

2019 Goodhue-Elkins Award

Presented by Chris Martin at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 21, 2019.

The Goodhue-Elkins Award is presented annually by NH Audubon to an individual or individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the study of New Hampshire birds. The award is named for Charles Goodhue, one of the state's great pioneer birders, and Kimball Elkins, the model of critical observation and insightful record-keeping.

The 2019 award is presented to Iain MacLeod. From the time that Iain MacLeod travelled across the pond from Scotland and settled in the Granite State in the late 1980s, he has been involved in New Hampshire birding and especially with raptors, one of his life's great passions.

Shortly after starting as a NH Audubon staff member in 1988, Iain and several others joined NH Audubon Biologist Diane Evans, on a trip to Lake Umbagog, where they trekked through a bog near the Androscoggin River to build New Hampshire's first artificial Bald Eagle nest in a giant white pine on an island in the Sweat Meadow wetland. Incidentally, the following spring, New Hampshire's first nesting eagle pair in 40 years chose to lay their eggs in a different nest that the eagles built themselves, *not* in the pine tree that Diane and Iain's crew had selected. Eventually however, the team's tree choice was vindicated, when 16 years later another Bald Eagle pair selected that same Sweat Meadow tree for their nest.

When he came to the US, Iain evidently packed an ample infatuation with Ospreys in his suitcase! Around 1995, when there were no documented Osprey pairs nesting in New Hampshire's Merrimack River watershed, he recruited part-time arborist Dan Geiger to help build an experimental Osprey nest at Turkey Pond. A bit later, he led the charge to build another artificial nest on Massabesic Lake, again with Dan Geiger's assistance. This second effort succeeded, when two young Ospreys were banded and fledged from the Massabesic nest in 1999.

During the 18 years that he worked for NH Audubon, Iain's contributions to the study of New Hampshire birds extended far beyond his staff responsibilities. His general enthusiasm for raptors led in 2004 to the establishment of the Pack Monadnock Raptor Migration Observatory at Miller State Park in Peterborough, in partnership with NH Parks. He pursued initial grant funding that led to construction of an observation area on the mountain's summit and cultivated a community of dedicated volunteer observers. Now an official Hawk Watch site, it has been in continuous autumn operation for 15 years. Iain remains an Observatory volunteer to this day, and is a fixture atop the mountain on Mondays as the official hawk counter. He's known for his incredible bird-finding abilities, excellence at identification, and enthusiasm for sharing his knowledge of raptors with visitors. Iain represented New Hampshire well



Iain MacLeod (left) receiving NH Audubon's 2019 Goodhue-Elkins Award from Chris Martin.

Photo by Dyanna Smith.

while serving as the Hawk Migration Association of North America's Board Chairperson from 2007 through 2009, and he has also been a leader with the Northeast Hawk Watch.

In 2006, when Iain moved to the Lakes Region to become Executive Director at the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center in Holderness, he increased his volunteering as an Osprey nest observer. His talent for patiently tracking an Osprey as it plunged into a lake, caught, decapitated, and delivered a fish to a previously undiscovered nest made all the difference as NH Audubon tried to keep pace with a growing Osprey population in the state's Lakes Region, particularly after the species was delisted by New Hampshire Fish & Game in Fall 2008.

Eventually, Iain took on a lead role as a regional Osprey volunteer coordinator, organizing other local Audubon volunteers, and tallying Osprey nest statistics for the entire Lakes Region. He identified sites that could benefit from installing a nest platform, then worked to make that happen by soliciting support to turn concept into reality. At least eight Osprey platforms/nests in New Hampshire owe their existence directly to Iain's dedicated work.

In 2010, he reached out to North American Osprey expert Dr. Rob Bierregaard and spearheaded efforts that ultimately led to several New Hampshire Osprey nests being included in Bierregaard's wide-ranging satellite tracking research on Osprey migration beginning in 2011. Over the next several years, Rob and Iain fitted transmitters on Ospreys from the North Country, Lakes Region, and Seacoast, following many on their 8,000-mile round-trip journeys to the Amazon rainforest and back. At the Science Center, he implemented Project OspreyTrack, an educational initiative that followed New Hampshire Ospreys and revealed to people their amazing long-distance travels.

Iain has also assisted annually with Bald Eagle monitoring at about nine Lakes Region nests, finding several new ones himself. He has helped NH Audubon with eagle nest site management, communicating with landowners and promoting predator guard placement on local nest trees. He has participated annually in the state's Mid-winter Eagle Survey in the Lakes Region over the past decade.

Iain's contributions also include running the Milan Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) route since 2002, serving on the *New Hampshire Bird Records* Editorial Team and writing numerous articles for the publication. Throughout his years in New Hampshire, he has also led field trips, shared his knowledge and inspired others – in the words of Iva Roger de Coverley on her award nomination form, Iain has been “spreading an appreciation for our birds and teaching the benefits of preserving these beautiful creatures.”

For over 30 years, Iain MacLeod has been advancing our understanding and appreciation of New Hampshire birds, and especially our knowledge of birds of prey. For these actions, and many others I have not mentioned today, Iain is without question a well-deserving recipient of NH Audubon's 2019 Goodhue-Elkins Award.

