



Newfoundland Breeding Bird Atlas

Atlas des oiseaux nicheurs de Terre-Neuve

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2022

Volume 2 - Issue 2

Atlas Update

Time flies when you're having fun—so perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise that Year 3 of atlas data collection is already here! It's been a busy winter for the Atlas Office, as we hosted a series of bird ID workshops from January to April, each of which was attended by ~100 people. We also continued to grow the Nocturnal Owl Survey, adding 10 new routes this year.

Now that spring is here, we're thrilled to be getting back into the field—and we hope you are too! With the borders open again, we look forward to welcoming atlassers from across Canada this summer. We're also very excited to be participating in the 2nd annual Big Atlas Weekend: a friendly competition with other ongoing North American atlas projects, and a chance to win prizes and represent Newfoundland for the trophy! (Yes, there is an actual trophy; see page 3 for details.)

As you head out to find new species and breeding evidence this year, make sure to touch base with your [Regional Coordinators](#) and check the coverage [map](#) so you can direct your effort to unexplored places. Happy birding!

Species in Focus: Bank Swallow

Did you know we have Bank Swallows in Newfoundland? As aerial insectivores, they fly erratically through the air, capturing insects on the wing. You can tell them apart from their more common relatives, the Tree Swallows, by looking for a brown/grey back and brown breast band on their clear white belly. They also nest in colonies, with each pair



Bank Swallow flying. Photo: Denise McIssac

digging an individual burrow in banks that are usually along stream edges or coastal cliffs. So far colonies of this species have been seen all along the west coast of the island! You can read more about this threatened species in the Species at Risk Toolkit that will soon be up on our website!

Progress To Date:

Checklists: 4,900

Registered volunteers: 170

Squares with data: 508

Records: 39,303

Breeding species: 164

Hours of atlassing: 4,795

Point counts: 1,034

Current as of June 10, 2022



Greater Yellowlegs. Breeding evidence: A

Photo: Catherine Dale

A publication of





Bank Swallow visiting its burrow at a colony in western Newfoundland. Breeding evidence: AE
Photo: Darroch Whitaker



An intrepid Savannah Sparrow collects food for its chicks. Breeding evidence: CF
Photo: Denise McIsaac



Rock Ptarmigan chick. Breeding evidence: FY
Photo: Jared Clarke

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A beautiful pond in Central NL where a Rusty Blackbird was foraging.
Photo: Catherine Dale

IMPORTANT DATES

- May 28 - Aug 15: Peak atlassing season
 - June 7 - July 7: Point count season
- June 11: Square Blitz in 22TCT75 (Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove)
 - June 24 - 26: Big Atlas Weekend

Exciting new event: Big Atlas Weekend 2022!

Join other current atlases across North America (Ontario, New York, Maine, Maryland and DC, and North Carolina) from June 24—26, 2022 for a Big Atlas Weekend! This exciting annual event is a fun way for birders from across the province to document breeding birds and come together as a birding community. For many birds in our area, breeding peaks in late June. It's a great time to confirm breeding and fill gaps in the Atlas dataset.

Schedule of Events

- June 22 @ 6 pm EDT – **Kickoff**. Introduction by the six Atlas coordinators followed by guest speaker Robyn Bailey, Project Leader at NestWatch. Robyn will be talking about how the data NestWatch collects both complements and differs from atlas data, what kinds of questions NestWatch is answering with those data, and best practices for making high-quality observations on nesting birds.
- June 24-26 – **Big Atlas Weekend!** Go atlasing in any of the six participating regions from 6 pm NDT on Friday to 11:59 pm NDT on Sunday.
- June 29 @ 6 pm EDT – **Awards ceremony**. Enjoy highlights from the weekend, share your stories in small groups with atlasers from all regions, and find out who won the individual and state/provincial champion awards.



How to Participate

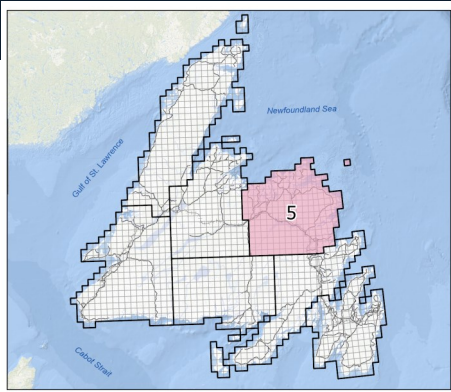
Joining the fun is easy! All you need to do is go atlasing between 6:00 pm NDT Friday, June 24 and 11:59 pm NDT Sunday, June 26 and submit your checklist through the NatureCounts App or Web Portal.

If you're new to atlasing, check out the Atlasing 101 and Data Entry videos on the [Tutorials and Bird ID Videos](#) page of the Atlas website.

Did we mention there's prizes?

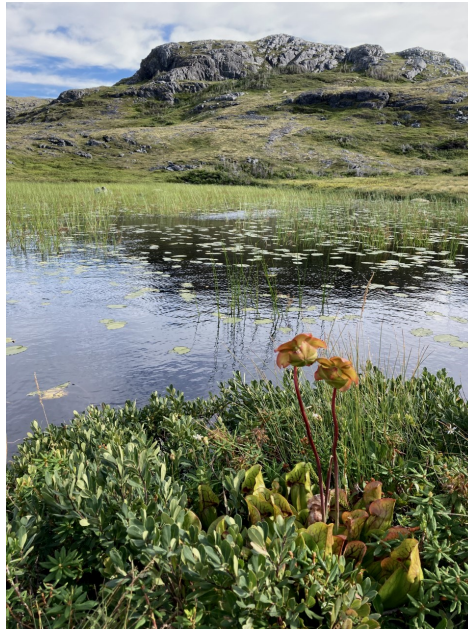
The Big Atlas Weekend will have prize opportunities for atlasers of all skill levels, ranging from first-timers to veterans. One prize winner will be randomly selected from several categories to win a [Cornell Lab of Ornithology Bird Academy course of their choosing](#). Some of the categories include completing an atlas checklist with at least one breeding code, a checklist with nocturnal effort, and a checklist in an

incomplete atlas square. See the rest of the categories on the [Big Atlas Weekend](#) page of the Atlas website! There will also be a trophy for the several categories that will be ranked between Atlases! Check out the webpage above.



Region 5: Northeast Newfoundland

This region is an area of many wonders. Want to visit an island that's never been atlased? Check out Fogo or Change Islands, or the countless islands in



the Bay of Exploits. If you prefer coastlines with the chance of whales and icebergs while you atlas, Region 5 is an ideal place to go. You can also experience the interior forest if that's more your style. Just head down some old woods roads that go to the middle of nowhere or take a hike along the trails in the region. See how many species you can find in Region 5 this summer!

Fogo Island Photo: Catherine Dale

Some numbers:

- 214 total squares (79 priority squares)
- 715 hours spent atlasing
- 109 point counts completed
- 27 participants registered
- 112 species recorded

TERRA NOVA NATIONAL PARK is located along the northeast coast of Newfoundland and occurs in the central portion of Region 5. The park is primarily dominated with dense black spruce forest interspersed with bogs and hundreds of small ponds and streams. A broad network of hiking trails and canoe routes offer plenty of opportunities to seek out boreal species including Black-backed Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher and nocturnal owls. Additionally, the extensive and rugged coastline provides plenty of options to observe seabirds including Arctic and Common Tern, Atlantic Puffin, and Black Guillemot.



A view of Terra Nova National Park
Photo: Catherine Dale



John Gosse: Regional Coordinator

John has been a biologist with Parks Canada for over twenty years and has focused on species at risk recovery and reducing the impact of non-native moose on forest ecosystems in Terra Nova National Park. He has also conducted breeding bird and winter bird surveys throughout remote regions of Newfoundland and Labrador and western Canada. His most rewarding place to bird is among the coastal islands of outer Bonavista Bay, though his **favourite bird species** is the elusive American Three-toed Woodpecker typically found in more interior, black spruce forests of Newfoundland.

Region 7: Avalon

The Avalon provides a great mix of urban and wilderness atlassing opportunities. Some great places to bird even if you're in or around St. John's are Quidi Vidi Lake and Bidgoods Park. From warblers, raptors, and gulls, to swallows and ducks, these locations have great variety! This region also includes some of the largest seabird colonies in North America including in

Witless Bay Ecological Reserve and Cape St Mary's Ecological Reserve. If you want to get out in untouched nature, consider a hiking or paddling trip through the Avalon Wilderness Reserve, and visit places few have gone before you!

Some numbers:

- 168 total squares (58 priority squares)
- 1260 hours spent atlassing
- 182 point counts completed
- 74 participants registered
- 121 species recorded

Beverly McClenaghan: Regional Coordinator

As an avid birder and a lover of the outdoors, you can often find me exploring the wild landscapes of Newfoundland. The Atlas has been a great reason for me to discover some new corners of the province while birding! When I'm not in the woods, I work as an environmental research biologist in St. John's studying the world's biodiversity using DNA!

Favourite Newfoundland bird?

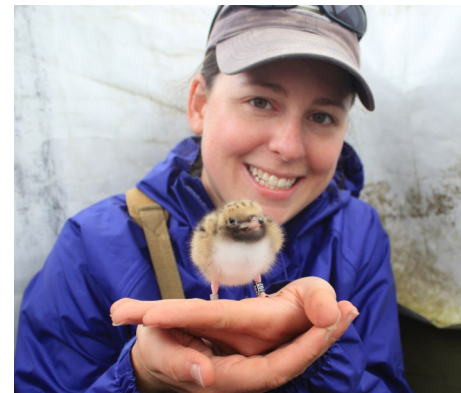
Some of my favourite moments include being deep in woods surrounded by the whistling song of the Hermit Thrush and watching Common Loons diving on a pond in the Avalon Wilderness Reserve.



Megan Boucher:

Regional Coordinator

Growing up, I spent countless hours exploring the woods behind my house, learning about the various birds, plants, and critters. We used to mark our field guide for the birds we saw around the yard and dad would take us to the park to feed the chickadees and nuthatches from our hands! That led to an exciting pastime and work experiences. I have worked on remote islands doing seabird research, banded seabirds, songbirds, and raptors in different locations, travelled to remote locations for fisheries work, and undertaken various other adventures. I am very passionate about birds, and love to see, learn, and teach others about birds. We have such a beautiful environment around us and to explore it through birds is an adventure!



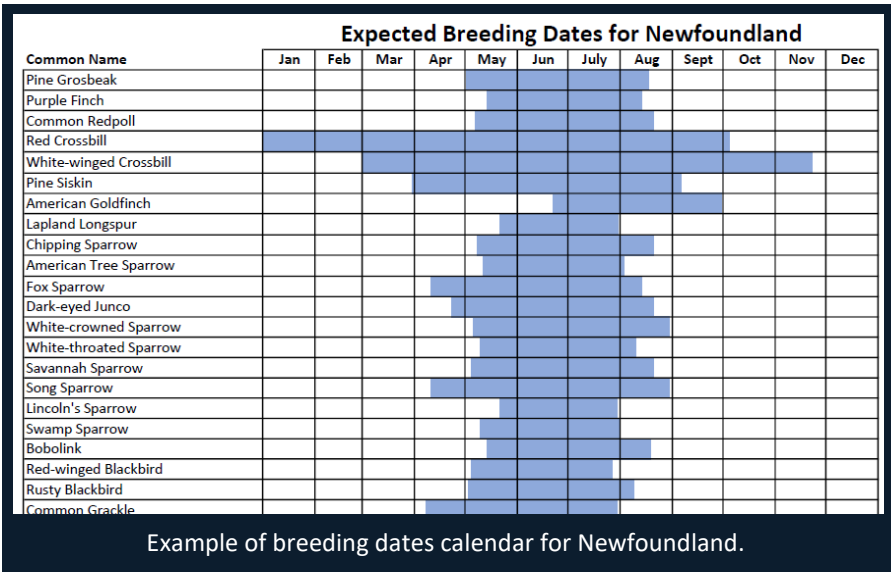
Favourite Newfoundland bird?

It is difficult to say what my favourite bird is as I have so many. I love Chickadees, both Boreal and Black-capped, and love how you can find them throughout Newfoundland including in St. John's!

Is it breeding? Understanding Breeding Dates

Spring is here and songbirds are appearing back in our yards, along our favourite trails, and at our cabins. But when you're atlassing in early spring and late summer, how do you know if a bird that you see or hear is "observed in its breeding season", which is a requirement of most breeding codes?

Some quick tips: If the bird is only there a few days and then gone, you can safely assume it was just passing through. For many songbirds that migrate, if you see a group of individuals of the same species all foraging in close proximity but generally appearing to get along, they are likely still travelling. Birds that are not on territory are far more tolerant of others sharing their space. For most species, if you see any higher levels of breeding evidence like a pair, agitated behaviour, or nest building, that bird is likely breeding in the area.



How it was made: Dates were calculated using the Newfoundland data from [Project NestWatch](#), accessed through Birds Canada's [Nesting Calendar Query Tool](#), which indicates when 10% of first eggs have been laid and the date when 90% of nests have been left by young. Days were added before the egg laying date for nest building and finding a mate. Days were added post-fledging according to the length of time fledged birds and adults stayed in the general vicinity of the nesting territory. This information was found in the [Birds of the World](#) account for each species. Date ranges were also compared to eBird bar charts and confirmed by experts, and adjusted where necessary.

This document will provide you with suggested timelines and help give you an idea of whether a species is expected to be breeding in that area yet or not. Migration times do vary for different regions of the island (example, typically a couple of weeks later on the Northern Pen) so this is an average for the whole island. We hope this will assist in solving some of the confusion that can come with atlassing during the shoulder seasons! Happy birding!

Quiz Time! Can you identify these female birds?

In most bird species, the males are the showy sex, flashing their brightly-coloured plumage, singing, and conducting elaborate displays to get the attention of females. While these males are certainly attention grabbing, it's equally important to be able to identify the less conspicuous females, as they are often the ones building the nests, incubating the eggs, and, in the case of ducks especially, shepherding the recently-hatched young.



Female bird #1. *Photo: Kathy Marche*



Female bird # 2. *Photo: Kathy Marche*



Female bird # 3. *Photo: Daniel Arndt*



Female bird #4. *Photo: Daniel Arndt*



Female bird #5 . *Photo: Alvan Buckley*



Female bird #6. *Photo: Kathy Marche*

If you're stumped on any of these mystery females, see page 8 for quiz answers!

Announcements

Important Dates

- Point counts must occur between **June 7 and July 7**, but general atlassing can continue all summer long!
- Make sure to represent Newfoundland in the [Big Atlas Weekend](#) competition from **June 24 to June 26!**

New Online Tools Available

You'll notice some new things on our [website](#) this spring! In addition to the [list of breeding dates](#) for Newfoundland species, you can also find links to [recordings of our winter webinar series](#) on the birds of Newfoundland. We're also excited to announce the launch of the French translation of the website! And stay tuned for the addition of profiles of Newfoundland's [species at risk](#), available soon!

Nocturnal Owl Survey: submit your data

For those atlassers who took part in the Nocturnal Owl Survey this spring, just a reminder to [submit your data](#) as soon as possible! We're excited to find out what species were seen and where this spring. And for those who might be interested in participating in the owl survey next year, you can check out the [NL NOS website](#) to learn more about the survey and view the route options.

Have refundable bottles and cans?

Donate them to the Atlas at any Green Depot in NL!

Account name:
Newfoundland Breeding Bird Atlas
Account #: 4841217
www.greendepotnl.ca



Regional Coordinators needed!

We are still looking for Regional Coordinators for **Region 6** (Bonavista-Placentia West) and **Region 8** (St. Pierre and Miquelon). If you're interested in learning more about this volunteer position, check out the information on the atlas website or contact the Atlas Office at nlatlas@birdscanada.org.

Calling all story-tellers and photographers!

Do you have an atlassing adventure or fantastic photo to share? We'd love to hear from you! Send pictures and stories to us at the Atlas Office: nlatlas@birdscanada.org.

Partners & Supporters

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Female Bird Quiz: Answers

Female bird #1: American Redstart

Female bird #2: Pine Grosbeak

Female bird #3: Red-winged Blackbird

Female bird #4: Harlequin Duck

Female bird #5: Red Crossbill

Female bird #6: Yellow-rumped Warbler