

## 2022 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award

*As presented by Becky Suomala for the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 17, 2022.*

The John Thalheimer Volunteer Award has been presented annually since 1997. This award is dedicated to the first recipient, John Thalheimer, whose outstanding service to NH Audubon exemplified volunteer commitment, strengthened the organization, and provided an inspiring example for others.

The 2022 recipient of the John Thalheimer Volunteer Award is Wendy Chatel.

I am so happy to be presenting this award to Wendy. She began volunteering in January of 2012 on a project to upload historic bird sighting data into eBird. Little did we dream that we would still be working on the project ten years later! Maybe we should have guessed since we started with almost 190,000 bird reports, but we're almost done and that's in large part due to Wendy.

Wendy is one of those key volunteers who is technologically savvy, smart, able to figure things out, work independently, and come up with valuable suggestions. Preparing the old *New Hampshire Bird Records* data to upload in eBird involves researching locations town by town so you know where each one is before uploading the data. It often means looking up the original 3x5 slips to try and find out where "Joe's Restaurant" was back in 1988, or where The Smiths lived in 1994. It is detailed research that requires persistence and patience.

Once the locations are ready, the data file has to be uploaded to eBird, a job that Wendy quickly learned and took over for all the other volunteers, as well as continuing the preparation for her own set of towns. She has worked on the project longer than any other volunteer, completing 60 towns to date, including all of the Seacoast and Lakes regions. We had to pause the project for two years during COVID, but got started again in 2022 and Wendy came right back. We are down to less than 33,000 records to go and can see the finish line!

As if that wasn't enough, she took over the Photo Editor position for *New Hampshire Bird Records*. This involves compiling many photos for possible use in each quarterly issue of the publication and obtaining permission to use the photos. She approached this in a systematic way, applying her technological know-how to not only make the process easier, but also compile resources for continued use. She created and updates a list of photographers who have given us permission to use photos and a list of all photos she has gathered for all issue. She continued doing this time-consuming job all during COVID.



*Wendy Chatel (left) receiving NH Audubon's 2022 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award from Becky Suomala.*

*Photo by Dyanna Smith.*

I can't count how many times NH Audubon's Communications Director has had a last-minute photo need and I've been able to consult Wendy's files and come up with something quickly. At one time, it was 9:00 at night and Dyanna needed to know if we had permission to use a particular photo. I checked Wendy's file and thankfully there was the blanket permission from the photographer. I have sent her many emails saying, "you've done it again," and saved me hours of time.

Wendy has helped with other projects along the way, including doing Bald Eagle surveys in the Lakes Region. She is a friendly presence in the office who is easy to get along with and very kind. Volunteers like Wendy do not come along very often and I am grateful for all that she does.

On behalf of all of us at NH Audubon, I am so pleased to present Wendy with the 2022 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award.

