

How Much Do YOU Know about New Hampshire's Symbols?

2009

Part II – Sport, Gem, Butterfly, Bird, Flower, Amphibian and Fish

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More about New Hampshire's state symbols. Our sport, should not be difficult to figure out, it is skiing.



Our gem is the smoky quartz. A common mineral it is found in many types of rocks, including granite. It is also known as cairngorm.

Our butterfly is the Karner Blue (*Lycaeides melissa, subspecies samuelis*). It was designated the state butterfly in 1992. Also called the Melissa blue it is found in small isolated colonies in New Hampshire as well as elsewhere. This butterfly usually has two hatches



Top: Male Karner blue resting on grass leaf. Bottom: Female Karner blue showing orange crescents. Photo by Paul Labus, The Nature Conservancy, Indiana.

per year. In April, the first group of caterpillars hatches from eggs that were laid the previous year. The caterpillars feed only on wild lupine plant leaves. By mid-May the caterpillars pupate and adult butterflies emerge from their cocoon-like chrysalis by the end of May or in early June. These adults mate, laying eggs in June on or near wild lupine

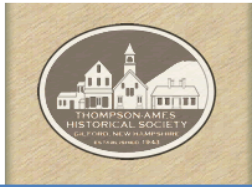
plants. The eggs hatch in about one week and the caterpillars feed for about three weeks. They then pupate and the second generation of adult butterflies appears in July. Its conservation status is imperiled due to a loss of land by development and lack of natural

disturbance, such as wildfire and grazing by large mammals. Such disturbances help maintain the butterfly's habitat by setting back encroaching forests, encouraging lupine and flowering plant growth. For those of you to may collect butterflies, please note that collection is illegal without a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

New Hampshire's bird is the Purple Finch. Back in 1927 The New Hampshire Federation of Women's Clubs voted the purple finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*) as their club's state bird. Thirty years later the New Hampshire Legislature adopted the purple finch as the official bird of the state. The legislation was signed on April 25, 1957. This bird lives primarily in coniferous woods and visits most of the eastern United States only in the winter. It feeds on flowers by crushing the base to get the nectar and leaving the upper flower undamaged. In a similar action, it often feeds on the seeds of fruits rather than the pulp. The decline of this finch in the East may be partly explained by competition with the House Finch. In aggressive interactions, the House Finch nearly always wins. Its numbers were also affected negatively nearly 100 years earlier when the House Sparrow was introduced. It is medium sized, 5-6 inches, has a wingspan of 9-10 inches and weighs 1.09 ounces. The male has raspberry-red on head and chest while the female is brown and striped. The bill is relatively thick and pointed and the tail is notched.



The state flower is the purple lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*). A New Hampshire historian Leon Anderson wrote that the purple lilac was imported from England and placed at the Portsmouth home of Governor Benning Wentworth in 1750. It was adopted as our stated flower in 1919. That year bills and amendments were introduced promoting the apple blossom, purple aster, wood lily, Mayflower, goldenrod, wild pasture rose, evening primrose and buttercup as the state flower. A long and lively debate took place with regard to the relative merits of each flower. Ultimately, the purple lilac was chosen according to Anderson in New Hampshire's Flower - Tree- Bird because it "is symbolic of that hardy character of the men and women of the Granite State.



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Would you believe New Hampshire even has a state amphibian? Well it does! It is the spotted newt (*Notophthalmus viridescens*).



It was designed the official state amphibian in 1985 after a two year effort by high school students. Newts are quite common to this region. The Union Leader newspaper (April 25, 1985, p48) lists the newts as the

“perfect symbol for ensuring ecology in New Hampshire as they exist predominantly in the rain and runoff sodden areas heavily affected by acid rain.”

We also have two state fish.



Our saltwater game fish is the striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) and designated as such on May 6, 1994.

Our freshwater fish is the Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*). It was officially designated on Aug. 7, 1994.



For the last article on New Hampshire's symbols look for Part III.

Please send comments or suggestions to:
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