
Winter Bulletin

March 2010

The birds are already breeding!



Bald Eagle by John Chardine

You may roll your eyes when I say that the breeding season is fast approaching, but I'm not kidding...for some birds the breeding season is already here! That's the reason for this late winter bulletin. I'm hoping to convince you that for this, our last year of the Atlas, **NOW** is the time to find those late winter and early spring breeders like crossbills, owls, ducks, raptors and woodpeckers. A recent analysis of Atlas data collected thus far has shown that we are ahead of the first Atlas in terms of the number of squares covered, but are behind in the number of species detected per square. Plus, while we've detected a fair number of summer breeders like sparrows, warblers and thrushes, we are missing early breeding species. On the reverse side of this newsletter there's a table detailing the timing of breeding for late winter and early spring breeders. Timing will vary by region (e.g., birds breed earlier in southern NS relative to NB and Cape Breton), but the table should give you an idea of what to look for and when to start. If you aren't sure whether an observation is too early to count as breeding, don't hesitate to contact the Atlas office or your RC. And, don't forget, the next time you strap on your snowshoes or cross-country skis, check which square you're in and take note of those crossbills singing overhead!

~ Becky Stewart, Atlas Coordinator

Organize an early breeder Atlas Blitz!

Why not organize a one-day atlas blitz for all or part of your region? It's easy. Approach it as you would a Christmas Bird Count: pick a day, choose squares/areas/trails to cover and assign participants to areas where they are needed. You can even end the day with an evening tally-up. If you want help planning your blitz, please contact the Atlas office.

Finishing the job – priorities for 2010

Just some things to think about as you plan your final atlas season...

Minimum of 20 hours and/or 95% of expected species in all priority squares. While we have done a great job of getting broad coverage across the Maritimes, we are missing some key data that will make our efforts comparable to the first Atlas. Thirty-five percent of priority squares still lack the full 20 hours of survey effort.

Target missing guilds and habitats in priority squares. Several squares with 5 to 10 hours have 60 to 70 species but are missing species that seem to have suitable breeding habitat in the square and/or that were detected in the square during the first Atlas (e.g., marshbirds). While this may represent a real change in species numbers over the past 20 years, it may also happen because the square was only visited once during the point count period. Thus while several species of warbler have been detected, other "basics" -- like Common Raven, Red-tailed Hawk, American Black Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Sora, etc. -- are missing and need more targeted search.

Make abundance estimates where we can. While almost half the bird records in the first Atlas had an abundance estimate, we only have abundance estimates for 5 to 10% of records, which may make comparisons between atlas periods difficult.

Species	March			April			May			Habitat	Nest-type				
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1				2	3	4
CROSSBILLS															
Red Crossbill													coniferous	cup	
White-winged Crossbill													coniferous	cup	
OWLS															
Great Horned Owl													mixed forest	cavity/stick nest ¹	
Barred Owl													mixed forest	cavity	
Northern Saw-whet Owl													mixed forest	cavity	
Long-eared Owl													mixed forest	stick nest ¹	
Boreal Owl													coniferous	cavity	
Northern Hawk Owl													coniferous	cavity	
Eastern Screech-owl													mixed forest	cavity	
HAWKS															
Bald Eagle													fresh/salt water	stick nest	
Red-tailed Hawk													mixed forest	stick nest	
Northern Goshawk													mixed forest	stick nest	
Red-shouldered Hawk													deciduous	stick nest	
Cooper's Hawk													deciduous	stick nest	
Osprey													fresh/salt water	stick nest	
American Kestrel													open areas	cavity	
Northern Harrier													open areas	stick nest	
Merlin													mixed forest	stick nest/cavity	
Peregrine Falcon													cliffs	scrape	
Sharp-shinned Hawk													mixed forest	stick nest	
Broad-winged Hawk													deciduous	stick nest	
DUCKS															
Common Goldeneye													freshwater	cavity	
Hooded Merganser													freshwater	cavity	
Common Merganser													freshwater	cavity	
Wood Duck													freshwater	cavity	
American Black Duck													freshwater	ground	
Mallard													freshwater	ground	
Common Eider													marine coast	ground	
Northern Pintail													fresh/saltwater	ground	
Green-winged teal													freshwater	ground	
Ring-necked Duck													freshwater	ground	
Harlequin Duck													forest streams	ground	
American Wigeon													freshwater	ground	
Blue-winged Teal													freshwater	ground	
Northern Shoveler													freshwater	ground	
Red-breasted Merganser													salt/freshwater	ground	
WOODPECKERS															
Pileated Woodpecker													mixed forest	cavity	
Hairy Woodpecker													mixed forest	cavity	
Downy Woodpecker													deciduous	cavity	
Northern Flicker													mixed forest	cavity	
Am. Three-toed Woodpecker													coniferous	cavity	
Black-backed Woodpecker													coniferous	cavity	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker													mixed forest	cavity	
DUSK															
American Woodcock													mixed forest	ground	
Short-eared Owl													open upland	ground	
Wilson's Snipe													freshwater	ground	

Red Crossbill - Kevin Kelly

Great Horned Owl - Denis Doucet

Sharp-shinned Hawk - John Chardine

Green-winged Teal; American Wigeon - John Chardine

Black-backed Woodpecker - Samuel Denault

American Woodcock - Denis Doucet

¹ Does not construct its own nests but will use stick nests built by other species

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