

2011 Goodhue-Elkins Award

by David B. Donsker

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The Goodhue-Elkins Award is given annually by New Hampshire Audubon 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 the state's first great birders, and Kimball Elkins, who remains the model for critical observation and insightful record keeping.



Steve Mirick receiving the Goodhue-Elkins Award, October 2011. Photo by Len Medlock.

The 2011 recipient was Stephen R. Mirick. Thirty years ago Steve saw his first Magnolia Warbler on a field trip to Foss Farm in Durham in the bird-filled month of May. Since that fateful moment, Steve has been addicted to birding in New Hampshire. New Hampshire ornithology has been a beneficiary of that passion and commitment ever since.

Perhaps no currently active birder could better exemplify the intent and spirit of the Goodhue-Elkins award than Steve. Almost from the very beginning of his birding activities, Steve understood the importance of carefully documenting his sightings and the significance of complete and accurate record keeping throughout the seasons. He has been an enthusiastic and frequent contributor to *New Hampshire Bird Records*, and is the top submitter of bird records for the state. As a result of his constant birding, diligent record keeping, and dedicated interest in the subject, Steve is extremely knowledgeable about the distribution and the seasonal cycle of birds in New Hampshire. He generously shares this font of information with the entire New Hampshire birding community through his thoughtful commentaries on NHBirds, in his many contributions to *New Hampshire Bird Records*, and in his personal interactions. He is quick to embrace new technologies that can contribute to documenting and sharing significant bird sightings and the archiving of that data. As one of our state's most respected birders, Steve has followed up on many sightings to confirm reported rarities. He is frequently the "go-to" person when someone has seen something unusual.

As an avid birder who is out nearly every weekend and many times throughout the week, he has contributed countless sightings, especially from his favorite region, the New Hampshire seacoast. He has discovered and documented many rarities, including many first sightings for the state.

But Steve doesn't limit himself to watching and reporting birds. He has served as the Fall Editor of *New Hampshire Bird Records* for more twenty years and only just recently retired from that position which he performed with great skill and distinction. He is a founding member of the New Hampshire Rare Bird Committee and has served several terms on that committee. As a member of that committee, he was a principal collaborator for the recent revision of the New Hampshire state bird list. He is the founder and moderator of NHBirds, the state's birding e-mail list for current bird sightings. Steve has been the compiler of the Lee-Durham Christmas Bird

Count since 1983, is the long-term coordinator of the Greenland sector of the Coastal New Hampshire CBC, and is a participant in several other Christmas Bird Counts in our state and in Massachusetts.

Steve has been a Breeding Bird Survey volunteer observer for the Dover, NH route since 1987. He has conducted marsh, grassland and shorebird surveys for the USFWS and NH Fish & Game. He served as the North Atlantic Regional Editor for the Hawk Migration Association of North America from the late 1980s into the late 1990s and was the New Hampshire Hawk Watch Coordinator during the same time period.

Steve has led innumerable field trips for New Hampshire Audubon, Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Brookline Bird Club, York County Audubon Society, the Seacoast Science Center and the Great Bay Discovery Center. In more recent years he has developed a keen interest in pelagic birding and has led or co-led numerous trips to the waters off New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Steve has amassed a significant bibliography of publications. He is the author of *Birding the New Hampshire Seacoast and Great Bay* and a *Checklist to the Birds of Great Bay*. He is co-editor of *A Checklist of the Birds of New Hampshire*. Steve has penned many articles for *New Hampshire Bird Records* and *Bird Observer*. He was the author of the "Green-backed Heron" account in the *New Hampshire Breeding Bird Atlas*. Steve was map consultant for the New Hampshire area for the *Sibley Guide to Birds* and the *National Wildlife Federation Field Guide to the Birds of North America*.

Steve is among the respected few who, as leaders and role models, are significantly responsible for the current vitality of the New Hampshire birding community. He has done this through the sharing of his own discoveries, facilitating the sharing of other birder's sightings, and conveying and sharing the excitement that birding brings to him. Steve's enthusiasm for New Hampshire birding is infectious. No one who comes in contact with him can help but be engaged with the joys and rewards of birding. Few are more serious about promoting the state's birding and helping birders increase their own knowledge. Steve has been the head, heart and soul of New Hampshire birding, particularly for the Seacoast region, for the current generation of New Hampshire birders. It is only fitting that this year's award goes to this remarkable and committed individual.

New Hampshire Audubon takes great pleasure in bestowing the 2011 Goodhue-Elkins Award to Stephen R. Mirick.