

2004 Goodhue-Elkins Award Recipient — Dennis J. Abbott, III

by Stephen R. Mirick

The Goodhue-Elkins Award is given annually by the Audubon Society of New Hampshire (ASNH) to recognize an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the study of New Hampshire birds. This award is named for Charles Goodhue, one of New Hampshire's first great birders, and Kimball Elkins, still the model of critical observation and insightful record-keeping.

Perhaps no one better embodies the attributes exemplified by the Goodhue-Elkins Award than this year's recipient, Dennis Abbott. Denny has devoted most of his adult life to recording the occurrence of birds in New Hampshire and to furthering our knowledge and understanding of their identification and distribution.

A New Hampshire native, Denny spent his working career in government service as a marine engineering technician chiefly at Portsmouth and other naval shipyards. He devoted long hours and energy to his work, which earned him awards for his dedication and service, but this didn't prevent him from vigorously pursuing his interest in birds and birding, which blossomed in his early thirties. Over the years, no one has seen more birds in our state, and Denny can proudly, but with typical modesty, claim an impressive total of 366 different species; however his birding activity hasn't been limited to merely "listing" birds.

Denny understood the importance of contributing his many field observations from early on and has been a regular contributor to New Hampshire's published bird records. He became a seasonal bird records editor for the New Hampshire Audubon Quarterly (later New Hampshire Bird Records) in 1973 and its chairman in 1976. Currently he serves as a member of the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee, having replaced Kimball Elkins when he retired from that position many years ago.

Denny has been a devoted leader and participant in the state's Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) for well over thirty years. He has been a back-bone of the Coastal count, enthusiastically participating since the early 1970s and serving as the compiler of that count area for several years in the latter half of that decade. He has participated with equal vigor in both of our most northern CBC counts, Errol-Umbagog and Pittsburg, since the 1970s and was the compiler of those counts for a remarkable 21 years, beginning in 1980. Over the decades he has also actively participated in the Lee-Durham, Isles of Shoals, Laconia-New Hampton, North Conway, and Nashua-Hollis counts.

Denny has been a member of ASNH since 1967 and was one of the charter members of the Seacoast Chapter. He served as a Trustee of ASNH for several years and was a member of the Trustees' Membership Committee for three years, serving as its chairman in 1975. He was elected to membership in the Nuttall Ornithological Club in 1976 and was one of its councilors from 1982-1985. Denny was also one of the earliest members of the American Birding Association (ABA), at a time when a national meeting of that organization could fit around a large dinner table, and served a stretch on the ABA's Board of Directors.

Over the years, Denny has eagerly contributed his knowledge of New Hampshire's birds and

birdlife to others both in the field and in the lecture hall. Most recently, Denny served as a New Hampshire range map consultant for North America's most authoritative field guide, *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds*. Denny has also led many field trips and given many lectures on birds for ASNH. On a personal level, Denny Abbott was my very first exposure to the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, when on August 22, 1981, he led the first field trip I went on, and discovered a Black Skimmer in Hampton Harbor; to this date, the only skimmer I have ever seen in New Hampshire.

On a less formal basis, Denny generously shares his expertise and in-depth knowledge of the state's birds with those who call him or join him in the field. He will more than happily spend his time with in-state and out-of-state birders alike who want him to help them find an unusual bird or who wish to know more about New Hampshire and New England birds and birding.

It's clear from his activities that Denny Abbott follows closely in the footsteps of those two New Hampshire giants: Charles Goodhue, one of our first great birders, and Kimball Elkins.

On June 27, 2004, the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, with great pride and pleasure, presented the 2004 Goodhue-Elkins award to Dennis J. Abbott, III, for his many years of contributions to our state's bird records through his careful and numerous field observations; for his generous sharing of his extensive knowledge about our birds with others through personal contact, lectures and field trips; and for inspiring others to do the same through his example and actions.

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