

## 2021 Goodhue-Elkins Award

*Presented by Francie Von Mertens at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 18, 2021.*

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.

NH Audubon is very pleased to present this year's award to Eric Masterson. Eric arrived in New Hampshire from Ireland in 1999 as a skilled birder who kept a birding journal and sketchbook from an early age. He immediately set about exploring the state and its birdlife and was soon making contributions to its study.

He took on a Breeding Bird Survey route in 2002, and became a regular participant in the local Christmas Bird Count. Reporting sightings to the *New Hampshire Bird Records* quarterly, he has served on its editorial board, written articles for it, and is now Spring Season Editor, making sense of some 200,000 bird sightings.

In short order, Eric joined the ranks of respected, long-term birders in the state, notable especially in the area of waterfowl migration and pelagic birds. He renewed interest and participation in off-season pelagic birding through his trips on fishing boat charters. As another mark of respect for his deep knowledge of the state's birds, he was invited to join the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee.

Eric's 2013 book, *Birdwatching in New Hampshire*, was a monumental synthesis of data that resulted in a user-friendly guide to where to find birds in the state—by location, habitat, and season. He also introduced a lot of people to the world of birds through his birdwatching column in *Monadnock Shopper News*, a regional weekly newspaper.

Eric leads field trips, sharing his enthusiasm and knowledge generously. As Judy Davidson wrote:

“Most birders know Eric. He's a role model for me. I've been on numerous trips to Star Island with his groups. He loves to teach people, and never was disappointed or made me feel stupid if I didn't know a bird. He's very passionate about all things birds.”



*Eric Masterson receiving NH Audubon's 2021 Goodhue-Elkins Award.*

*Photo by Rebecca Suomala.*

Eric was instrumental in developing NH Audubon's Carter Hill Hawkwatch in Concord. His fascination with the Broad-winged Hawk's dramatic migration to South America inspired his "Kettle of One" journey by bike along their route, peddling off with the Broad-wingeds in September, 2016. Six months later he had travelled 5,000 miles from New Hampshire to Panama and it was time to return home as the Broad-wingeds headed back north.

Infused with the lure of birds soaring overhead, he also took on another adventure: hang-gliding. The birding community held its collective breath upon hearing of Eric's serious, high-impact hang-gliding crash in August of 2020. Miraculously, he recovered, and is back in action, synthesizing data, working professionally in land conservation, leading field trips, sharing his knowledge and welcoming good company with others.

NH Audubon is honored to present the 2021 Goodhue-Elkins Award to Eric Masterson.

