

2023 Goodhue-Elkins Award

Presented by Mike Bartlett at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 16, 2023.

The Goodhue-Elkins Award is given annually by New Hampshire Audubon to honor an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the study of New Hampshire birds. The 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.

I am truly honored to present this year's award to my long-time colleague and friend George W. Gavutis Jr.

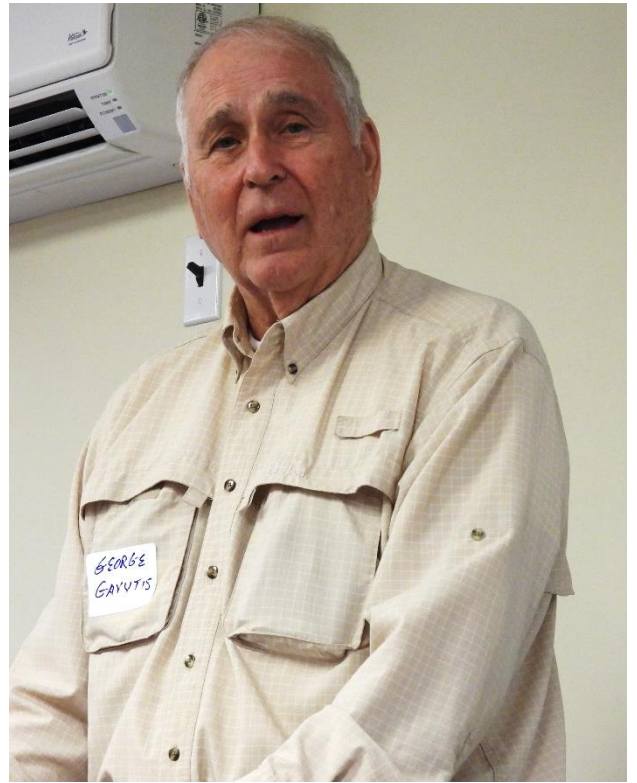
Many of us agree that George's contributions to the New Hampshire Breeding Bird Atlas alone qualify him for this award. He was a regional coordinator for over six years, field volunteer, author of eleven accounts and co-author of one more. George still does a Breeding Bird Survey route every year, which involves starting at 4:34 in the morning! For decades he has also faithfully sent in his bird sightings to *New Hampshire Bird Records*. It's obvious to everyone who knows George that he loves being out in the field, finding birds and, perhaps more importantly, recording and sharing the data he collects.

George is the quintessential conservationist, actively working to promote habitat management for birds and other wildlife in the Kensington area, beginning with his own land in 1973. Over the last fifty years, George has installed and monitored several hundred songbird nesting boxes, several dozen Wood Duck boxes, and at least a dozen Barred Owl, American Kestrel and Eastern Screech-Owl boxes—boxes that have produced thousands of ducklings and tens of thousands of songbirds.

In his spare time, George completed a list of bird species for the Natural Inventory section of the Kensington Town Master Plan and then went on to create lists of mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and fish. He also wrote a four-page overview for the inventory section.

One of the Goodhue-Elkins award criteria speaks to the degree to which the nominee shares his knowledge—and here is where George also shines. In the early 1990s George started writing a column called *Walk on the Wildlife Side* for a community newsletter. Lynn Monroe, editor of the monthly newsletter, had this to say regarding George's contribution:

“George delivered the most wonderful stories and observations, and his column quickly became the first thing folks looked for when they received their newsletter. We learned how he got up early to count owls for the Christmas Bird Count each year and when we published the count, we learned that bluebirds stick around all winter and that logging of mature forests actually enhances bird populations. Over the years, he's kept our town informed about what to watch for



George Gavutis, Jr. recipient of NH Audubon's 2023 Goodhue-Elkins Award.

Photo by Rebecca Suomala.

as the seasons change, and the annual migration brings new feathered friends to our feeders. He's cautioned us when to clean out those feeders and what to stock them with—and what to do with those irritating sparrows. He warned us when bobcats and bears were sighted in town and helped us choose the fish that could survive in our ponds.

George is still writing his column, and many say that it is the way they have come to know the woods and streams and wild things that live in our community.

There is no question that our town is a far better place because of our resident naturalist, George Gavutis.”

I would only add that, thanks to George Gavutis, our state is a far better place to live as well.

NH Audubon is honored to present the 2023 Goodhue-Elkins Award to George for his decades of service to the birds and birding community of New Hampshire.

