



Newfoundland Breeding Bird Atlas

Atlas des oiseaux nicheurs de Terre-Neuve

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2026

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Atlas Update

They say time flies when you're having fun...which might explain where the past 6 years have gone! Somehow, it's already February 2026 and we've made it to the end of data collection for the NL Breeding Bird Atlas.

Here at the Atlas Office, we have been absolutely blown away by the unbelievable amount of information collected for this project. When we first launched the Newfoundland Atlas in 2020, we never imagined we would achieve this level of coverage.

As of February 2026, Atlas volunteers and staff have collected bird data in an astounding 869 squares (nearly 60% of the total 1,485 squares on the island). Over 18,000 checklists have been submitted to the project, which contain records of 193 species, and volunteers and staff members between them have conducted almost 5,900 point counts. These numbers will continue to increase for the next few months as data from acoustic recordings (i.e., Zoom recorders and Autonomous Recording Units) is integrated into our NatureCounts database.

We'd like to extend a huge THANK YOU to everyone who put time and effort into this project – we could not have done it without you! Over the past 6 years, 172 participants have submitted data to Newfoundland Atlas – and while most of our volunteers were from NL, we also received data submitted by visitors from virtually every other Canadian province and several US states. Together, volunteers and staff members carried out an unbelievable 14,832 hours of bird surveys. I hope each and every one of you is proud of your contribution to this amazing feat.

And although this phase of the Atlas is complete, it's not over – there's still more to come. To learn more about what's next for the Atlas and how you can continue to contribute, check out page 4. And to find out about other programs Birds Canada will continue to offer here in Newfoundland and Labrador, look at pages 5-6.

Progress To Date:

Checklists: 18,371

Registered volunteers: 357

Squares with data: 869

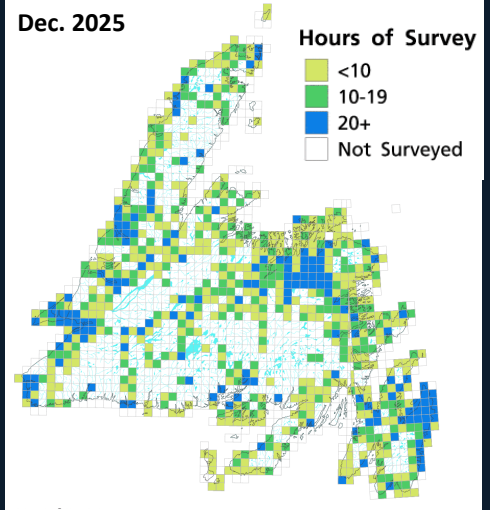
Records: 168,684

Number of species: 193

Hours of atlassing: 14,832

Point counts: 5,823

Current as of 4 February 2026



A publication of



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American Restart female on the nest.
Breeding evidence: AE (adult entering)
Photo: Courtney Cameron



Yellow-rumped Warbler.
Breeding Evidence: CF (carrying food)
Photo: Courtney Cameron



Willet chick exploring the beach.
Breeding evidence: FY (fledged young)
Photo: Delphine Ward



Brown Creeper. Breeding evidence: H (in habitat)
Photo: Kathy Marche

Remembering Lois Bateman

Newfoundland Atlas staff and volunteers were saddened to learn of the passing of Region 2 Coordinator Lois Bateman in late December 2025. Lois' contribution to the Atlas went above and beyond. She was familiar with every square her region and always happy to brainstorm ways to get them covered. Her organization, determination, and sharp mind were an invaluable asset to the Atlas and to Birds Canada's other volunteer programs, and made working with her a pleasure.

We wanted to take the opportunity to pay homage to Lois' kindness, generosity, and indomitable spirit. The following tribute was prepared by Julia Briffett, one of Lois' co-coordinators for Region 2, and Marie Iams, her best friend.

Lois grew up in the farming community of Shediac Cape, New Brunswick, where she developed a life-long interest in the natural environment. Following high school, she attended Dalhousie University, graduating with an honours degree in Science. She then spent several years teaching in Tobago, W.I. as a volunteer with CUSO before moving to St. John's, where she earned a Master's Degree in Biology from Memorial University. In 1975, Lois became one of the first faculty members of the new Grenfell Campus in Corner Brook. From that time until she retired in 2011, she mentored hundreds of students and played a pivotal role in establishing the Environmental Science Program.

Early in her career, Lois began her involvement in community life. She served on many boards and committees, including Ecowatch, Model Forest, the Pine Marten Recovery Team, ACAP-Humber Arm, Nature Canada, and the Atlantic Provinces Council on the Sciences. She also served for several years on the Local Service District Committee of Little Rapids where she lived, and with the Pasadena Ski Club. Lois led the effort to establish the Humber Natural History Society, and served many of the years from 1988 to 2025 as its president. She coordinated the Corner Brook Christmas Bird Count, led countless field trips, did Breeding Bird and Owl Surveys, and was a co-coordinator for the Western Region of Newfoundland's first Breeding Bird Atlas.

More than anything else, Lois was a born educator, who touched the lives of generations of students, as well as many community members participating in natural history events. One such participant noted: "Lois influenced my interest in the field of natural history, which I cherish because of her." A former student, now a scientist, commented: "I attribute so much of where I am today to Lois. She encouraged, guided and provided moral support during my university days and via e-mails that followed in the years after. She made me want to be a better naturalist and environmentalist. She will continue to inspire me going forward."

Lois was devoted to her extended family and her home community of Shediac Cape, and was a loyal friend to many who will always remember her generosity and quiet kindness. She will be missed.

The success of Newfoundland's first Breeding Bird Atlas is due in no small part to Lois' hard work and dedication. She will indeed be much missed by Birds Canada staff, Atlas volunteers, and the many amateur naturalists she encouraged across NL and beyond.



A lifelong naturalist: Lois compiling bird survey data.

Photo: Lori Bateman



Right up until her final days, Lois was an active volunteer in many projects.

Photo: Lori Bateman

Atlas: Next Steps

Publication

Now that the data collection phase has been wrapped up, the Atlas Office is looking towards the publication of the Newfoundland Atlas! This will be an online book, and include species accounts, maps of breeding evidence, relative abundance, and probability of observation, beautiful photographs, and more. Right now, the Regional Coordinators are doing an amazing job continuing to review records that were flagged for various reasons to ensure the quality of data going into the end product.

The Atlas needs your photos!

We know there are many talented bird photographers out there. What better way to support the Atlas than to contribute and potentially see your images featured and credited in the final published materials? The Atlas is looking for good quality photos of all Newfoundland breeding birds, preferably taken in Newfoundland during the breeding season (and in breeding habitat wherever possible). We're also interested in photos that depict elevated breeding evidence (e.g. courtship displays, nests, young, birds carrying food/nesting material, etc.).

Please submit the highest resolution, non-watermarked versions of your images possible by using a file sharing platform (e.g. Google Drive, OneDrive, Flickr, DropBox, Google Photos, WeTransfer, etc.) and emailing the link to Jenna (jmcdermott@birdscanada.org). You can attach photos in email as well, but will likely run into size limits. Please do not send photos via Facebook, as the quality deteriorates significantly. If you want to send in photos but are struggling with how to do so, please reach out. Thanks to everyone who has submitted images already!



Spruce Grouse chick. Breeding evidence: FY.

Photo: Elliott Naef



Arctic Tern chick.

Breeding evidence: FY.

Photo: Tina Randell

Keep supporting the Atlas

The Atlas team sincerely appreciates the volunteer support for the project. If you would like to consider helping even more, please make a donation or recruit others to make a donation in support of the project. You can Sponsor a Species and get your name (or someone else's—just email us after you've made the donation) in the species page of the final publication at [this secure link](#), or make a general donation to the Newfoundland Atlas [here](#). You will receive a charitable receipt for income tax purposes from Birds Canada, along with an extra warm feeling inside, knowing you're supporting the project even more. For those that are able to, we thank you for considering this!

Continuing Programs in NL

Data collection for the Atlas may be over, but there's still lots to learn about the bird populations of Newfoundland and Labrador. Birds Canada has a variety of long-term citizen science programs that will be continuing over the coming years. If you find yourself suffering from atlas withdrawal, consider signing up to collect bird data for one (or more) of the programs below!



NEW: MarshWatch — NL edition

This winter, we will be rolling out a program that's brand new to our province: MarshWatch, NL edition. Beat the winter blues by joining us for an 8-week webinar series focused on exploring the beauty and importance of wetlands. We will teach you how to identify the common bird species found in the marshes, bogs, and swamps of Newfoundland and Labrador, and expand our learning to cover amphibians and key wetland plants. These hour-long webinars will be beginner-friendly but suitable to all skill levels. Webinars will take place on Monday evenings at 7:30 pm (NST), starting Monday, February 2nd and running through to Monday, March 30th. MarshWatch webinars are free but registration is required. You can register to join the fun [here](#). We hope you join us!

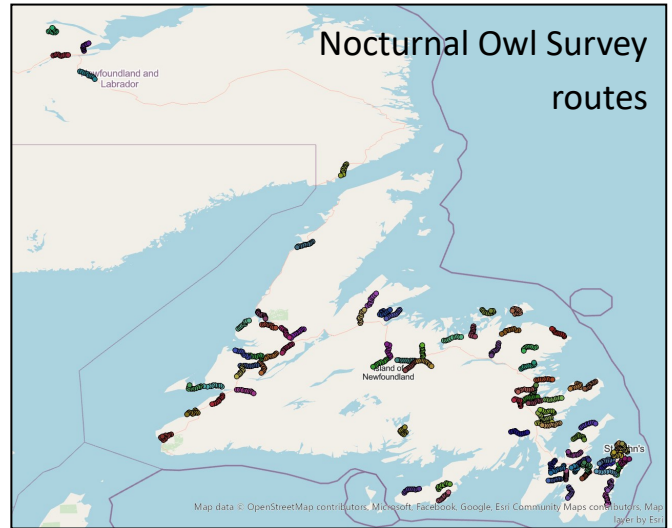
Nocturnal Owl Survey

There's nothing better than hearing the haunting calls of an owl on a crisp, moonlit spring night in the forests of NL! The NL Nocturnal Owl Survey started in 2018 and has grown exponentially over the last 5 years, with routes now located throughout Newfoundland, and a few in Labrador.

Taking part in this beginner-friendly survey is easy! To participate, sign up for a 10-stop survey route near you. Then on one evening between 1 April and 15 May, drive your route, stopping at each point to play owl calls and listen for responses.

If there's no survey route near you, no worries – we may be able to create one. We are always looking to expand the coverage of the Nocturnal Owl Survey and are happy to work with you to create new routes. All we need is roughly 20 km of road in forested habitat.

To learn more about the NL Nocturnal Owl Survey, visit our website (<https://nocturnalowlsurvey-nl.weebly.com/>), where you will find plenty of information about the survey as well as resources for learning to recognize the owls of Newfoundland and Labrador. To sign up to participate, register through our NatureCounts site: <https://naturecounts.ca/nc/atowls/main.jsp>.



Continuing Programs in NL



Short-eared Owl in Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve.

Breeding evidence: H.

Photo: Jared Clarke

NL Short-eared Owl Survey

Short-eared Owls are among our most charismatic birds in NL. They are found in wide-open habitats, including bogs and coastal barrens, and can be recognized by their slow, almost floppy flight and striking black-rimmed yellow eyes. These beautiful birds are designated as Threatened under the Newfoundland and Labrador Endangered Species Act. Reasons for their declining population include habitat loss and degradation, some of which arises from climate change, as well as human disturbance, competition and food availability, and predation.

With our brand-new Short-eared Owl survey, first launched in 2025, we are leveraging the immense power of citizen science to help monitor NL's population of Short-eared Owls.

Similar to the Nocturnal Owl Survey, the Short-eared Owl survey involves driving a route of 8 to 10 stops to search for owls. Routes should be surveyed once in the early spring (1 April to 15 May) and once in the summer (15 June to 31 July). Ideally one volunteer would survey the same route in both spring and summer; however, if you can only commit to one survey window, we would still appreciate your help!

To learn more about the NL Short-eared Owl survey and register to participate, visit our NatureCounts site: <https://naturecounts.ca/nc/nlseow/main.jsp>.

Canadian Lakes Loon Survey

Canadian Lakes Loon Survey participants have worked since 1981 to track Common Loon breeding by monitoring chick hatch and survival. Participants dedicate at least three days, visiting their lake once in June (to see if loon pairs are on territory), once in July (to see if chicks hatch), and once in August (to see if chicks survive long enough to fledge). Visit <https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/canadian-lakes-loon-survey>

for more information.



Species in Focus: Rusty Blackbird



Rusty Blackbird in breeding plumage (above), and “rusty” non-breeding plumage (below).

Photos: Jenna McDermott



Have you ever been near a wetland or shallow pond and heard what sounds like a rusty gate squeaking open? Though not the case across many other areas of North America, in Newfoundland we are lucky that the most likely animal making this sound is the Rusty Blackbird. The Common Grackle is the only other species you would likely confuse the Rusty Blackbird with in Newfoundland, and the grackle is far less common.

The Rusty Blackbird is designated as Vulnerable in Newfoundland and as Special Concern in Canada, however if you are in an area with a wetland or pond surrounded by conifer forest, there is a good chance you will find a Rusty Blackbird in Newfoundland. These birds forage on the ground along the edges of waterbodies, looking for aquatic insects to eat and bring back to their young. They nest in forest stands nearby, and are quite vocal.

The sound of the rusty gate that this species makes is not the only reason that Rusty Blackbirds get their name—they also look very different during the summer breeding months compared to the winter non-breeding months. During breeding, adult Rusty Blackbirds are a glossy black all over, with a bright white eye, but during non-breeding, they are a rusty brown colour (see photo at to the left). They remain in pairs during summer but can congregate into large flocks with other blackbirds during migration and winter.

Read more about Rusty Blackbirds and Newfoundland’s other species at risk [here](#).

Partners & Supporters

