

2015 Goodhue-Elkins Award

Written and presented by Stephen R. Mirick at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 12, 2015.

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.



David Donsker (right) receiving the 2015 Goodhue-Elkins Award from Steve Mirick.

Photo by Terri Donsker.

The 2015 Goodhue-Elkins Award is presented to David B. Donsker. Although David has been interested in birding since the 1960s, he first became active in the New Hampshire birding community during the 1980s and that interest turned into an all-consuming passion. David first became active in the local Seacoast Chapter of NH Audubon in the early 1990s when he started giving bird programs and participating in local Christmas Bird Counts and field trips. From 1994-2007 he served in various positions on the Seacoast Chapter board including Program Coordinator, Vice President, and President. Since then, he continues to lead field trips and share programs on his world birding adventures. Among the many programs that he and his wife Terri have presented over the years include programs on Venezuela, the Galapagos Islands, China, Bhutan, Uganda, Hawaii, Cuba, and the East Indies.

David was the compiler for the Seacoast, NH Christmas Bird Count from 1998 to 2009 and has participated in countless area Christmas Bird Counts over the years. He has been the Photo Quiz writer for *New Hampshire Bird Records* since 2001 and currently serves on the Editorial Team. He has authored several articles including one on Winter Birding on the New Hampshire Seacoast and one on the famous Mississippi Kites in Newmarket, NH.

David served on the New Hampshire Rare Bird Committee nearly 10 years, and was chair for two years. He also served on a sub-committee that researched the entire history of birds in New Hampshire in order to establish an official State List of the Birds of New Hampshire.

While David's contributions to New Hampshire's birding community have been enormous, his passion for birds has taken him far beyond the borders of New Hampshire. He has traveled the world and visited over 70 countries on seven continents. Unfortunately for David, this has sometimes led him to miss some nice birds in New Hampshire. In September 2000, while he was traveling, I found nine Caspian Terns feeding along the beach a short distance from his house. David didn't see them, but his wife Terri did!

David's passion for world travel and birding has brought his world species list to approximately 6,800 of the 10,580 extant species in the world, an astonishing total that is matched by very few people. But David not only wants to see the bird, he wants to understand the bird, and to know more about it, and how it relates to other birds in the world. This interest in avian biogeography and taxonomy led him to

join forces with the venerable ornithologist Frank Gill in undertaking a truly monumental effort to create a standardized list of English names to the world's birds. In 2006, David was a contributor and the taxonomic editor in a book entitled *Birds of the World: Recommended English Names*, and he currently is the editor for the IOC World Bird List, an internet resource which facilitates worldwide communication in ornithology and conservation.

David has also been a member of the prestigious Nuttall Ornithological Club since 2002 and currently serves as its president. His local and international ornithological memberships are almost too numerous to list

In 2002, ABC News reported that “David Donsker is a birder obsessed. He has crawled on his belly in a pig farm to glimpse the rare Grenada Dove. He once trekked the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan for the exotic Beautiful Nuthatch and Satyr Tragopan.”

Over the years, I've shared many experiences with David – mostly on the board of the Seacoast Chapter or at Nuttall meetings, and at many, many, rare birds. I haven't been able to spend as much time birding with David as I'd like; perhaps we both need to retire. However, I have been teammates several times with David while competing in the “Superbowl of Birding,” and once spent all day birding with David when we saw 156 species of birds in a single day in New Hampshire.

In my years of birding in New Hampshire, I've known few with the thoughtful intelligence, kindness, sincerity, and passion for birds that David shares with his friends and with all members of the New Hampshire birding community.

It is with great pleasure that New Hampshire Audubon presents the 2015 Goodhue-Elkins award to David B. Donsker.

