science project helps us track changes in New Hampshire's winter bird populations, revealing important trends over time.

One of the best parts of the survey is hearing from participants across the state and sharing in the excitement of backyard bird discoveries. As one participant put it, "The timing of this survey allows appreciation of how busy birds are in the heart of winter.

I enjoy providing a thoughtful smorgasbord of bird delights to attract a wide variety of species all winter."

This was my first year running the survey—and the first time we made a major push for online data entry. We also introduced new resources, including an online guide to common winter birds, a comparison chart for commonly confused species (like House Finches vs. Purple Finches), and a recording of our first-ever webinar for new participants.

**The response was incredible: nearly 1,000 people submitted their data online**, a huge milestone that will help us process results more efficiently. A dedicated team of volunteers will spend the coming months entering paper submissions by hand—thank you for your efforts!

While we wait for the final results, here is just one of the many photos we received from backyard birders across New Hampshire. It's always exciting to see the diversity of species recorded and the rare birds that show up on the survey, including Baltimore Orioles, Pine Warblers, and Hermit Thrushes—species that typically migrate south for the winter.

In the past 20 years, American Robins and Eastern Bluebirds have gone from signs of spring to common winter residents. What will be the next big shift for New Hampshire's winter birds? Tracking these changes is more important than ever as climate change reshapes our winter bird populations.

Stay tuned as we dive into this year's results!



Red-bellied Woodpecker, by Donna Ellis.

# Helping New Hampshire's Harriers

by Chris Martin, Senior Biologist

Northern Harriers continue to hang on precariously as a breeding species in New Hampshire. Most habitat that supports this ground-nesting raptor is ephemeral (think hayfields, wet meadows, early successional shrublands) and would benefit from manipulation every few years to keep it from reverting to forest. Additionally, open agricultural areas are attractive targets for subdivision and, once converted into house lots, don't provide harriers with what they require for nesting and foraging.

In 2024, in a two-day count organized by NH Audubon and held on August 7-8, twelve wildlife biologists and experienced volunteers fanned out across Coos County in search of breeding harriers. We surveyed 21 suitable areas from Whitefield to Pittsburg but we only managed to find two successful pairs and 3-4 fledglings. Over the previous five breeding seasons (2019-2023), similar counts held in early August when fledglings appear produced confirmation of 1-6 successful pairs and 3-15 young.

Recently, NH Fish and Game's Nongame Wildlife Program has been encouraging NH Audubon to focus on outreach efforts to get North Country natural resource agencies and private landowners more directly involved in maintaining habitat for this state-listed endangered bird. In winter/spring 2024, we hosted a three-part workshop series to provide landowners and wildlife professionals with information about harrier natural history, NH inventory and monitoring efforts, and habitat management options. Each of these virtual seminars had 30-40 attendees, and we followed up on May 9 with a field trip to the Colebrook area with 15 of these participants to see harrier habitat in person.

During all these sessions, participants took advantage of many opportunities to meet some new friends, share various perspectives as landowners or land managers, and exchange ideas on collaborative conservation efforts to support harriers. In the years ahead, more networking like this will be needed if we hope to retain harriers as a breeding bird in the Granite State.

*A well-camouflaged juvenile Northern Harrier spotted during the Coos County search in August 2024 (top), by Tom McShane; participants in a chilly May harrier field session gathered at Beaver Brook Falls in Colebrook (middle), by Kelly Boland. An example of good harrier habitat (bottom), by Chris Martin.*



# Outstanding 2024 Peregrine Season!

by Chris Martin, Senior Biologist

NH Audubon conservation staff and field volunteers wrapped up 2024's Peregrine Falcon breeding season with some outstanding results. We tallied 28 territorial pairs, a new state-record high. We confirmed 23 incubating pairs, just one off the record. And 21 successful pairs fledged 50 young, both new record highs for NH. We reached 50 fledglings in 2024 even though just one nest produced four young.

Many Granite State sites were successful this season, including Manchester's well-known Brady Sullivan Tower, which produced two chicks and succeeded for the 24<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, producing 76 fledglings since 2001. Up north, a pair in Dixville Notch fledged three, as did another pair in the Second College Grant that was tallied via audio recording posted to eBird...a first for NH! Finally, a late July check of transmission poles near the Bellows Falls Dam on the Connecticut River confirmed two fledglings from the Fall Mountain territory, and that got us to 50 fledglings.

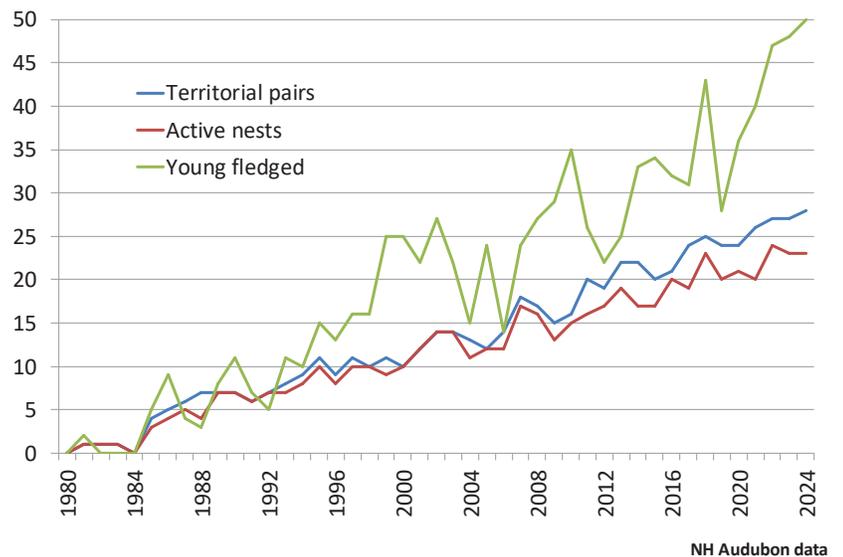
This year marks the 44<sup>th</sup> breeding season in the post-DDT recovery era for our state's Peregrines, which even today remain listed as state-threatened in NH. Their population growth in the Granite State continues to be slow-paced, but our falcons are nevertheless a key piece of a regional breeding population across New England that includes both cliff-nesting and urban-nesting pairs. NH Audubon focuses on management activities designed to promote successful nesting outcomes, including posting seasonal climbing route closures, maintaining nest boxes and trays, investigating nest failures, commenting on proposals with potential to disrupt falcon nesting, and offering advice to landowners who have Peregrines on their land.

*NH Peregrine Falcon management is supported by a federal State Wildlife Grant to NH Fish and Game's Nongame Wildlife Program. Monitoring is supported by grants from the Knopf Family Foundation and the Blake-Nuttall Fund, and by generous donations from NH Audubon members and others. A big "Thank You!" to all who assist in our efforts, including our federal and state partners, our corporate and foundation partners, private landowners, volunteer falcon observers, and many rock climbers who help us out.*

*Dixville juvenile (top), by Lori Charron; Chris Martin peers into the Brady Sullivan nest box where a defensive mother falcon awaits (right), by Zoe Dawson.*



NH Peregrine Falcon Productivity, 1980-2024



# Heavy Spring Snows Limit Eagle Success

by Chris Martin, Senior Biologist

In 2024, New Hampshire Bald Eagles were impacted by two major snow events (March 23 and April 5) that hit while eagles were incubating eggs or tending small chicks. NH Audubon conservation staff and volunteers found more territorial pairs and active nests than ever before, but the number of successful nests and fledglings were both down. We confirmed 115 territorial pairs and 80 pairs incubating, both new record highs up 5% compared to 2023. But we tallied only 55 successful nests, down 10% from 2023. And 81 young fledged was off 13% from 93 fledglings counted in 2023. Eagles are strong incubators, even in storms, but even they have limits! Snow that accumulates to >18 inches can pack around eggs and kill embryos.

New Hampshire Fish and Game (NHFG) removed the Bald Eagle from the NH Endangered and Threatened Wildlife List in March 2017 after NH Audubon and state and federal wildlife partners documented 20 years of strong population growth. The state's population has continued to expand since then.

We continue to collaborate with NHFG Conservation Officers, with Maria Colby and Wings of the Dawn Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Henniker, and with other rehabbers and wildlife veterinarians to return injured eagles to the wild whenever possible. But numerous hazards remain, including vehicle strikes, use of lead shot and tackle, the risk of avian flu, and potent second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides that impact many non-target animals.

On the topic of environmental hazards, in May 2024 we again collaborated with valued colleagues from Maine's Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) to band and collect blood and feather samples from 10 eaglets at five nests. That's 18 eaglets from nine nests banded and sampled in NH in the past two years. Preliminary analyses by a U.S. EPA lab found that all 18 nestlings had been exposed to PFAS compounds with PFOS being predominant.

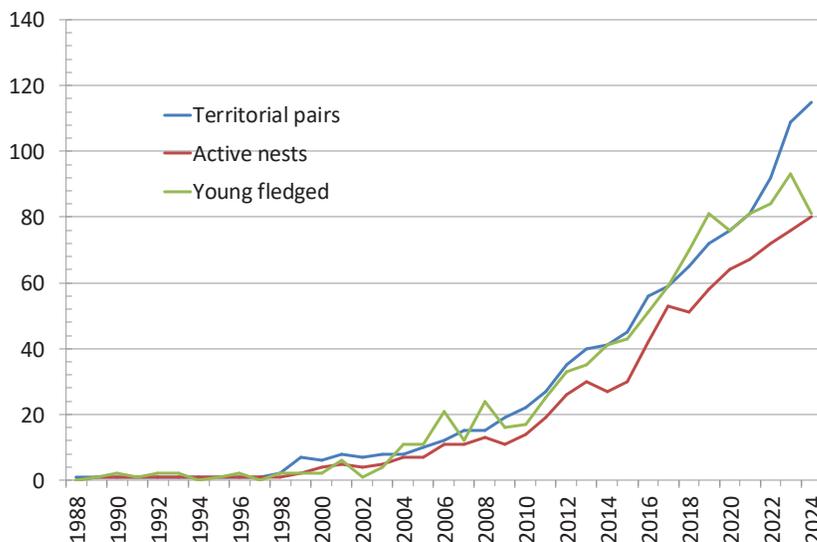
NH Audubon field volunteers helped us identify 11 new breeding territories statewide in 2024 compared to what we knew of in 2023, including two new productive nests in Wakefield and another in Rye. Even a new pair of sub-adult eagles on Highland Lake in Andover built a nest and fledged one chick in mid-August. Wildlife photographers helped us reconfirm band IDs on several breeding adults, including 2 birds living in adjacent Connecticut River territories in Hinsdale; a 17-yr old female 'Black 9/K' raised on Barkhamsted Reservoir in Connecticut and an 8-yr old male 'Orange P/N' fledged from a territory on Quabbin Reservoir in Massachusetts.

*We depend on additional financial support from foundations and individuals to continue to track these incredible birds statewide. Please consider making a gift to sustain our work for the coming year. Thanks to all of you who volunteer your time and talents in the field to help us monitor eagles. NH Audubon would not be able to continue our statewide monitoring without your help!*



*Biodiversity Research Institute team banding and collecting blood and feather samples from eaglets on Great Bay (top), by Chris Martin; Maria Colby and NH Fish and Game release a rehabilitated eaglet in Pittsburg (above), by Diane Seavey.*

## NH Bald Eagle Productivity, 1988-2024



NH Audubon data

# 2024 Rusty Blackbird Breeding Season Summary



by Carol Foss, Senior Biologist

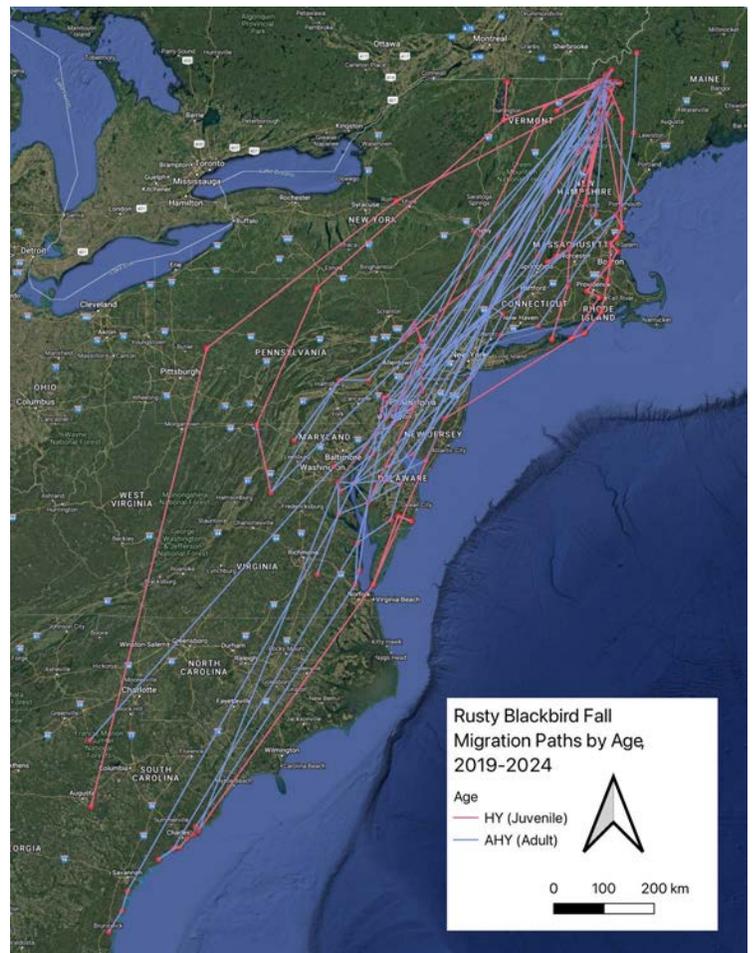
Lunch delivery, by Emmily Bottari.

New Hampshire's Rusty Blackbird research project has been delving into the ecology of this declining songbird since 2012. In collaboration with colleagues in Canada and the United States, we are searching for the factors contributing to the population decline. Each year adds new pieces to the puzzle, and our research continues to evolve as new discoveries prompt new questions.

The intrepid Rusty Blackbird field crew for 2024 included Elora Grahame, Emmily Bottari, Levi Burford, and me; with assistance from Emily Filiberti and Saimara Alejandro. The crew observed Rusty Blackbird activity in 37 of the 80+ areas of potential nesting habitat they surveyed and documented 20 successful nests. Five nests failed and 12 had unknown outcomes. The banding team banded 25 adults, 44 nestlings, and four fledged juveniles, and deployed 20 Motus nanotags.

We are continuing to use Motus technology to investigate Rusty Blackbird survival, travels within the Northern Forest after the nesting season, their migration routes, and the timing of spring arrivals and fall departures. Our five local receiving stations logged a total of 298 Rusty Blackbird detections in 2024, including early arrivals on April 15 and 19 and departures of five birds between September 28 and October 4. The crew used vehicle-mounted and hand-held equipment to track tagged birds to remote beaver ponds from June through the end of September and documented 177 locations.

We also deployed two "new" portable receiving stations, constructed on old boat trailers, near wetlands where we knew tagged birds spent time in late summer. One of these stations, deployed in Lincoln Plantation, ME, documented



2019-2024 Rusty Blackbird fall migration routes documented by the Motus Wildlife Tracking System

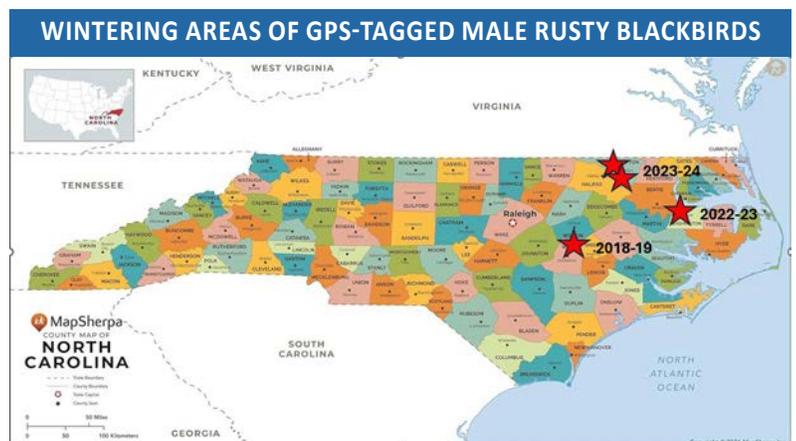
five tagged individuals for a total of 206 days. Four of these birds left the area in late July and three of them were never heard from again. After months of being missing in action, the fourth was detected at Magalloway Mountain on October 7 and northwest of Augusta, ME on October 17. The fifth bird was still at the wetland when we retrieved the station on September 22 and was detected in Berlin on its way south six days later. The other portable station, deployed in Success, NH, kept tabs on two young from a nearby nest that were using a large network of beaver ponds. These siblings both departed on the same day, September 20. One of them flew over western Massachusetts on September 23 and reached the eastern shore of Maryland on October 25. The other passed stations at Great Bay and Wachusett, MA on October 23 and reached Huntington Beach, SC on December 6.

In 2022 and 2023 we deployed 26 PinPoint GPS tags. Unlike nanotags, which transmit signals to receiving stations, these tags attempt to contact GPS satellites at programmed intervals (e.g., once a day) and if successful, store the location data internally. In order to access this data, biologists must recapture the bird, remove the tag, and download the locations to a computer. Given the challenges of finding one of these birds in a succeeding year, much less catching it, every retrieved tag is worth its weight in gold.

We were very excited to recapture three males with PinPoint tags this year, one that was deployed in June 2022 and two in June 2023. These three tags were close to 90% successful in contacting the satellites, which gave us about 300 days of locations per bird from July to May. The detailed locations from these tags make it possible to determine what habitat types Rusty Blackbirds are using throughout the non-breeding period and to identify important migration stopover and wintering areas. All three of these birds spent the winter in northeastern North Carolina, a bit northeast of the wintering location of another GPS-tagged male from 2018 (represented as stars on the North Carolina map).

*We are grateful to our cooperating landowners, Aurora Sustainable Lands, Savannahwood LLC, Seven Islands Land Company, Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge, Wagner Forest Management, and Weyerhaeuser (formerly Plum Creek), and to the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, Conservation Biology Research Fund at the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Wagner Forest Management, and donors Patricia Gilman and Chris Johnson for support of this work.*

*Portable Motus receiving station mounted on a boat trailer, by Carol Foss (top right); North Carolina wintering areas of four male Rusty Blackbirds with PinPoint GPS tags (right).*



# Tracking Wood Thrush Migration

*in New Hampshire and Beyond*

by Pamela Hunt, Senior Biologist

The Wood Thrush is a familiar bird of our eastern forests, but it is also something of a poster child for declining neotropical migrants. Although the magnitude of the decline varies across the species' wide range, on the larger scale there are roughly half as many of these accomplished songsters then there were 50 years ago. Reasons proposed for the decline typically center on habitat loss or fragmentation on both the breeding grounds and in the forests of Mexico and Central America where Wood Thrushes spend the winter. In the hopes of teasing apart how threats operate across the entire annual cycle, a biologist at the US Fish and Wildlife Service conceived a project to use the Motus Wildlife Tracking System to look at Wood Thrush migration over the species' entire range. To do so, collaborators in over 20 states agreed to attach nanotags to thrushes in the breeding season, while partners in Latin America plan to do the same in the winter of 2024-25.

New Hampshire Audubon coordinated the project in New Hampshire, where we were assisted by staff from The Harris Center for Conservation Education, Antioch University New England, and the Tin Mountain Conservation Center. Also critical for project success was bird bander Lindsay Herlihy, who worked at sites in central and southeastern New Hampshire. Between late May and early July we caught and tagged 27 thrushes in six clusters centered on existing Motus towers. The latter allowed us to check on birds over the course of the summer, although this turned out not to be possible in the varied topography in the southwestern portion of the state.

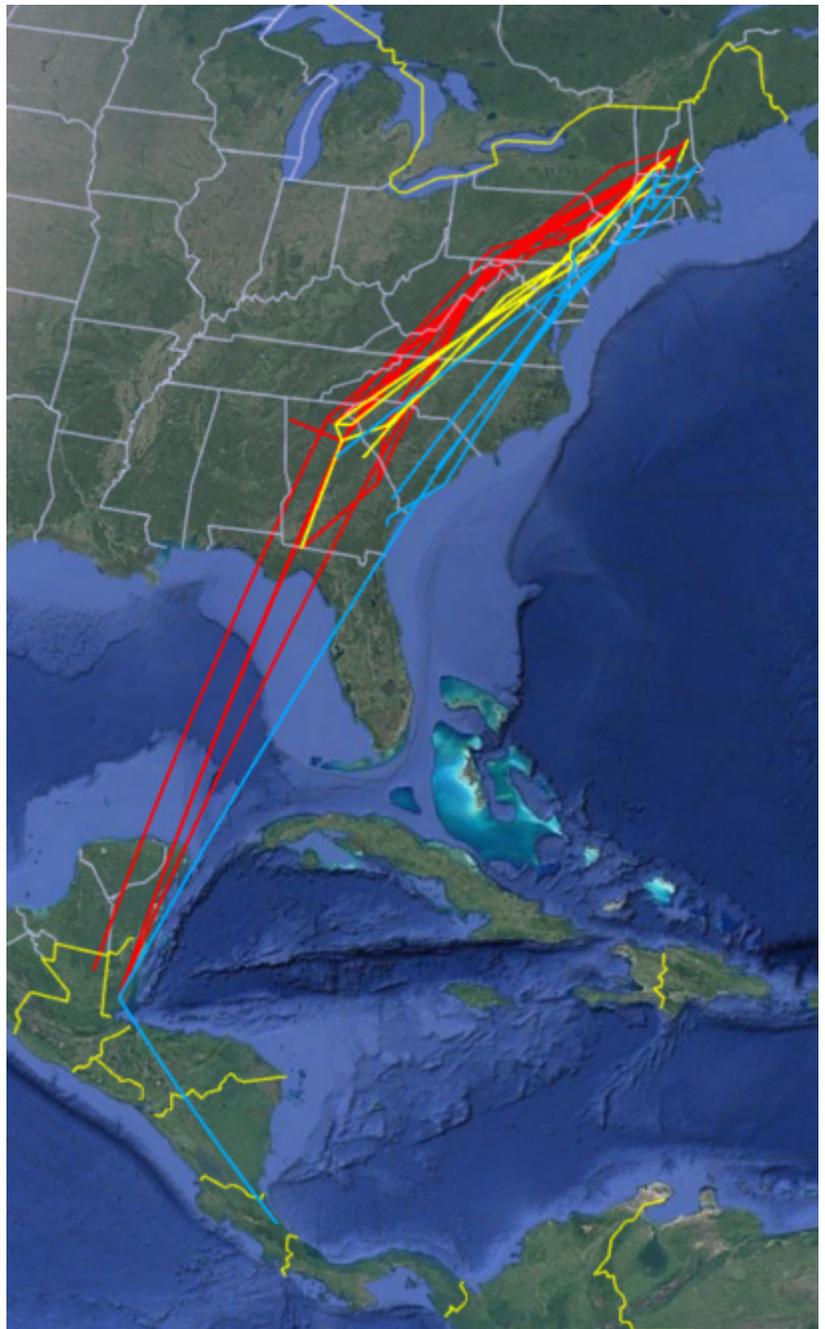
By early October, 23 of our 27 thrushes had been detected by Motus receiving towers outside of New Hampshire. Twenty of these made it at least as far as the southeastern U.S., five of which were subsequently detected in Belize after crossing the Gulf of Mexico. The farthest traveled was a bird tagged in southwestern NH. It left Hinsdale on September 29, passed over South Carolina on October 14, and was in Belize on the 20th. It was last detected in Costa Rica on November 2, having completed a journey of almost 3000 miles. Most birds have taken a route southwest along the Appalachian mountains through western New England, eastern Pennsylvania, and Georgia/South Carolina. In April and May we hope to see many of these same birds work their ways back north to breed.

*A Wood Thrush wearing a Motus nanotag. Photo by Mike Akresh.*

With roughly 550 transmitters attached to thrushes from Minnesota to Maine in 2024, this project stands to gain an exceptional amount of data on the migratory routes of this declining species. Where do “our” birds go in winter? How long does it take for them to get there? Are there critical stopover sites along the way? With answers to these questions collected from the entire breeding and non-breeding ranges, conservation biologists will be in a much better position to identify limiting factors and devise conservation strategies to benefit this species. This project will continue in 2025, when NH Audubon and our partners will deploy another 25 transmitters.

*The Wood Thrush motus project is supported by grants from the Butler Foundation, Fuller Foundation, and the Nuttall Ornithological Club. We also thank the NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and Society for the Protection of New Hampshire’s Forests for permission to tag wood Thrushes on their property.*

*The map shows the approximate paths taken by Wood Thrushes tagged in NH in 2024. These are color coded by the predominant route during the early stages of migration: blue=coastal, red=Appalachian Mountains, yellow=intermediate. Note that these patterns start to break down the farther south you get, with all three groups mingling in the southeastern U.S. Because Motus towers are still relatively sparse along the Gulf of Mexico we don’t have good data on when and where NH’s thrushes made the crossing, but they probably left from the panhandle of Florida. First detections on the Yucatan Peninsula range from October 12 to November 19, suggesting a wide range of departure date, although it is likely many birds were missed upon first arrival in Mexico.*



*Mike Akresh from Antioch University holding a tagged Wood Thrush, by Phil Brown; Rebecca Suomala and Lindsay Herlihy with a Wood Thrush tagged near Great Bay, by Lindsay Herlihy.*

# Forestry for the Birds & Climate Resilience at Willard Pond Wildlife Sanctuary



by Doug Bechtel, President, and Marc Nutter, Conservation Program Director

On January 25, a brisk and beautiful Saturday morning, we were joined by our natural resource and forestry partners at Willard Pond Wildlife Sanctuary and a group of 20 people eager to see and learn firsthand about climate resilient forest management and forestry practices that benefit birds and other wildlife. The group toured the active forestry operation where NH Audubon is completing a forest management project that builds on the 2015 management plan and prior harvests. There are many reasons NH Audubon conducts logging operations like this, not least of which is so we can demonstrate exemplary natural resource management to educate and inspire others to take similar action as they are able. This field workshop was an opportunity to show interested landowners how and why this kind of work aligns with our Mission and Core Values.

First and foremost, we care about forest health because forests are a dominant habitat type that supports many wildlife species, including many birds. The timber management we implement is based on science-based planning by expert foresters. Jeremy Turner, with Meadowsend Consulting Company is one of New Hampshire's leading forestry professionals whom we have been working with since 2008 planning and implementing wildlife-focused forest management on multiple properties. We were also joined by Matt Tarr, the State Wildlife Habitat Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension, who works with landowners and teaches people about wildlife and habitats statewide. Mike Gagnon added to the workshop as the Hillsborough County Extension Forester and Field Specialist in Natural Resources, also with UNH Cooperative Extension.

*Forestry workshop participants stand in a patch cut where seed producing trees are left standing for the benefit of wildlife. Notice the denning structure created with large cut logs pieces in the foreground. Photo by Marc Nutter.*

These expert partners spoke with attendees about how NH Audubon cares for their wildlife sanctuaries through active management; in this case, with careful and selective logging on about 75 acres, representing ~3.7% of the total Willard Pond Wildlife Sanctuary. The goals included creating young forests, which are important for a huge number of bird species. Logging also helps control nonnative plants and diseased trees, shifting the forest toward healthy native tree species. It is long understood that healthy forests also have many different ages and conditions. The project included creating denning sites for bears and other mammals, while also creating perches to support Roughleg Grouse drumming behavior in the next 5-10 years as the young forest regrows and forms a thicket around the standing stumps. Logging in the winter also protects soil health because soils are frozen and the heavy equipment has minimal impact. We avoided logging in the growing season, which would have had significant negative impact on soils and healthy root systems as well as nesting wildlife.

Another consideration is how forest and forest products sequester carbon dioxide, which we deem important because we believe reducing carbon in the atmosphere will help, even in small ways, slow climate change. Young forests sequester carbon faster than old forests, and the carbon in the harvested wood is taken off the land and retained in wood used for furniture, building supplies, veneer, baseball bats, and other uses.

At this particular site, the forests were definitely cleared

during the boom of the sheep herding and wool economy in New England in the early 1800s. The regrowth of those forests included shade intolerant white pine and hardwoods such as birch, aspen and other short-lived species. Our timber management also shifts the species composition back to an oak-dominated ecosystem which was likely prevalent before clearing, and which is better suited to the soil and moisture conditions there. Oak are much more resilient to the effects of climate change and they provide both habitat for a large number of forest insects (pollinators) which feed a high abundance and species diversity of birds. Oak mast (acorns) are also an incredibly important food source for many wildlife species.

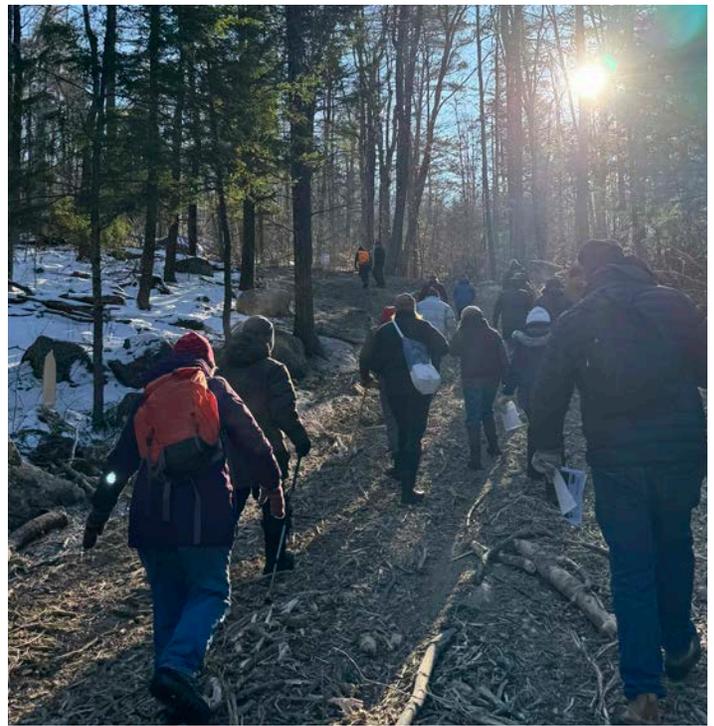
In addition to the ecological values described above, this project aligns with most of our organization's Core Values, including:

***We strive to protect the natural world and inspire others to do the same.*** Our wildlife sanctuaries are protected as habitat forever and we are maintaining healthy forests for the long-term. The workshop was a way to inspire others to manage their land well.

***Our credibility, integrity, and reputation are built on deliberative science-based decision-making.*** The science-based planning we do includes before and after monitoring of habitat and wildlife changes.

***We embrace a spirit of respectful partnership, volunteerism, and teamwork to advance mutual goals.*** We include and engage forest management experts to guide our work, which includes inviting them to teach our members about our joint efforts. We invest in partnerships with other organizations to seek solutions at both our lands and across the northeast and country.

Critically important is how this workshop brought people outside to learn important skills that protect and conserve the natural environments we all love. It also combines multiple program priorities that are core to NH Audubon's work: education, conservation science, and habitat management. We hope we see you outside in the weeks, months, and years to come. Keep an eye on our events page and invitations for future forestry tours at our wildlife sanctuaries.



*The group accesses the harvest area using a temporary skid trail. Efforts are made to minimize the impact of these pathways and are returned to a natural state during the clean up phase of the harvest. Photo by Zoe Dawson.*



*Bear denning structure created during timbering. Photo by Marc Nutter.*



*A diverse group of forestry experts and land owners learned how to manage land through forestry best practices for wildlife and climate. Photo by Zoe Dawson.*

# The Adventures of NH Audubon

by Grace McCulloch, Community Science Project Leader

**“A bear is raiding my bird feeder!”**

**“A woodpecker thinks my house is his new project!”**

**“Why does this cardinal keep attacking my window?”**

These are a few of the many calls, emails, and phone messages Volunteer Naturalists at NH Audubon receive each week. In reply, each inquiry is met with friendly, practical advice:

*Bird feeders are like candy bars left out in the open—hard for bears to resist, especially in fall when they are bulking up for the winter. To deter bears, take down feeders once winter-like conditions are over or it is April, whichever comes first. Alternatively, you can move them to an area bears can't reach, like a second story window. Also, be sure to clean up any seed on the ground.*

*That woodpecker might be a 'young and dumb' bird trying to make a cavity in an inappropriate place or a bird searching for food. Since woodpeckers are protected by law, harming them is not an option, but you can deter them. Chase them away whenever you hear or see them on your house. Cover the area they're hammering at with something they can't cling to, like a plastic sheet or plywood. They will likely move on.*



*A Pileated Woodpecker forages in a more appropriate place! Photo by Grace McCulloch.*

*Don't worry, your cardinal isn't trying to break in—it's battling a rival in its reflection. To stop the behavior, reduce the reflection by covering the **outside** of your window with screens, tape (in strips 2-4 cm apart), or anything that disrupts the glass's surface. The behavior usually stops when the adults have youngsters to feed or the breeding season ends.*

As a new staff member, I have found working with our Volunteer Naturalists to be a fun and challenging part of my role. There's never a dull moment. Volunteers help identify birds, provide resources on birding, receive rare bird sightings, and also answer questions on a wide (and sometimes strange) variety of topics from plants to squirrels to bugs. One recent call came from a woman who had found a dead Cicada Killer Wasp in her yard. It was a beautiful specimen, and she was looking for someone who might appreciate having it. While we don't take animals or specimens, we managed to find a good “home” for her wasp by connecting her with the manager of the University of New Hampshire Insect Collection who gladly accepted the specimen.



*Despite “killer” in their name, these large, solitary wasps pose little threat to humans. Photo by Nancy Godin.*

Typically, questions follow the seasons—spring brings questions about nesting birds, summer about young birds and hummingbirds, fall about migration, and winter about attracting birds to feeders. Each season offers its own surprises and opportunities for enjoying local wildlife. Information about each of the topics covered in this article and much more is available on NH Audubon's *Ask the Naturalist* webpage: [nhaudubon.org/ask](http://nhaudubon.org/ask).

I asked our Volunteer Naturalists about their favorite experiences. Here is what they had to say:

*My favorite call was received two years ago from a woman in Concord concerned that House Sparrows might disturb a Mourning Dove nesting on her porch rafters. I explained that House Sparrows prefer to nest in boxes or other cavities and would likely leave the dove alone. In conversation, we learned she lived only 4 blocks from me! Later when one of the two chicks fell from the nest, she called me again to rescue it. I ran over there, returned the chick to the nest, and so began a lasting friendship. She kept me updated on the progress of the chicks. They've continued to successfully nest in the same spot every year since!*

—Stephanie Parkinson

# Audubon's Volunteer Naturalists



Stephanie Parkinson was able to capture a photo of the beautiful nest including one of the chicks. While Mourning Doves often nest in the horizontal fork of a tree, they will also readily build a nest on a house ledge.

*I love researching and learning new things when people call or email their questions. My favorite is when someone called last year about something in the spring-fed pond near their home. They had seen an organism in the water, some organism with “weird characteristics” like bubbles and translucent coronas around them. It was visible at night with some kind of illumination and beautiful colors that faded away. While researching I learned that indeed, freshwater jellyfish have been found in 63 of New Hampshire’s water bodies as of 2019 (NHDES 2019). Not much is known about them. There is so much yet to learn about our natural world! Keep observing!*

—Laurel Horne

*Two favorites come to mind. The first was a call from a father reporting several Bald Eagle sightings. Years ago, any eagle sighting in New Hampshire was significant. Thanks to the great work of biologists at NH Audubon and others we now have 115 territorial pairs in the state, as of 2024. I thanked him for the report and explained that our biologists are especially interested in sightings of eagles carrying sticks or showing nest building behavior. He went on to tell me how he had watched the birds with his five-year-old son, sitting motionless together for nearly an hour. I could feel his excitement and knew it would be an experience they would both remember.*

*My second favorite was from a man reporting a banded bird that had been hanging around his pool. He described it as “the sort of bird you would see in the city” and thought it might be a pigeon. I asked him to email us a picture and he was right. It was a pigeon, a racing pigeon who decided to take some time off and lounge poolside. For more information on what to do if you find a racing pigeon, visit our ‘Ask the Naturalist’ webpage.*

—Kim Doolan

Continued at bottom of page 26.

## frequently asked questions in spring

### I FOUND A BABY BIRD! WHAT SHOULD I DO?

First, don't panic! The bird's parents are likely nearby, and in most cases, the best thing you can do is leave it alone.

*Does it have feathers and hop around?*

It's a fledgling—a young bird learning to fly. This is a natural stage, and its parents are still feeding it. Unless it's in immediate danger, let it be. If needed, gently move it to a safer spot, like a nearby bush or low branch.

*Is it featherless or has its eyes closed?*

This is a nestling, and it needs help. If you can see the nest, carefully place the chick back inside and watch from a distance for 1-2 hours. If the parents don't return, or if the nest is missing, the bird will need professional care.

Do NOT feed the bird! Bread, milk, and water can do more harm than good. Instead, contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. **See page 26** for a list of rehabilitators, provided by NH Fish and Game. By following these steps, you're giving the baby bird its best chance at survival!

### WHEN SHOULD I PUT OUT MY HUMMINGBIRD FEEDER?

Hummingbirds return to New Hampshire in late April or early May—so put up your feeder when the warm weather arrives! Place it in partial shade to keep the nectar fresh longer.

*What should I put in the feeder?*

Mix 1 part sugar with 4-8 parts water, boil, and cool. Skip the red dye. Never use honey, as it can grow a fatal fungus. Change the nectar every 3-4 days (more often in hot weather) and clean the feeder each time. Store extra nectar in the fridge.

*What about bees, ants, or other critters?*

Bee guards can help, and a little petroleum jelly on the feeder wire keeps ants away. Sometimes flying squirrels show up at night for a sugary snack!

*When do hummingbirds leave?*

Adults start migrating in August, and young birds stick around until late September. Don't worry—leaving your feeder up won't stop them from migrating! Keep it out until they're gone for the season.

Enjoy watching these amazing little birds!

# Protecting Common Nighthawks at Steeplegate Mall in 2024

photo and story by Rebecca Suomala, Biologist Emerita

Project Nighthawk staff and volunteers typically track nesting nighthawks in Concord, Ossipee, and throughout the state. In the summer of 2024, we changed focus and concentrated our nighthawk monitoring at one location, the Steeplegate Mall in Concord, NH. The Mall has a



*The Steeplegate Mall fenced off in August 2024 preparing for demolition.*

large stone roof which is a reliable nesting location for Common Nighthawks. There are usually at least two male nighthawks displaying over different sections of the Mall trying to attract a female to nest on their part of the roof. We have typically had one or two nests on the roof every year. With only about 15 breeding territories in the state, the Mall is a significant site.

Common Nighthawks are endangered in New Hampshire so when developers began planning demolition and renovation of the Mall in the winter of 2024, they met with NH Fish and Game and NH Audubon as part of the permitting process to discuss the nesting nighthawks. The time frame for demolition was uncertain but it was clearly important that we track nighthawk activity from the start of the nesting season. Project Nighthawk staff and volunteers began watching at the Mall in late May. We focused all our efforts on this site, conducting standard evening surveys at least twice a week. Our information turned out to be very important.

By July 5, it was clear we had three active males at the Mall and likely two nests. I met with the consultant for the developers to share observations—his from the rooftop and ours from the ground. Thanks to this information, NH Fish and Game was able to negotiate with the developers to delay removal of the stone roof until the nighthawks were finished nesting. Eventually we were able to document two fledged young feeding above the Mall lights. It took many visits and sharp eyes to see the birds in the darkness above the lights. Even more interesting was that when the Mall lights were turned off in preparation for demolition in mid-August, we discovered the nighthawks had moved next door and were feeding above the lights at the Shaw's parking lot. This is the first time we have been able to document feeding locations used after dark and it shows what you can learn by concentrating on just one location with lots of evening watches.

We will be watching the progress of the demolition as spring approaches and the nighthawks return. If you would like to receive Project Nighthawk's annual summary, including more on the 2024 season, contact me: [rsuomala@nhaudubon.org](mailto:rsuomala@nhaudubon.org), or view it online, along with more information on nighthawks at [nhaudubon.org/project-nighthawk](http://nhaudubon.org/project-nighthawk).

*I am grateful to all the volunteers and supporters of Project Nighthawk who have made this work possible. Project Nighthawk is funded entirely by private donations.*

# NH Audubon Announces a New Emeritus Program

by Doug Bechtel, President

NH Audubon has been fortunate to have long-time dedicated staff who have spent decades working for the organization, building our programs, working for wildlife, and bringing their expertise to all that NH Audubon does.

In 2024, NH Audubon instituted an Emeritus Program to recognize the accomplishments of these individuals. The idea emerged when one of our long-time biologists announced their upcoming retirement and we knew that the future would bring more retirements. The Emeritus Program not only recognizes the long-term dedication and accomplishments of retiring staff, but also welcomes their ongoing professional contributions to the organization. Maintaining this connection is a terrific benefit for NH Audubon and its members.

We are delighted to announce that Becky Suomala, retiring biologist, will be our first Emeritus Biologist. Becky has been with the organization for over 36 years serving as *New Hampshire Bird Records* Editor, Project Nighthawk Leader, Backyard Winter Bird Survey Coordinator, and numerous other positions.

Congratulations, Becky! We look forward to her continuing participation with NH Audubon as a Biologist Emerita. Becky's contributions are exemplary and set a high standard for future Emeritae and Emeriti to emulate.

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## Naturalists, con't from page 25

A huge thank you to all the volunteers, past and present—Stephanie, Laurel, and Kim—who have dedicated time to answering New Hampshire's wildlife questions. If you have a question for our Volunteer Naturalists, be sure to check our webpage first. We have posted answers to our most common questions there. Who doesn't love an immediate response! If it's not there, send us an email ([birdsetc@nhaudubon.org](mailto:birdsetc@nhaudubon.org)) or call and leave a voicemail at (603) 224-9909 ext. 316. It can take several days to get a response, as volunteers reply to every message.

If you need immediate assistance with an injured or "orphaned" animal, call a wildlife rehabilitator right away. NH Fish and Game maintains a list of licensed professionals on their website: [www.wildlife.nh.gov/wildlife-and-habitat/rehabilitators](http://www.wildlife.nh.gov/wildlife-and-habitat/rehabilitators).

### Reference:

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). 2019. "Freshwater jellyfish in New Hampshire: They do exist!" <https://www.des.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt341/files/documents/2020-01/bb-51.pdf>.

# Reflections on Retirement

by Rebecca Suomala, *Biologist Emerita*

In the fall of 2024, I officially retired from NH Audubon after more than 36 years. It still amazes me to think I was with NH Audubon for so many years. How did that happen?

Before I even started at NH Audubon, I remember being at Frankenstein Cliff and seeing a Peregrine Falcon bring food to its nest. It was amazing. This was one of New Hampshire's first Peregrine nests in modern times. Back then, bird reports were mailed to NH Audubon on 3x5 slips. I found that original Peregrine report. It was May 23, 1986 and I remember thinking, some people worked very hard to make this happen. It brought tears to my eyes. I didn't know I would soon be working with one of those people.

In 1987 my husband Mark and I quit our jobs and took six months to travel around the US, camping along the way. We targeted the National Parks but also visited many monuments and refuges. When we returned, I was committed to working towards a better environment. That job at the bank was not for me. I was excited to be hired by NH Audubon in February of 1988 as the phone receptionist and store clerk. Thus began my career of 36 plus years in positions that included Wildlife Department Secretary, Volunteer Coordinator, Natural History Services Coordinator, and eventually, after I received my Master's degree, a Biologist in the Conservation Department.

When I started, my computer had a slot for a single floppy disk and no hard drive. The weekly Rare Bird Alert was recorded on a tape in an old fashioned answering machine with a separate phone number. There was no such thing as a NH Audubon website or email. When I laid out *New Hampshire Bird Records* I glued on little illustrations in the blank spaces on the page before bringing it to the printer. There have been absolutely amazing changes.

I've had the privilege of working with people who share my interests and passion for the environment. That's rare. I've been spoiled. I forget that's not how the rest of the world is. We can share fun bird sightings, get excited about the first spring wood frogs in the parking lot, share the excitement of a cool butterfly in the garden, or watch an eclipse together. We are all committed to NH Audubon's mission and it is the people I work with who have kept me here all these years.

There have been sacrifices, such as the 17 years many of us worked with just one raise, but there have also been many rewards, like the flexibility to complete my Master's degree which included being away for two months at a time to run a banding station on Star Island.

I am so grateful for the many volunteers who have helped me over the years, the donors who have supported our projects, and my fellow staff members

who have been incredibly supportive. Working at NH Audubon has been like being part of a second family. I have struggled when the family went through hard times but the friendships stayed strong and that family helped me when I went through hard times. I will never forget my co-workers who surprised me with an issue of *New Hampshire Bird Records* in memory of my mom who had just passed. Or the two volunteers who answered my panicked call at 3:00 pm one afternoon and came over to help me pack up my house before the movers arrived the next morning. Or the volunteer who offered to drive me to the hospital where my father lay dying. It is those friendships and connections that have meant the most to me.

I have a deep and abiding love of birds, wildlife, and all of the natural environment. I am heartbroken at what we have lost, and still could lose, but I am excited to see a new generation doing amazing conservation work, and to have one of that new generation, Grace McCulloch, taking on my job. NH Audubon is in the strongest condition that I have seen in my entire tenure and I cannot tell you how happy that makes me feel. I am grateful to those who have worked so hard to get us here.

I look forward to continuing to contribute to the organization's work and I am deeply honored to be NH Audubon's first Emeritus Biologist. Thank you to all who have supported me over the years from within and outside the organization. I hope to see you out birding!



Becky with her Emeritus Award and the special, lifetime edition of *New Hampshire Bird Records*, by Zoe Dawson.

# LOOK FOR THE FLAG

## NEWFOUND REFLECTIONS



2025  
OPENING  
DAY

FRIDAY  
MAY 23

*2024 Lead Naturalist Riley Mochari (bottom boat, pink hat) prepares to begin a guided paddle.*

*photos and story by Devin Guilfoyle, Newfound Center Coordinator*

Many people come to Paradise Point every summer to rent boats and explore the lake. This past June, we had a couple paddling for the very first time. They were excited but a little nervous to get into their canoe. “What if I can’t find my way back?” they asked.

“You can look for Loon Island, or the C-shaped rock formation off of our dock,” I replied. “Or you can just look for the flag.”

The flag in question is one I found in the center’s basement in the summer of 2023; a yellow flag with NH Audubon’s logo and “Paradise Point Nature Center” written underneath. After some cleaning and de-wrinkling, I decided it would look nice to put on a post at our dock. The flag flew for the latter half of the 2023 season, serving as an indication to errant paddlers and local boaters alike: our center is here.

It is May 24<sup>th</sup>, the opening day of the 2024 season. This will be the first full season the center has hosted since 2021. I’m carrying a different flag to the road—a red, white, and blue flag that says “OPEN”. This flag is put out every morning to welcome visitors and in hopes that people driving on North Shore Road will see it and say, “Hey, let’s check this out!” I wonder how many people will take heed of its welcome and take the same walk down to the center.

As it turns out, many people took that walk this season: over 900 visitors came to our center in 2024! Between boat rentals, naturalist programs, and interpretive displays, there was much to see this past summer. We offered standup paddleboard rentals, which were absent last summer, in addition to canoe and kayak rentals. We had a nature store at the center last summer, offering

NH Audubon t-shirts, hats, tote bags, and postcards for visitors to commemorate their time in the area. We had the pleasure of having Riley Mochari, a Plymouth State University student majoring in adventure education, take the position as Lead Naturalist this summer. She led paddles and hikes, facilitated educational programs, and worked hard to spruce up some of our exhibits.

Our Red Barn Speaker Series was a success, as well. Lecture topics included entomology, lake ecology, and nature photography, and all were as wonderful as they were thought-provoking. They reminded us of the wonder of nature, especially right here in New Hampshire’s Lakes Region, and how important it is to protect it, for its human and non-human residents.

I had a lot of conversations with visitors throughout the summer; conversations about nature, the joy of outdoor recreation, and occasional bonding about shared places and experiences. I asked people how they found out about the center. Many of them said they simply saw our open flag and decided to stop in.

You could think of Paradise Point Nature Center as a nature center, but I think of it as a welcome center for the natural character of the Newfound Lake region. The area is home to many colorful plants and animals: the unmistakable Pink Lady’s Slippers in the spring, the brilliant orange of the Blackburnian Warblers in the summer, the picturesque scarlet of the Black Tupelo leaves in the fall, to name a few. Our work at Paradise Point centers on protecting our natural scope of color for the sake of its inhabitants, human or otherwise. On this forty-three acre wildlife sanctuary, we are reminded of the color and wonder that too often escapes our daily life. The center will be back next year to welcome you to our paradise.

Just look for the flag.

# Connect with the Outdoors at Nature Day Camp!

by Claire Adams, Camp Administrator

While many people are familiar with NH Audubon's long history of summer day camps (running at the McLane and Massabesic Centers since 1980), some may not be aware that we also offer two additional weeks of camp in the winter and spring. During February and April breaks, NH Audubon hosts day camp sessions at both the McLane Center in Concord and the Massabesic Center in Auburn for 6-10-year-olds. These smaller group vacation camps are the perfect way to enjoy the seasons through outdoor exploration and discovery. Each day is designed to build the skills of budding naturalists through outdoor exploration, hands-on activities and crafts, games, and live animal presentations. With daily registration, it is also a great way to try out our camp programs before signing up for a full week (or more) during the summer.

From February 24-28, campers went outside in the cold and snow during Winter Wonders Camp. They learned about how our native species endure the winter weather with amazing adaptations, went snowshoeing on the trails, and discovered the fascinating science of snow.

During Signs of Spring Camp (April 28-May 2), campers will learn to read nature's signals that tell us spring is on its way. From the first plants showing signs of life and animals awakening from hibernation or returning from migration, spring is an exciting time to be out exploring nature. Campers will come prepared to spend time outdoors in sunshine, rain, mud, or even snow!

Our nine sessions of summer camp will run from June 23-August 22, covering themes from becoming a nature detective to discovering the wonders of water to learning outdoor survival skills. Campers spend their days exploring the trails, going ponding, playing animal adaptation games, and making nature-themed crafts. Campers are split into four different age groups: Wonders, Discovery, Explorers, and Leaders-in-Training. This allows everyone to experience fun, engaging activities that are designed for their stage of development and understanding.

This summer, we are making a change to the Wonders Group! This group, tailored to our youngest campers, used to be a half-day session (9am-2pm) for 4-5-year-olds. It is now a full-day session (9am-4pm) for 5-6-year-olds. This change allows more immersion for our young naturalists, further growing the next generation of nature stewards.

NH Audubon's Nature Day Camps play a major role in fulfilling our mission: to protect NH's natural environment for wildlife and for people. By making environmental education fun and exciting through games, exploration, and live animal presentations, we are better able to build strong nature connections in our campers at a young age that will stay with them throughout their lives.

If you are new to our camp community or are interested



## CONSERVATION QUEST: NATURE FILMMAKING CAMP

Conservation Quest camp in partnership with Media Power Youth (MPY) is expanding! This summer, we are offering sessions at both the McLane Center in Concord (July 21-25) and the Massabesic Center in Auburn (August 4-8). Campers ages 10-14 will enjoy the freedom to run, play, and create outside with their peers as they make their very own short films. They will explore local wildlife and habitats while learning how to protect them for future generations. As campers collaborate on their media project, they will deepen their connection to nature and develop the skills and confidence they need to become great environmental leaders. Filmmaking encourages kids to get curious and empowers them to share their unique perspective on the world. Young filmmakers will also have the opportunity to present their creations to the community at MPY's end of summer film festival.

*Media Power Youth is a nonprofit organization dedicated to youth media education and digital wellness. They help kids learn healthy communication skills and how to use media for good to enhance community well-being. You can learn more about their mission and programs by visiting their website: [mediapoweryouth.org](http://mediapoweryouth.org).*

in experiencing a taste of our programming, please consider joining us for one of our Nature Day Camp Open House and Reunion events. You can find details and RSVP on our event calendar at [www.nhaidubon.org/events](http://www.nhaidubon.org/events). For more information about our camp programs and to register, please visit our website at [www.nhaidubon.org/camp](http://www.nhaidubon.org/camp) or contact me directly, at [cadams@nhaidubon.org](mailto:cadams@nhaidubon.org).

*We believe strongly that everyone should have the opportunity and access to experience nature and camp. We are committed to offering camperships to anyone with a need. Reach out for details.*

# The Enchanted Forest Takes a Community to Bring to Life

By Anita Fernandez, Community Outreach Coordinator

The Enchanted Forest returned to Concord in October with help from NH Audubon staff and volunteers, enthusiastic attendees, and community partners and sponsors.

The event took place over a two-day period on October 25 and October 26, but involved so much from so many. The non-scary, family-friendly fall event allowed attendees to take a guided tour through our woods in the evening hours. In order to bring this magic to the community, over 100 pumpkins were donated and carved into unique jack-'o-lanterns. Volunteers donned costumes and transformed into New Hampshire plants and animals to teach all about nature and natural phenomenon. Many more constructed lighting, took photos, helped with crafts and games, organized the trail groups, lead individuals safely on the tours, and kept the refreshments flowing.

Ruth Smith, our Storyteller on Saturday evening, and former NH Audubon staff member who ran the event for many years, returned again to volunteer her time because of what the Enchanted Forest means to her. She has been able to see attendees who originally came to the event in the 80s and 90s return with their children, carrying on the enthusiasm for nature and the environment. Ruth states, "Suffice it to say that I love the event [and] others do too. Many return year after year because they see value in being part of the magic and learning."

Other long-term participants include Stephanie Parkinson, our "Farewell Tree." Stephanie is so passionate about her role as the individual who gets to talk to the attendees about what they've learned on the tour and thank them for coming, that she's crafted her own spectacular costume and has taken on the role since 2019. Dyanna Smith, NH Audubon's Communication Director, summarizes things this way, "Enchanted Forest is our heart." For the hundreds of attendees who marveled at the magic, I think they would agree.

For 2024, NH Audubon crafted all-new skits and stories to help attendees appreciate all aspects of nature. We began with Crow, Cardinal, and Pigeon in *Common Birds Are Cool Too*, a skit which reveals that even though there are animals we see every day or in great numbers, they still deserve our wonder and respect. Pigeons can drink water using their tongues like



One of the many jack-'o-lanterns along the trail and a group listening to the campfire story (top two, by Zoe Dawson); Red Riding Hood and Coyote (above, by Mark Suomala).

a straw, crows drop nuts into intersections and then swoop down for their food once a car tire has cracked open the shell, and only cardinals who are fit enough to get the chemicals needed to produce red feathers called carotenoids will be bright red.

Next the group wound its way to the second site, where we learned about native New Hampshire plants in *What Makes a Weed Anyway?* Butterfly Weed and Butterfly Bush talk about what plants should go in a garden in this state and how they can help support wildlife. We discovered that no plant is bad, but plants should be planted where they have grown and lived with their own native wildlife so that each plant can help support animals.

The final skit was *Red Riding Hood and the Coyote*, where we saw Red bringing apples and a pumpkin spiced latte to her grandmother when she finds a coyote in the woods and mistakes it for the "big bad wolf." Although both members of the Canid (or dog) family, coyotes are much smaller than wolves, and as a top predator in New Hampshire, essential for helping to control small mammal populations like rabbits and mice. Attendees even had the opportunity to practice their coyote howls right alongside the coyote.

The indoor areas were no less busy. Families participated in creating a moon phase book, made a fox mask, played some candy corn bowling and scarecrow ring toss, and had the opportunity to have their photo taken in front of an enchanting forest backdrop by one of our photographers. Refreshments were a hit for every mood and included cookies, donuts, sourdough crumb cakes, and yogurt, along with a choice of cold or warm cider.

The weather, the changing leaves, the actors, pumpkins, and volunteers of all types made this Enchanted Forest a difficult one for our attendees to leave. One child remarked as she was leaving the trail, "This is the best day of my life!"

*Thank you to all who donated financial resources and their time efforts. Thanks to our product sponsors: Moulton Farm, TDC & Son LLC, Stonyfield Organic (Lactalis), All Things Sourdough, and Macks Apples. And thank you to all who attended. Check out our event calendar often to see upcoming outings, events, and presentations of all kinds throughout the state.*



# 110<sup>th</sup> Annual Member Celebration & Meeting

By Anita Fernandez, Community Outreach Coordinator

*A morning birding tour of Silk Farm Sanctuary gets started, with President Doug Bechtel leading the way, by Dyanna Smith.*

On Saturday, September 14, NH Audubon held the 110<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting at our McLane Center in Concord.

Sun shining, a very light breeze, and warm temperatures greeted attendees of the 4<sup>th</sup> Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast, in the morning. Volunteers from dozens of projects across the organization mingled and munched amidst floral bouquets handcrafted by McLane Center pollinator garden volunteers. We presented Golden Binocular Awards to 11 exceptional volunteers who support and impact conservation in such important ways: Doris Bucu, Gino Caretti, Zeke Cornell, Lisa Dumont, Heather McKendry, Walt Milne, Marilyn Rix, Stacey Scaccia, Jim Sparrell, Mark Suomala, and Katie Towler.

This year's Annual Member Celebration focused on movement and migration. For those dedicated birders who arrived early on the property, they caught glimpses of a Tennessee Warbler and Northern Parula, both of which migrate out of New Hampshire in the fall. During the morning activities, President Doug Bechtel led a Fall Bird Watch, in which participants searched the trails at the Silk Farm Wildlife Sanctuary for fall migrating birds. The group spotted two Pine Warblers, a short-distance migrant that overwinters in the US, and one Red-eyed Vireo that overwinters in South America. Conservation Program Director Marc Nutter led attendees on a tour of the All Persons Trail, including the new second loop through the woodlands, completed in the fall of 2023. This tour also showcased the first stop of the Silk Farm Sanctuary Audio Tour which highlights 13 features of the property (to listen to the tour, visit [nhudubon.org/silkfarm](http://nhudubon.org/silkfarm)). For those interested in the movement of plants and animals throughout their yearly life cycles, Senior Biologist Diane De Luca led the How to Keep a Phenology Journal workshop in the McLane Center pollinator gardens. And for those looking to answer that age-old question, "Am I a bryophile or a mycophile?" Environmental Educators Claire Adams and Devin Guilfoyle led

the Mushrooms & Mosses of McLane tour.

Next on the agenda was the Scientist Spotlight: Motus presentation. No, Motus isn't an acronym, it's Latin for movement. NH Audubon biologists Carol Foss and Diane De Luca shared their work studying wildlife movement and migration, and how the Motus program (launched by Birds Canada) has allowed for a deeper understanding of wildlife movement through the use of radio transmitters called nanotags to Rusty Blackbirds, Wood Thrush, and even Monarch butterflies. How do you tag a Monarch butterfly you may ask? Carefully! Butterflies are caught in a net, placed into a small envelope to be weighed, then monitored for several hours once the tag is affixed before being released. The tags are then picked up by receiving stations placed throughout the Eastern US. One individual butterfly's signal was captured 29 days after tagging at a staggering



*Our Annual Award winners (pictured left to right): the Goodhue-Elkins Award was presented to Tony Vazzano, the Tudor Richards Award was presented to Betsy Hardwick, and the John Thalheimer Volunteer Award was presented jointly to Logan Young (and Bob Krewson). Photo by Zoe Dawson.*

830 miles away from the tagging site. You can see receiving towers at both the McLane Center and the Massabesic Center.

Event attendees enjoyed their picnic lunch in the sun and warmth of our gardens and pollinator meadow. As a last-minute surprise, guests were also able to observe two newly netted Monarchs being weighed and tagged by the NH Audubon Monarch Tagging team. The group gathered back for the NH Audubon's annual Business Meeting, during which seven board members were voted in to begin a new three-year term: Sylvia Bates, Bill Deal, Doris Jurisson, Tom Lee, Nisa Marks, David Silk, and Debbie Stanley. Board Chair Nisa Marks and President Doug Bechtel both presented their remarks, reflecting on the past year's accomplishments such as the acquisition of a 40<sup>th</sup> wildlife sanctuary, the formation of a rodenticide task force aimed at reducing wildlife poisoning, and a record number of Peregrine Falcon hatchlings. During the Annual Awards ceremony, four individuals were recognized for their outstanding contributions to conservation work within the state. The Tudor Richards Award was presented to Betsy Hardwick, the Goodhue-Elkins Award was presented to Tony Vazzano, and the John Thalheimer Volunteer Award was presented jointly to Bob Krewson and Logan Young. See [nhaudubon.org/awards](http://nhaudubon.org/awards) for full honors.

Keynote Speaker Sara Robertson Morris was the final event of the day. Her enthusiasm and the infectious passion she has for her work on migrating birds at the Appledore Island banding station kept attendees engaged and excited to learn more. Over the years, Sara and her team have made several discoveries that add to our understanding of bird behavior during their migration stops, and the importance of the Isles of Shoals as a stopover site. For example, not all of the same bird species stop on Appledore Island during both the spring and fall migration (although there is some overlap). The length of the stopover also varies; in the spring, when there is a shorter distance until a bird reaches its summer breeding grounds, individuals make quicker stops. Body weight is also a significant indicator of stopover period. Blackpoll Warblers weighing more in the fall are more likely to leave the island immediately than those who need to "bulk up" for their travels. In an experiment using a portable sound chamber, Sara has also been looking at songbird calling and the responses of birds to sound cues. She is also contributing recordings of a bird's flight calls (those confusing chip notes that all sound the same) to build a library of flight calls for AI identification.



Beautiful weather, engaged attendees, and uplifting presenters made for an Annual Celebration to remember. Be sure to save the date for this year's event: Saturday September 13, 2025, at the Massabesic Center in Auburn.

*Becky Suomala (left) playfully introduced keynote speaker Sara Robertson Morris (right) dressed as a Black Guillemot. Photo by Lindsay Herlihy.*

## Environmental Policy Activities

*by Carol Foss, Senior Advisor for Science and Policy*

*Notes: "Inexpedient to Legislate" means that the bill was "killed" and went no further in the legislative process. All bills "laid on the table" have also died and will not be considered further. "Interim Study" ended consideration of the bill in the 2024 session. "Non-concurrence" means that the two chambers failed to agree on an amended version and the bill died.*

NH Audubon's Environmental Policy Committee members provided testimony on four bills during the 2024 state legislative session: one in support, one in opposition, and two as comments.

Three of these bills restricted wakesports, which involve boats with heavy ballast that create very large wakes. These boats cause shoreline erosion when operated too close to shore and disturb bottom sediments when operated in shallow water. We strongly supported **HB 1390**, which would have prohibited wakesports on water bodies of less than 50 contiguous acres, within 500 feet of a shoreline or in-water structure, and in water less than 20 feet deep. This bill died on the table. **SB 431**, which passed the Senate, proposed a ban within 200 ft. of shore and included no depth or acreage restrictions. We submitted comments recommending a minimum distance of 500 ft. from shore and in-water structures and a minimum water depth of at least 15 ft. The House amended this bill to 300 ft. and 50 acres, but the Senate failed to concur and the bill died. We also supported **HB 1301**, which would have allowed the department of safety to restrict or prohibit wake surfing on a public body of water pursuant to a petition and hearing process. This bill also died on the table.

We opposed **HB 1325**, which would have allowed private ownership of small-tailed monkeys, raccoons, foxes, otters, skunks, and kangaroos. This bill was killed in Committee.

The intent of **HB 1351** was to prohibit the sale and use of rodent glue traps. We commented on the issues associated with the use of poisons, kill traps, and live traps to control rodents and urged the Committee to understand the effects and consequences of available rodent control strategies and take a comprehensive approach to addressing this issue rather than legislating on single approaches in isolation from the big picture. This bill was Laid on the Table.

We submitted joint testimony with eight other organizations in support of **HB 1649**, to prohibit sale of products with intentionally added PFAS, which was ultimately signed by the Governor. Research in many parts of the world has documented negative health effects of PFAS, often referred to as "forever chemicals," on wildlife as well as humans.

We also submitted joint testimony with seven other organizations in support of **SB 543**, a bill to establish an environmental adaptation, resilience, and innovation advisory council. The purpose of the council was to increase coordination and collaboration among state agencies, municipalities, NGOs, and the academic community in addressing the challenges of



*The Legislative Office Building, where most of the public hearings for the NH House of Representatives committees are held, by Carol Foss.*

climate change. This bill passed both chambers but was vetoed by the Governor.

We signed in to register a position for or against 34 bills without submitting testimony. Nearly a quarter of these bills were related to water quality, including cyanobacteria. Other topics included clean energy, climate, solid waste management, wildlife, and administrative changes. Full text and the outcomes for all bills are available through the Legiscan website ([legiscan.com/NH](http://legiscan.com/NH)).

At the Federal level, we continued work to support passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA), which would support efforts to conserve declining species for which no funding is currently available. This legislation would make federal funding available for state conservation and restoration programs for fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation concern, which would make a huge difference in New Hampshire.

NH Audubon joined partners to sign group letters in support of:

- The Environmental Protection Agency's proposed mitigations for 11 rodenticides: proposed measures to

reduce harm to endangered species and other wildlife from use of these rodenticides included requiring tamper resistant bait stations, prohibition of refillable bait stations, and limitations on use near endangered species habitats.

- A minimum funding level for EPA 2024 core programs, which included reducing emissions that contribute to climate change, improving enforcement, and supporting state and local governments.
- A petition seeking rulemaking for registration of systemic insecticides, including neonicotinoids. Systemic insecticides are water-soluble chemicals that are toxic to insects and may be applied to soil, plant surfaces, and seeds. They are called systemic because they are absorbed by plant tissues and transported through the entire plant system, including pollen and nectar. These insecticides affect beneficial insects as well as insect pests. Neonicotinoids are very toxic to bees and are persistent in the environment. The petition requests that rules for registering these insecticides be amended to require data demonstrating that the chemical's benefits exceed its environmental and other costs.
- Increased funding for Monarch Butterfly conservation.
- Implementation of rules to finalize the White House Council on Environmental Quality's update to the National Environmental Policy (NEPA) Guidelines regulations.

We also signed group letters in opposition to:

- Various efforts to limit state and local authorities to regulate pesticides and to lock in use of outdated pesticide risk assessments.
- The Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act, which would prevent the regulation of lead tackle and ammunition on certain Federal lands and waters.

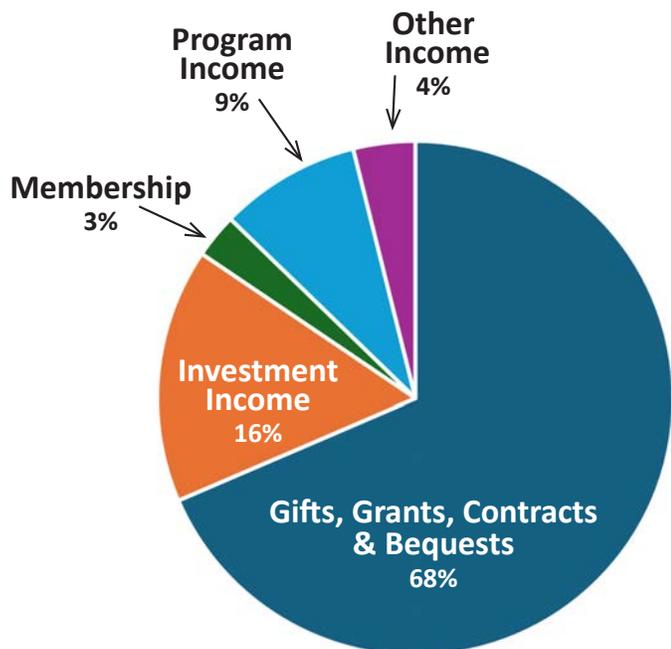
*We gratefully acknowledge financial support of NH Audubon's FY24 policy work from Paul Nickerson.*

## 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE GENERAL COURT

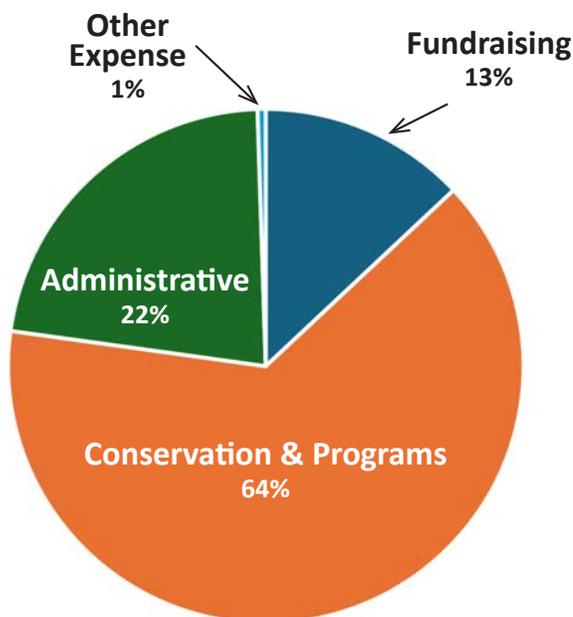
*NH Audubon provided testimony on these bills.*

Bill Number	Intent	NH Audubon Position	Outcome
HB 1301	allows the department of safety to restrict or prohibit wake surfing on a public body of water pursuant to a petition and hearing process	Support	DIED ON THE TABLE
HB 1325	allows the private ownership of small-tailed monkeys, raccoons, foxes, otters, skunks, and kangaroos	Oppose	INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE
HB 1351	prohibits the sale and use of adhesive-based rodent traps	Comment	INTERIM STUDY
HB 1390	establishes prohibitions and limitations for the operation of wakeboats and their use in wakesports on public waters of the state	Support	DIED ON THE TABLE
HB 1649	prohibits certain products with intentionally added PFAS	Support (Joint)	SIGNED BY GOVERNOR
SB 431	adds restrictions for engaging in wake surfing on a public body of water	Comment	NONCONCURRED
SB 543	establishes the state environmental adaptation, resilience, and innovation councils	Support (Joint)	VETOED BY GOVERNOR

# Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Report



**INCOME**



**EXPENSE**

Revenue & Support	Fiscal Year 2024
Gifts, Grants, Contracts & Bequests	\$3,143,764
Investment Income	\$732,547
Membership	\$127,840
Program Income	\$405,540
Other Income	\$178,185
<b>Total Revenue and Support</b>	<b>\$4,587,876</b>
<b>Program &amp; Functional Expenses</b>	
Fundraising	\$358,489
Conservation & Programs	\$1,770,583
Administrative	\$614,942
Other Expense	\$14,128
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$2,758,142</b>
<b>Total Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,829,734</b>

- The land contribution of the the Ines and Fred Yeatts Sanctuary contributed \$1,005,000 to our gift income
- Investment income bounced back this year (\$732,547) from a loss last year (-\$376,585)
- We enjoyed another exceptional year for unrestricted bequests, adding up to \$982,960
- Program income increased 30% over FY23, reflecting higher enrollment in camps, among other factors
- Administrative expenses increased 7% over FY23 as we continue to adjust staffing to appropriate levels
- NH Audubon program and fundraising expense proportions demonstrate best practices for nonprofits nationally

# The Year in Numbers



NH AUDUBON

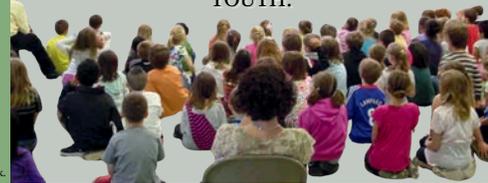
Representing the previous fiscal year, 2023-2024.

A NH tagged Monarch was detected by a Motus tower at East River Mountain, WV - making the longest confirmed flight of a NH Monarch of

NEARLY  
**850**  
MILES.



NH Audubon educators  
PRESENTED  
**324**  
PROGRAMS  
to more than  
**17,000**  
ADULTS  
and  
**12,000**  
YOUTH.



In the first annual Capital Area Butterfly Survey, teams counted

**704** of **40**  
BUTTERFLIES SPECIES.



NH Audubon centers were the venue for

**13**  
"I DO'S"  
♡♡♡

Rusty Blackbirds:

**30** and **151**  
NESTS ADULTS &  
MONITORED NESTLINGS  
BANDED.



Photo by Steve Mirick.

Manchester Pollinator Pockets:

PLANTED INSTALLED  
**3** and **270**  
GARDENS NATIVE PLANTS  
with help from  
**61** and **92**  
VOLUNTEERS STUDENTS.

**664**  
VOLUNTEERS  
gave  
**9,220**  
HOURS.

**35**  
BIRDING OUTINGS



**4,147**  
people were members, a  
**5%**  
INCREASE  
from FY23.

TOP  
**3**  
MEMBERSHIP  
REGIONS:  
• Capital Area  
• Amoskeag  
• Seacoast



During the legislative session, NH Audubon

MONITORED TESTIFIED ON  
**34** and **7**  
BILLS BILLS.

OVER  
**1,500** people counted birds at their homes during the Backyard Winter Bird Survey.

**210**  
SPECIES PROFILES  
were added to our new State of the Birds website.



**44%** were detected by Motus towers south of NH  
OF TAGGED MONARCHS

**4,738** were counted during fall migration, a  
COMMON NIGHTHAWKS

**15%**  
DECREASE  
from 2022.



NH Audubon hosted  
**143** **68**  
FEBRUARY APRIL  
CAMPERS, CAMPERS,  
and  
**1051**  
SUMMER CAMPERS.



Visitors:

**664**

people visited the Newfound Center, after a closed FY22 season.

.....

**4,294** **10%**  
people visited the Massabesic Center, a  
DECREASE  
from the FY23 season.

.....

**6,768** **21%**  
people visited the McLane Center, a  
INCREASE  
from the FY23 season.

During the 2023 breeding season,

**93**

BALD EAGLES  
and

**48**

PEREGRINE FALCONS  
fledged.

**42** at the McLane Center, including a Whip-poor-will tagged in Bangor, ME, last detected on the Gulf Coast of Mexico.  
MOTUS DETECTIONS

**26** at the Massabesic Center, including a Red Knot that traveled from Ontario to Massachusetts in one day, and made it to South Carolina three days later.  
MOTUS DETECTIONS



# Annual Giving

NH Audubon is grateful for the generosity of our members and supporters at all levels. We are pleased to recognize the following individuals and organizations who contributed \$500 or more in support of our mission from 4/1/2023-3/31/2024 during Fiscal Year 2024. We strive for accuracy, but mistakes do happen. If you believe an entry is listed in error, or if you have questions about your giving history, please contact the Membership & Development team at 603-224-9909 x310.

## PROTECTOR (\$25,000+)

Anonymous  
Betty J. DeAngelis Trust  
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Estate of Gregory A. Doane  
The Dorr Foundation  
Estate of April Gallant  
Linda Snyder  
Ines & Frederick Yeatts

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The Samuel P. Pardoe Foundation  
Frances Von Mertens  
Steve & Mabel Wheeler  
*in memory of Helen M. Parker*

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CLH Fund For Environmental Education  
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Campership Fund  
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Sarah T. Schwaegler  
David Silk  
Ken & Ilene Stern

## CONSERVATIONIST (\$1,000+)

American Eagle Foundation  
The Barrette Family Fund  
Mrs. & Mr. Tracy J. Banks Bradfield  
Sylvia Bates & Thomas Masland\*  
Richard & Linda Beyer\*  
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*in honor of Rebecca Suomala*  
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Linda Siecke  
Dawn & Arthur Stavros\*  
Ann & Roger Sweet  
Clint & Bonnie Swift  
William & Susan Tucker  
Carol Wallace  
Marjorie Wiggins  
Clive Wood

# Annual Giving (con't)

## ENVIRONMENTALIST (\$500+)

Anonymous (3)

Dr. Thomas Algozzine & Mrs. Heather Algozzine

Nancy & Blake Allison

*in honor of Steven and Mabel Wheeler's selfless and dedicated efforts*

Amherst Garden Club

Edmund & Joslyn Becker, Jr.

Ms. Daphne L. Borden

*in memory of Forbes Leland*

Arthur & Betsy Borrer

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Mr. Steven V. Brown & Dr. Janet W. Campbell

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*in memory of Ann Carroll*

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Lauren Jacoby

Dan Jones

Laurie A. Latchaw

Sandi Linatsas

*in memory of V. Michael Smith*

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*in memory of Janet Liptak*

Rebecca Lovejoy & Kevin Peterson

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*in memory of Erick Leadbeater*

Katie Lyon-Pingree

Sue Martin & Pete McVay

*in memory of Jay Sweeney*

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Regina & Edward McMonagle

Sarah Minnis

Dana & David Moore

John & Francoise Morison, III

Maria Moser-Meister & Peter Meister

Ms. Corey Nickerson & Mr. Jason Greenwald

*in honor of Paul Nickerson*

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Andrew & Jessica Nord

Nubanusit Lake Association

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*in memory of Mary Orff*

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Susan M. Poirier

Sarah Proctor & Mark Parquette

Maureen Redmond-Scura & Mark Scura

Jane P. Rice

Robin Ridge

*in honor of Kathie Palfy*

Andrea & George Robbins

Bill D. Roebuck

*in memory of Karen Baumgartner*

Peter B. Rotch

Carla Schneider Muskat

Joseph & Diane Scott

Bruce & Anne Smith

*in honor of Daniel Hubbard*

Ms. Robin N. Smith

James E. Snyder

Joel Stettenheim & Signe Taylor

*in memory of Peter R. Stettenheim*

Ann Reinke Strong

Christine Sugarman

Barbara K. Sweet

Richard Talbot

Philip Wallingford & Katherine Barnes

Stephen & Nova Wheeler

*in memory of Linda Tate*

Robert Wilson & Norma Goodnight

Stephen & Danette Wineberg

Mark & Susan Zankel

## Corporate Partners

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Hitchiner Manufacturing Co., Inc.

### CHAMPION (\$2,500)

Kiwanis Club of Manchester

### PARTNER (\$1,000)

Eversource Energy Foundation

### SUPPORTER (\$500)

Grappone Automotive Group

Jim Trombly Plumbing, Heating, & Cooling

John S. Jordan Design, PLLC

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\*= Legacy Guild Member

## Thank you!

# Legacy Guild

*New Hampshire Audubon's Legacy Guild is a way to continue supporting the values that are important to you in your lifetime by including NH Audubon in your estate plans. In addition to the supporters designated with an \* in the Annual Giving listing, we are honored to be included in the estate plans of the following donors:*

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### Increase the impact of your membership dues or donation!

Many employers will match your membership or annual fund gift to New Hampshire Audubon. These added funds are vital to protecting New Hampshire's natural environment. If you've recently supported New Hampshire Audubon online, by mail, or by phone, you can double (or triple) your impact by finding out if your employer has a matching gift program.

Questions? Call or email our Membership & Development team at 603-224-9909 x310, [jthomas@nhaudubon.org](mailto:jthomas@nhaudubon.org).

## MAKE A LASTING IMPACT WITH MONTHLY GIVING!

Support New Hampshire Audubon year-round by becoming a monthly donor or member. Your ongoing contribution provides steady support for our conservation, education, and advocacy efforts.

*It's easy to set up!*

### ONLINE:

Visit the "Donate", "Join", or "Renew" pages linked at the top of our website – [nhaudubon.org](http://nhaudubon.org). After selecting the amount you wish to give each month, check the box for "Make this a recurring gift".

### BY PHONE:

Call our Membership & Development Team at 603-224-9909 x305, and we'll assist you in setting it up.

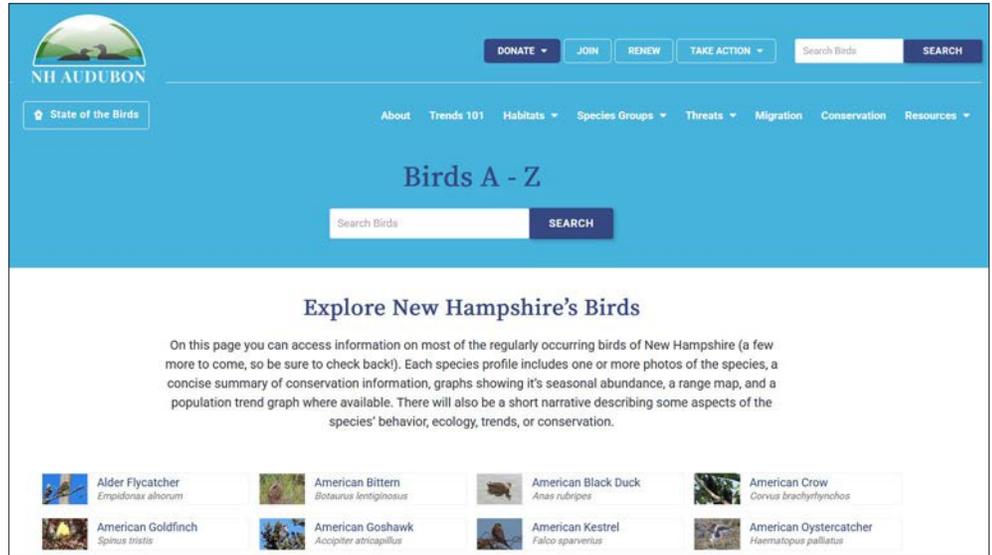
A MONTHLY GIFT OF \$85 OR MORE BRINGS YOU INTO THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE AT NH AUDUBON—A GROUP OF OUR MOST GENEROUS SUPPORTERS.

*Thank you for helping protect New Hampshire's natural environment all year long.*

# Birds A to Z: *State of the Birds* Species Reference Resource

by Pamela Hunt, Senior Biologist

Late in 2023 NH Audubon unveiled our online version of the 2020 “State of the Birds” report, providing an interactive and searchable digital version of this important document. In 2024 we went one step further: creating “species profiles” for over 200 of the bird species that occur regularly in New Hampshire. Each profile contains a narrative highlighting several aspects of that species’ ecology and/or conservation, several photos, and a sidebar presenting basic conservation information such as trends, threats, and actions. There are even range maps and seasonal occurrence graphs to provide a sense of when and where you might find each species in the state. Consider this new resource “one stop shopping” for information on New Hampshire’s birds and be sure to check back now and then to see if new species have been added.



visit:  
[nhaudubon.org/birds-a-z](https://nhaudubon.org/birds-a-z)

## EXPLORE PARADISE POINT AND NEWFOUND LAKE

Support NH Audubon with a boat rental on Paradise Point! Get out on the water to discover the natural beauty and diverse wildlife of Newfound Lake. Rentals are first come-first served, but reservations may be made in advance by calling the Newfound Center office.

### NEWFOUND CENTER

- 290 North Shore Road, Hebron NH
- 603-224-9909

### SINGLE KAYAK

- 2 hours: \$45
- 4 hours: \$50
- Full day: \$60
- Members: \$40/\$45/\$55

### CANOE, TANDEM KAYAK, OR PADDLEBOARD

- 2 hours: \$55
- 4 hours: \$60
- Full day: \$75
- Members: \$50/\$55/\$70

### TOURING KAYAK

(limited supply; for experienced paddlers only)

- 2 hours: \$60
- 4 hours: \$65
- Full day: \$80
- Members: \$55/\$60/\$75

(Full day: Return by 4pm)

Not a member yet?  
Visit [nhaudubon.org/join](https://nhaudubon.org/join) for discounts on your boat rentals.



Scan to find out more about all that the Newfound Center has to offer.





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**Locations in Auburn and Concord**



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Jun 23-Aug 22

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[www.nhaudubon.org/camp](http://www.nhaudubon.org/camp)