

Fortieth Annual Report of the Vermont Bird Records Committee

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The Vermont Bird Records Committee (hereafter VBRC or the Committee) held its annual meeting on 14 November 2020 virtually via Zoom. The 40th annual report of the VBRC covers the evaluation of 76 records involving 45 species, 1 subspecies or 'identifiable subspecific form', 1 hybrid, and 1 family. Sixty-four records were accepted (84%) with the majority decided unanimously.

Highlights for 2020 included the state's first and second accepted records of Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) from Alburgh, VT and Woodstock, VT, respectively, the first accepted record of King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) from Bradford, VT, the first accepted record of Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) from Highgate, VT, and the first accepted breeding record of Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) from Burlington, VT. Other notable reports from around the state include the second state record of Willow Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*), the second state record of Wilson's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*), the second state record of Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), the third and fourth state records of Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*), and the second state record of "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*). A detailed list of all the reports from 2020 is found below.

The Vermont Bird Checklist is now at 391 species, representing 22 orders and 63 families. The names of the birds and their taxonomic arrangement follow the American Ornithological Society Checklist of North American Birds Seventh Edition (1998) and 62nd supplement (July 2021). The checklist includes one extinct species (Passenger Pigeon [*Ectopistes migratorius*]), two extirpated (Loggerhead Shrike [*Lanius ludovicianus*] and Henslow's Sparrow [*Ammodramus henslowii*]), six hypothetical occurrences, and nine introduced species. With the addition of Black Vulture as breeding in 2020, there have now been 204 species found breeding in the state. The checklist can be viewed and downloaded at <http://vtcostudies.org/wildlife/wildlife-watching/vbrc/bird-checklists/>. Species taxonomy and nomenclature follow the 7th edition of the AOS Checklist of North American Birds and supplements (see <https://americanornithology.org/publications/north-and-middle-american-checklist/>). Nomenclature for subspecies or 'identifiable subspecific forms' follows taxonomy of The eBird/Clements Checklist of Birds of the World (Version 2019), available at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist/download/>.

The 2020 roster of VBRC voting members included: Ken Cox (Chair), George Clark, Sue Elliott, Spencer Hardy, Kent McFarland, Craig Provost, Chris Rimmer, Taj Schottland, Nathaniel Sharp, Ruth Stewart, John Sutton, Zac Cota-Weaver, and Sue Wetmore.

The Vermont Bird Checklist is based on more than a century of documented observations. Reports that will expand this knowledge base are encouraged and appreciated. Consult the checklist to see species and time periods for which the Committee requests detailed documentation. An online form for documenting rare species, out-of-season encounters, and rare nesting species can be found on the Vermont Bird Records Committee website at <http://vtcostudies.org/wildlife/wildlife-watching/vbrc>.

For each record we present basic statistics: count of individuals, age and sex when known, location, when the bird was seen, and who submitted the report. We also indicate whether the evidence provided was a photograph, video, audio, or only a written submission. Some example images from the documentation are also presented. The Committee strongly encourages written submissions even if other media exist. When available, a link to the record in Vermont eBird is included. All records accepted by VBRC, past and present, are stored in Vermont eBird either by the VBRC, if the observer did not enter it, or via the observer(s) directly entering the record. The VBRC strongly encourages observers to enter all bird observations, rare or common, in Vermont eBird.

Accepted Records

First State Records

Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One discovered by an observer in Alburgh, VT and originally identified and posted to the [Vermont Atlas of Life on iNaturalist](#) as a Bald Eagle charmingly nicknamed “[Elvis](#)”. Once the identification was corrected and further details were received from the observer, an RSD (Rare Species Description) form was submitted and this first state record was accepted by the committee. Mark Bessette. Photos and written. 28 March 2018. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S65617455>



Two of a handful of images posted to the Vermont Atlas of Life on iNaturalist of Vermont's first Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) © Mark Bessette

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found at the Waits River & Connecticut River confluence in Bradford, VT by Bill Shepard. RSD forms submitted by Kyle Jones, Zac Cota-Weaver, Richard Littauer, and Jim Mead, the bird was seen by many. Photos, audio, and written. 19-25 May 2020.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S69618507>



Vermont's first King Rail © Henry Trombley

Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found in the delta of the west branch of the Missisquoi River, Highgate, VT by Jacob Crawford, Max Carroll, and Chris Liaszos. RSD forms submitted by Jacob Crawford and Richard Littauer. Photos, audio, and written. 5-6 September 2020.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S73223092>



Vermont's first Common Ringed Plover © Richard Littauer

Notable State Reports (second through tenth records)

Willow Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found on Thayer Beach in Colchester, VT. 26 May 2020. Jeff Hinds. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S70137277> 2nd state record.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found on Lake Memphremagog, viewed from Indian Point in Newport, VT shortly after the passage of Tropical Storm Isaias. Marshall Iliff. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S72130432> 2nd state record.

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found at Moose Bog, Wenlock WMA in Ferdinand, VT. 28 July 2019. Jim Mead. Photos, audio, and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S58528079> 2nd state record.

Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found in a field off Route 12 in Woodstock, VT near the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. Discovered by Kevin Rice, RSDs submitted by Nathaniel Sharp, Zac Cota-Weaver, and Richard Littauer. 3-5 March 2020. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S65427951> 2nd state record.



Vermont's second Crested Caracara in Woodstock, VT. © Kent McFarland

Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found on Lake Champlain, viewed from Thompson's Point, Charlotte, VT. 5 December 2020. Theodore Murin. Written. 3rd state record.

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found at a private residence in East Montpelier, VT. 15 June 2020. Richard Littauer. Photos, audio, and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S70474880> 3rd state record.



Vermont's third Western Kingbird. © Richard Littauer

- One found along Campbell Flats Road in Norwich, VT. 3 October 2020. Kyle Jones. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S74352477> 4th state record.

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found at the Stone Bridge Dam, Dead Creek WMA, Panton, VT. 15 March 2020. Henry Trombley. Written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S65830695> 5th state record.

American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found at Button Bay State Park, Ferrisburgh, VT. 7 June 2020. Jim Mead. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S70184599> 5th state record.



Vermont's fifth American Avocet, found by Dan Bushey. © Jim Mead

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found at the Allen Brother's Marsh, Westminster, VT. 24-27 November 2019. Coleen Lawlor and Richard Littauer. Photos, written, and audio. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S61700349>, <https://ebird.org/checklist/S61789801> 6th state record.



Vermont's sixth Say's Phoebe © Nick Tepper.

- One found at the Champlain Bridge in Addison, VT. 15 March 2020. Jane Ogilvie. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S65934454> 7th state record.

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found on Tenney Road in Corinth, VT. 8-14 April 2020. Edward Cooper. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S66873074> 8th state record.



Vermont's eighth Townsend's Solitaire © Edward Cooper.

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found in the delta of the west branch of the Missisquoi River, Highgate, VT. 3 September 2020. Martha McClintock. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S73166552> 9th state record.



Vermont's ninth Western Sandpiper © Martha McClintock.

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found at Lake Runnemede, Windsor, VT. 21 April 2019. Lewis Grove. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S55205034> 9th state record.



Vermont's ninth Blue Grosbeak © Lewis Grove.

Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found on Parker Hill Road in Grafton, VT. 25 March 2016. Donald Clark. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S28540547> 9th state record.
- One found in downtown Rutland, VT. 30 June 2020 - 1 July 2020. Robert Harvey and Richard Littauer. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S71019080> 10th state record.



Vermont's tenth Yellow-headed Blackbird © Richard Littauer.

Rare Nesting Reports

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- Pair raised five young on Sodom Pond in Adamant, VT. Rare Nesting Reports submitted by Richard Littauer and John Jose. 18-23 August 2020.
<https://ebird.org/checklist/S72533154>

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- Pair raised a single nestling in a dilapidated barn behind apartment buildings on North Winooski Avenue in Burlington, VT. First known successful nesting of this species in the state. 25 April 2020 to 29 June 2020. Kyle Tansley and Richard Littauer. Photos, written, and audio. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S70880228>



Vermont's first Black Vulture chick © Kyle Tansley.

State Subspecies Reports

Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) ([Vermont eBird map](#))

- One found at the Country Club of Vermont, Waterbury, VT. 2 December 2020. Avery Fish and John Peckham. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S76970018>, <https://ebird.org/checklist/S76990289> 2nd state record.

Out-of-Season Reports

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

- One found on the Chittenden Reservoir, Chittenden, VT. 3 June 2020. Jayne McGarry. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S69228964>

Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*)

- One found in Tinmouth Channel, Rutland, VT. 22 October 2020. C. J. Frankiewicz. Written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S75226279>

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)

- One found at St. Michael's College, Colchester, VT. 15 December 2019. Shirley Johnson. Photos and written.

Little Gull (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*)

- One found on Lake Champlain from Grand Isle, VT. 5 May 2014. David Hoag. Written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S18232254>

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*)

- One found at a private residence in South Hero, VT. 28 February 2020. Jeannine Seevers. Photos and written.

Cape May Warbler (*Setophaga tigrina*)

- One found at a private residence in Essex Junction, VT. 3 December 2020. Larry Clarfeld. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S77009545>

Northern Parula (*Setophaga americana*)

- One found at Charlotte Town Beach, Charlotte, VT. 17 November 2018. James Osborn. Written, photos by another observer. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S49999851>

Wilson's Warbler (*Cardellina pusilla*)

- One found at Otter View Park in Middlebury, VT. 26 November 2019. Ronald Payne. Written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S61768309>

Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*)

- One found at a private residence in Montpelier, VT. 24 January 2020. Richard Littauer. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S63727239>

Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*)

- One found at the railroad tracks along the Hoosick River near Quarry Hill in Pownal, VT. 1 January 2020. Eric Seyferth. Written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S62843393>

Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*)

- One found on Bluebird Drive in Guilford, VT. 18 January 2020. Julie Bete. Photos and written.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*)

- One found at a private residence in Mt. Holly, VT. 2 January 2020. George C. Wood. Rejected at species level, accepted as *Pheucticus* sp.

Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*)

- One found at a private residence in Brattleboro, VT. 7 December 2016. Cynthia Kenyon. Photos and written.
- One returning to a private residence in Brattleboro, VT. 27 January 2017. Cynthia Kenyon. Photos and written.
- One returning to a private residence in Brattleboro, VT. 17 December 2018. Cynthia Kenyon. Photos and written.
- Two found at a private residence in Brattleboro, VT. 20 January 2019. Cynthia Kenyon. Photos and written.
- One returning to a private residence in Brattleboro, VT. 18 January 2020. Cynthia Kenyon. Photos and written.

Other Reports Accepted

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)

- Three found along Courser Road in Enosburg, VT. 28 April 2019. Judy Sefchick. Written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S55503913>
- Three found along Tabor Rd. in the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, Swanton, VT. 19 April 2020. Rich Kelley. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S67457382>
- One found at Rock River Outlet, Highgate Springs, VT. 25 September 2020. Kenneth Copenhaver. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S74045355>
- One found at Sandbar State Park, Milton, VT. 26 September 2020. Allan Strong. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S74082189>

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

- One found on the Chittenden Reservoir, Chittenden, VT. 9 August 2020. Jayne McGarry. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S72263773>

“White-rumped Storm-Petrel” (*Hydrobatidae*)

- One found on Lake Champlain near Grand Isle, VT. 20 November 2020. David Hoag. Not accepted at family level, accepted as Storm-Petrel sp. (*Oceanitidae/Hydrobatidae*). <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S76441290>

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*)

- One found in Post Mills, VT. 7 August 2020. Peter J. Thompson. Not accepted at species level, accepted non-unanimously as *Fregata* sp.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

- Two found on Molly's Falls Pond, Cabot, VT. 31 August 2020. Suzanne Roberts. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S73033338>

Willet (*Tringa semipalmata*)

- One found at Herrick's Cove in Rockingham, VT. 17 May 2020. Donald Clark. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/vt/checklist/S69228964>

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

- One found at Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area - Farrell Access, Addison, VT. 19 September 2020. Scott Morrical. Not accepted at species level, accepted as *Selasphorus* sp. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S73777831>

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

- One found on Gore Road in Holland, VT. 15 October 2020. Daniel Maple. Photos and written.

Worm-eating Warbler (*Helminthos vermivorum*)

- One found along the D&H Rail Trail in Rupert, VT. 7 May 2020. Timothy Hoch. Written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S68563281>
- One found at Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. 4 October 2020. Oliver Patrick. Photos and written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S74410333>

Orange-crowned Warbler (*Oreothlypis celata*)

- One found at the St. Albans School Forest, St. Albans, VT. 16 May 2020. Bridget Butler. Written. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S69131574>

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

- One found at a private residence on East Camp Hill Road in Weathersfield, VT. 15 April 2020. Marianne Walsh. Photos and written. Accepted as origin unknown, likely escapee. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S67241419>

Reports Not Accepted

A number of factors may contribute to a record being denied acceptance by the VBRC. It is uncommon for a record to not be accepted due to a bird being obviously misidentified. More commonly, a record is not accepted because the material submitted was incomplete, insufficient, superficial, or too vague to properly document the reported occurrence while eliminating all other similar species. It is important that the simple act of not accepting a particular record should by no means indicate that the VBRC or any of its members feel the record did not occur as reported. The non-acceptance of any record simply reflects the opinion of the VBRC that the documentation, as submitted, did not meet the rigorous standards appropriate for adding data to the formal historical record. The VBRC makes every effort to be as fair and objective as possible regarding each record. All records, whether accepted or not, remain on file and can be re-submitted to the Committee if additional substantive material is presented and are available for scientific research.

Snow x Ross's Goose hybrid (*Anser caerulescens x rossii*)

- Addison, VT. 17 November 2020. Committee has not historically voted on hybrid individuals, therefore no action was taken on this report.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

- Addison, VT. 31 December 2020.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*)

- Colchester, VT. 3 August 2020.

Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*)

- Woodstock, VT. 3 December 2020.

Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*)

- Danby, VT. 28 April 2020.
- Mt. Tabor, VT. 20 September 2020. Not accepted at species level, accepted as Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush.

Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*)

- Barnet, VT. 23 September 2020.

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*)

- Derby, VT. 19 July 2020.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)

- Pittsford, VT. 18 August 2020.