

2009 Goodhue-Elkins Award

As presented at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, June 2009

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.

This year's recipient is Robert Bradley of Littleton, NH. Bob Bradley is an avid birder, but specifically relevant to this award is his profound interest in New Hampshire's bird records. He has been a regular contributor of bird sightings to New Hampshire Audubon over many years. Bob was a very active reporter in the 1960s and 1970s, submitting hundreds of reports using the "new" format which required transcribing each sighting onto a 3x5 slip instead of writing an informal letter with a list of sightings. He reported his own observations as well as those of others, ensuring that they would become part of the historical record of bird sightings. Now, as we are assessing various impacts including global climate change, these long-term records are essential to the work that New Hampshire Audubon does.

Bob's observations, and those he reported for other birders, provide a significant portion of the bird sighting data from the 1960s and 1970s when there were few reporters. His waterfowl data provide the majority of reports from the upper Connecticut River and support the potential nomination of that area as an Important Bird Area.

Bob was a volunteer observer for the Breeding Bird Survey in New Hampshire, another long-term census of population trends. He surveyed the Franconia route in most years between 1977 through 1998. He often conducted his route with Marion Fuller, a piano teacher with excellent ears.

He was involved in the publication of bird reports through New Hampshire Audubon and very active in the birding community. According to Denny Abbott, Bob was an important contributor of bird sightings from the northwest corner of the state. He was never afraid to offer constructive criticism regarding the content and format of the season reports. He was a Season Editor for the bird reports in the *New Hampshire Audubon Quarterly* for several seasons.

During the Breeding Bird Atlas project, Tudor Richards asked him to help confirm breeding birds at Pondicherry and Bob had the good fortune to see a mother Virginia Rail with babies. He is surprised he lived to be 30 after going on many a steep birding hike in the White Mountains with Dr. Harry McDade.

Bob has restricted mobility now, but continues to report from the Littleton area. New Hampshire Audubon is pleased to honor Bob Bradley with the 2009 Goodhue-Elkins Award.

Bob Bradley was unable to attend the meeting to receive the award, but sent the following in acceptance. It gives a glimpse into the lively, generous spirit Bob brings to his great interest in birding in New Hampshire.

When the letter arrived informing me that I had received the Goodhue-Elkins award, like so many things in life, I wondered “why me?” with so many good birders out there. I’ve been birding for over 60 years. If you’re in my age bracket please remember Betty Phinney, Vera Hebert, Pauline Merrill, Bob Smart, Bob Vernon, John McIlwaine, Dr. McDade, and Kimball Elkins.

Kimball was always so helpful. On coastal field trips I was usually with him. One May trip we were in the Kensington area. It was a large group with Bob Smart as the leader and Kimball in the last car. He knew one birder would be late and we had just seen a Reeve, a very rare shorebird. Kimball saw the late birder and went back to be sure he saw the Reeve. Kimball always took the time to be sure everyone saw the birds, common or rare. Thank you Kimball!

On one July trip to the Hampton mudflats, we were hoping to see Willets. I spotted an Avocet. Quietly I told Vera Hebert, then Kimball so they could confirm my identification. It **was** an Avocet! The bird flew and most only saw it in flight. I learned later from Vera that it was a first for New Hampshire.

Over the years, it’s not so much the birds, it’s the birders, the people you’re with and all the experiences you have with them. Dr. McDade was a great mountain climber and he took me to places I didn’t think I would come out of alive. One September, with his mother, we were almost to the edge of Little Cherry Pond. Dr. McDade said “step on the green and everything will be all right.” That’s what I did and I found myself waist deep in water along with my binoculars. Mrs. McDade was screaming “Get Bob out of the pond, it doesn’t have any bottom.” And what do you think Dr. McDade replied? “Wait until I identify this bird” which turned out to be a Lark Sparrow. I never did see the bird; muddy binoculars have limited vision.

These days if you are with Becky Suomala, Bob Quinn, Steve Mirick, Denny Abbott and others, consider yourself very lucky because they are very talented. You will have a wonderful time.

Over the years I have been lucky to bird with my close friends, Edith Anne Emery and Priscilla Powers, and their mother Ruby.

I am very grateful for this award.
Thank you.
Bob Bradley

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