



Newfoundland Breeding Bird Atlas

Atlas des oiseaux nicheurs de Terre-Neuve

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2023

Volume 3 - Issue 1

Atlas Update

The summer has arrived again, and with it all the migratory species who call The Rock their home for a couple of months each year. Their arrival means it's time for us to go to work, documenting their behaviour, numbers, and presence here. This year is an important one, because it is **our second last year of data collection!** Be sure to check in with your Regional Coordinators to discuss how to distribute your efforts in the next 2 years to best benefit our final Atlas product.

The NatureCounts app has undergone many updates and is working really nicely, so we encourage atlassers to use that to submit their data from the field. It's a great way of streamlining your data entry. Remember that NatureCounts checklists can automatically push to eBird, but if you want to go the other way around, you will need to import each eBird checklist individually!

You can add your atlassing efforts to those of people all across North America on the weekend of June 23 by participating in the **Big Atlas Weekend**. This is a friendly competition between all the current North American bird atlases, and we'd love to win the trophy! There will also be a virtual trivia kickoff event before the weekend, and an awards ceremony after that we encourage you to participate in. See page 4 for more details.

There is a lot of growth in the Atlas Office this summer, with the addition of 5 hired field technicians who will be roaming the wilds of Newfoundland and completing as many point counts as possible, as well as a Logistics Manager, Mercia Conway Harris, who will be assisting with office tasks while Catherine and Jenna are out in the field. You can reach Mercia at mharris@birdscanada.org.

Another exciting change is that we have a new Regional Coordinator! Robin Pritchard from Grand Falls-Windsor is taking over coordinating Region 3, and Alvan Buckley and Doug Clarke will be moving their attentions to Region 6. Welcome to Robin!

We appreciate all of your efforts to participate in the Atlas, and look forward to hearing about your exciting sightings this season.

Progress To Date:

Checklists: 7527

Registered volunteers: 212

Squares with data: 617

Records: 61,511

Breeding species: 180

Hours of atlassing: 7135

Point counts: 1565

Current as of 9 June 2023



Yellow-rumped Warbler. Breeding evidence: S (singing)

Photo: Lucas Berrigan

A publication of





Rusty Blackbird resting between angry calls.
Breeding evidence: A (Agitated)
Photo: Jenna McDermott



Semipalmated Plover doing broken wing display.
Breeding Evidence: DD (distraction display)
Photo: Gene Herzberg



Female Yellow Warbler working on her nest.
Breeding evidence: NB (Nest Building)
Photo: Jenna McDermott

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Atlassing near Great Brehat on the Northern Peninsula.
Photo: Jenna McDermott

IMPORTANT DATES

- May 28—Aug 15: Peak Atlas season
- June 7—July 7: Point count season
- June 23—25: Big Atlas Weekend!

Breeding Confirmation for Manx Shearwater

By Kyle d'Entremont



The view from Middle Lawn Island.

Photo: Kyle d'Entremont

Middle Lawn Island (MLI) is an inconspicuous grassy rock located off the southern coast of the Burin Peninsula. The island has historically been known to house hundreds of Manx Shearwaters (most being non-breeding prospectors) during the breeding season. Until the recent discovery of several breeding pairs on Matinicus Rock in Maine, MLI was also thought to be the only location in North America where Manx Shearwaters were known to breed regularly. However, active breeding burrows and production of offspring has remained very low on MLI, with only a handful of chicks confirmed each year in the 2000s when a research team was actively surveying the island for burrows. Due to the remote nature of the island and lack of frequent access, successful breeding by Manx Shearwaters has been difficult to confirm since these surveys were last conducted.

When I was first told I would be going to MLI for Leach's Storm-Petrel research in August 2022, I immediately had a second personal goal for my trip to the island---finding an active Manx Shearwater burrow. My favorite order of birds is the Procellariiforms (commonly referred to as the tubenoses and consisting of storm-petrels, petrels, shearwaters, and albatrosses), so I was quite excited at the possibility of finding one of North America's most elusive breeders in this group of birds. I also knew that if myself or my colleagues could not confirm breeding of Manx Shearwaters on the island during our research excursions, the species would likely not be recorded for the Newfoundland Breeding Bird Atlas. Needless to say, the stakes were high!



Up close and personal with a Manx Shearwater chick.



Kyle holding a Manx Shearwater chick.

After several days of storm-petrel work on the island, we finally had some spare time on the evening of August 22, 2022 to casually survey the island for Manx Shearwater burrows. We focused our search efforts on the eastern side of the island, where Manx burrows were found to be most dense in the 2000s. After about an hour of searching for burrows and being disappointed by a few which looked promising (e.g. evidence of digging and feathers outside the entrance), I finally stumbled across what I had been looking for: a burrow not too dissimilar in size and shape from a puffin burrow. I reached in and felt a bird much too big to be a storm-petrel, and with the signature long and hooked beak of a shearwater. It was one of the most exciting discoveries of my 5+ years working as a seabird biologist, and I will certainly remember it for many years to come!

Happening June 23—25: Big Atlas Weekend 2023!

Submit breeding behaviour observations to the Newfoundland Atlas for the chance to win prizes and help Newfoundland bring home the trophy!

- June 21 @ 7:30 pm Kickoff webinar
- June 23—25 Go Atlassing!
- June 28 @ 7:30 pm Awards ceremony webinar

Go atlassing from **June 23 @ 7:30pm to June 25 @ midnight**. See [facebook event](#) for more details.

Check out the new Species at Risk profiles [here](#)

You'll find a 2-page document for each at risk bird species in Newfoundland with information on identification, nesting behaviour, habitat needs, and more. **YOU can help document these important species in the Atlas.**

Species in Focus: Short-eared Owl

If you're wandering along, exploring a flat, open area with long grasses or short vegetation, you may wonder what kind of bird you would even see there! But you're in luck, this is the perfect place to stumble upon a Short-eared Owl. And even better, they are active during the day, so you might be lucky enough to see them hunting for their small mammalian prey. Be aware though: these owls have incredible camouflage for the ground that they sit upon, and are often silent except when defending their territories.

Short-eared Owls are listed as Vulnerable in Newfoundland, and Threatened in Canada. They're negatively affected by loss and changes to their habitat, which can result in less suitable breeding locations, and less prey to eat. One of the best ways that you can help this species in Newfoundland is to report any that you see to the Atlas! They are a distinctive bird, with a typical owl shaped face, dark smudges around the eyes, a short tail, and rounded wings. They could be confused with Northern Harriers which use the same habitat, but Short-eared Owls lack a white patch on the rump, have a much shorter tail, and have dark wingtips and "wrist" patches.



Short-eared Owl.
Breeding evidence: H (Habitat)
Photo: Scott Leslie



Short-eared Owl. Breeding evidence: H (Habitat)
Photo: Brendan Kelly

Fall Photo Breeding Evidence Draw

In fall 2022, many volunteers participated in a photo draw; submitting photos of Newfoundland birds displaying breeding evidence for a chance to win a beautiful prize! Here are some of the submissions. Enjoy!



Magnolia Warbler.
Breeding evidence: H.
Photo: Sheila Craig



Black-capped Chickadees.
Breeding evidence: NY.
Photo: Robin Pritchard



The Prize!
A beautiful print by Julie McIlquham at Wag the Dog Art.



Atlantic Puffins.
Breeding evidence: P.
Photo: Paul Drajem



Greater Yellowlegs.
Breeding evidence: D.
Photo: Vernon Buckle



Dark-eyed Junco.
Breeding evidence: CF.
Photo: Jill Tucker



Merlins.
Breeding evidence: D.
Photo: Cynthia Mercer



Semipalmated Plover.
Breeding evidence: DD.
Photo: Gene Herzberg



Hairy Woodpecker.
Breeding evidence: N.
Photo: Denise McIsaac (our grand winner!)

Fall Photo Breeding Evidence Draw, continued!



Spruce Grouse. Breeding evidence: FY.

Photo: Kurt Hennige



Black Scoters. Breeding evidence: P.

Photo: Cody Power



Arctic Tern.

Breeding evidence: FY.

Photo: Tina Randell



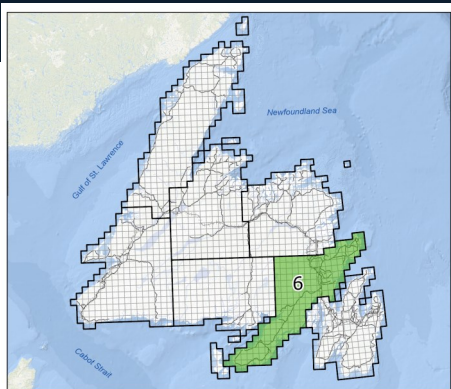
Red-breasted Nuthatch. Breeding evidence: FY.

Photo: Kathy Marche



American Robins. Breeding evidence: D.

Photo: Deanna Strickland



Region Highlight

Region 6: Bonavista-Placentia West

From much-loved puffin colonies near Bonavista, down to the Burin Peninsula, and everything in between, including the wilds of the Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve, Region 6 has it all! And there's still plenty of squares left to Atlas, so if you're looking to explore a new part of Newfoundland this summer, consider this area. Doug Clarke and Alvan Buckley are now the Regional coordinators for Region 6!

Some numbers:

- 185 total squares (70 priority squares)
- 253 hours spent atlassing
- 30 point counts completed
- 100 species recorded
- 34 participants registered



Coastline near Elliston, Region 6. Look for Horned Larks and American Pipits in habitat like this.

Photo: Darrian Washinger

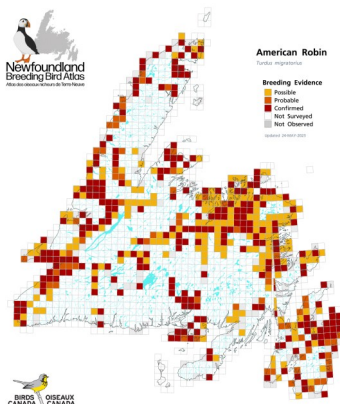
Announcements

Important Dates

- If you are doing point counts, remember they must be done between **June 7 and July 7**. General atlassing can be done any time there is breeding behaviour associated with species.
- Big Atlas Weekend 2023 is a great opportunity to interact with other atlassers across the continent. Don't miss out! Events are running from June 21— June 28.

Spring and Summer Bird Walks

This summer, Atlas staff and field team will be offering guided bird walks in various locations across the island. Keep an eye on our Facebook page or the Upcoming Events page of our website to stay in the loop. We hope to see many of you this summer.



Check out individual Species Maps

Take a look at the [species maps](#) which are available on NatureCounts now to see the distribution of where each species has been found so far. Don't be alarmed if a record you submitted hasn't shown up yet, it's likely still in data review and will appear soon. Take a look at the common species like American Robin (shown to the left) and notice all the places on Newfoundland they haven't been documented yet. Consider filling some coverage gaps to improve the maps for our common species!

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



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 the Atlas Office: nlatlas@birdscanada.org.

Partners & Supporters

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