

### Two years down, three to go!

By Ivy Austin

With the second year of data collection complete, it's time to take a first look at our early results. Keep in mind that these results are quite preliminary-- there is still a lot of 2007 data to be entered and of course, three more years of data to be collected. As of today, 698 participants are registered for the Atlas—that's almost 200 more participants than were registered at this same time last year. As I am writing this, data have already been entered for 1,212 squares (that's double the number of squares that were visited last year), 215 species have been recorded and a whopping 2,848 point counts are complete. In addition, a lot of "new" species, not previously recorded during the first Maritimes Atlas, have been added to the Atlas list, including: Yellow-throated Vireo (found in all three Maritimes provinces), Yellow-headed Blackbird and a lone Le Conte's sparrow that spent his summer singing near Sussex, NB.



Turkey Vulture chick, photo by Scott Makepeace

Even more exciting, from the online maps, we are beginning to detect some real distributional differences between the first and second atlas. During the first atlas, Turkey Vultures were recorded as possible breeders in 7 squares. This year alone, three Turkey Vulture nests were found and possible breeders were detected in several more squares. Similarly, Northern Cardinals have already been recorded in 41 squares (confirmed in 14 of those squares) during this second Atlas—they were detected in 18 squares during the first Atlas. Lastly, Palm Warblers, which breed in bogs and areas with "young forest", were primarily found in NS during the first Atlas and none were detected in Northwestern NB. This time around, Palm Warblers have already been observed in a large proportion of northwestern NB squares. This change in distribution may reflect the recent changes in forest stand composition in the northwest.

*Continued on page 2...*

In this Issue	Page
Great Blue Herons – "X" marks the spot on PEI.....	2
Identifying used nests .....	3
Getting the most out of the Website .....	4
Tips on finding the elusive Long-eared Owl ( <i>Asio otus</i> ).....	6
Quick Tips and Frequently Asked Questions.....	7
Estimating abundance .....	8
Moose Island atlassing trip .....	10
How Diane Griffin Completed her Kensington Square 20MS54.....	11



These stories are just the beginning and there are many more to come, most of which won't be revealed until the end of the five-year period when all the data is in. However, it is readily apparent that the data you are collecting is going to provide important information on breeding bird distribution throughout the Maritimes and will help set conservation priorities for birds and bird habitats.

Thank-you to all who contributed this year's data collection! The amount of work, time and dedication that you have given to this project is absolutely phenomenal.

## Great Blue Herons – “X” marks the spot on PEI

*By John Chardine and Rosemary Curley*

In the Maritimes, Great Blue Herons (GBHE) usually nest colonially, in trees. Colonies are situated within commuting distance of feeding areas and are chosen so as to be difficult to reach by mammalian predators. Many heron colonies in the Maritimes are near or on salt water; this is particularly true on PEI. There, the locations of most GBHE colonies are well known and appear to be restricted to islands. However, historically, there were inland GBHE colonies on PEI, and therefore it is not impossible that an inland breeding colony might be found again. In contrast, in NS and NB, herons nest colonially, and sometimes singly, both on islands and inland in forested areas. We suspect that many scattered, small colonies remain undiscovered. Over the course of field work for this atlas, we hope that the whereabouts of new colonies will be documented.

Because GBHE's nesting strategies vary between provinces, how we apply our breeding evidence codes to GBHE sightings

will also vary depending on where this species is detected. In NS or NB, a GBHE seen in a woodland area, away from known colonies, may indicate a colony within that atlas square, and recording the detection as “H” (“species observed during its breeding season in suitable nesting habitat”) is appropriate. However, as some herons have to fly long distances between nesting and feeding areas (up to 30 km), we strongly urge you to try to confirm breeding by discovering the nest or colony. On PEI, we suspect that most colony locations are known and GBHE have not been recorded nesting singly, so “X” is a more appropriate code than “H” for an individual sighting away from a breeding colony. However, if an atlaser feels a breeding location is present, then every effort should be made to confirm breeding by finding the nest or colony or to compile other documentation that leads them to believe that breeding is possible or probable.



Great Blue Heron, photo by Ron Ridout

In summary, we suggest that for GBHE breeding evidence code H should not be used on PEI, but is appropriate for NS and NB. As for using other breeding codes, some “Probable” codes are inappropriate (e.g., code T) or rarely used for colonial nesters such as herons. Herons don't sing (S) and pairs (P) are rarely if ever seen together away from the nest. Courtship displays



including copulation (D) are, for the most part, performed at or near the nest.

## Identifying used nests

*By Ivy Austin*

Now that the birds are done raising their broods and the leaves are beginning to fall, many used nests are visible. Why is this important? Because a used nest, code NU, is confirmed breeding evidence. This is one of the trickiest types of breeding evidence to detect and should only be used when the observer is absolutely certain of the nest's identity. Many nests are hard to associate with one particular species. That said, some nests are easier to identify than others.

How can you tell if a nest was used during the recent breeding season? In the case of songbirds, the weight of adults perching on the nest's rim while tending to eggs and nestlings usually causes the rim to "flatten" and the sides of the nest may appear "scrunched" or uneven. The plants surrounding the nest may be splattered with whitewash from birds travelling to and from the nest. Other signs of a recently occupied nest include feathers or bits of egg shell. In the case of raptor nests, look for "whitewash" on the ground below the nest because raptor nestlings literally "shoot" their excrement out of the nest. But how can one tell if the nest is from the most recent breeding season or from breeding seasons past (i.e., can not be recorded as breeding evidence)? For the majority of songbird species, a nest will not last through the winter or if it does it will have a very "weathered" appearance. During the winter most nests will collapse in on themselves thus no longer retaining their symmetrical shape. If you are unsure, look closely for other signs that indicate the nest was recently occupied, particularly those that wouldn't last through the winter months

(e.g., whitewash, fecal sacs). Raptors will often reuse nests from year to year, so make a note of the nest location and come back to check for activity in the spring.

One of the easiest nests to identify is a Ruby-throated Hummingbird nest. The nest's relatively small size distinguishes it from other species. The inside diameter of a hummingbird nest is approximately 3 cm with a height of 4 cm (a typical Yellow or Chestnut-sided warbler nest is double that size). The nest is a neat cup built with small plant down (like thistle or dandelion), decorated with bits of lichen and held together with spider webs. Nests are usually built in the fork of a branch or on a downward sloping twig. Nest height ranges from 1.5 to 15 m above ground or over water.



**American Robin nest, photo by Becky Stewart**

The American Robin's nest is another easily identified nest and is one with which many may already be familiar. The robin's nest is a bulky, untidy cup made from grass, weeds and twigs, packed together with mud and lined with grass. Their nests can be found almost anywhere but are usually located in a tree or shrub. Robins can raise up to three broods in a single year and will often reuse the same nest. Robins are one of the few songbirds with a sturdy-enough nests to survive a Maritimes winter and robins will



often reuse a nest the following year. Examine the tidiness of the inner cup to give you an indication of when the nest was constructed. If the inside cup is just plain messy then it may be last year's nest or may have been depredated. Nest heights range between 3 to 10 m.

The Mourning Dove's nest is a platform of loose sticks and twigs, sometimes lined with finer twigs. Their nests are so loosely constructed that you can occasionally see right through the bottom of the nest. Mourning Doves can raise three or more broods in a single year. The best time to look for Mourning Dove nests is after the breeding season because, when disturbed, this species has a tendency to abandon the nest, even if it contains eggs or nestlings. Nests are usually found 5 to 25 feet from the ground, in a tree or in shrub.



**Mourning Dove nest, photo by Anne Marsch**

The Eastern Kingbird usually nests near the end of a horizontal branch of a tree. Near a field or orchard, they prefer apple trees, but near a stream or water body, they nest in trees or shrubs along the bank. If there are no trees available, Kingbirds will use a post or a stump as a nest site. The nest is a deep, messy cup with loose materials on the outside (particularly Old Man's Beard), and lined with fine grass, rootlets and hair. Nest

height varies from 1 to 20 m, but usually it's low.



**Eastern Kingbird nest, photo by Becky Whittam**

Although few Baltimore Orioles breed in the Maritimes, it is worth keeping an eye open for an oriole nest. Their "pendulum"-shaped nests are distinctive (a deep pouch woven from various grasses and other plant fibres) and are usually placed in forks at the end of tree branches. In the Maritimes, orioles show a particular affinity for elm trees. Although nests are typically found at heights of 8 to 10 m, they can be placed anywhere from 2 to 30 m above the ground.

If you're interested in learning more about bird's nests, eggs and nestlings, there's a great book on the subject [Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds](#) by Paul J. Baicich and Colin J. O. Harrison. Good luck with nest searching!

## **Getting the most out of the Website**

*By Becky Stewart*

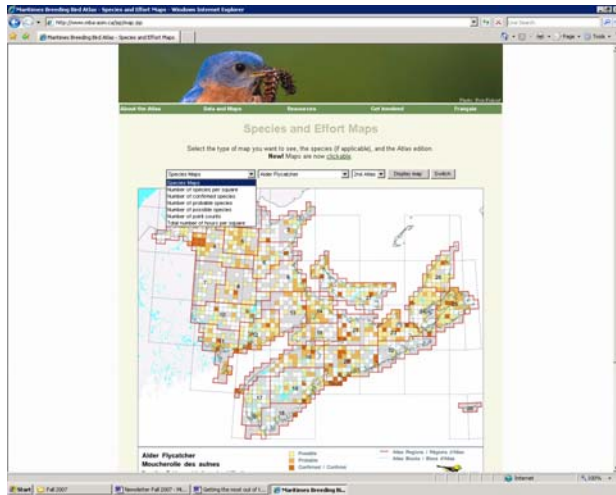
The Atlas website is meant to be a resource for atlasers. Going online is absolutely not a requirement and all data can be submitted on paper forms. However, for those of you who like tracking your progress and entering



data online, the website is ideal and there may be some online resources that you have not yet discovered. Hopefully this article will help you get the most out of this resource.

### *Data Entry Questions*

Although not available in the *Guide for Atlasers*, all the instructions you need for entering data and accessing your personal information (e.g., to change your address) are available online. Instructions for online data entry, as well as frequently asked data entry questions, are available under the “Resources” drop-down menu on the Atlas homepage (you can also type in the web address directly <http://www.mba-aom.ca/english/instructions.html> ). These instructions walk you through the online data entry process from logging in to completing breeding evidence forms.



### *“Clickable” maps*

The “clickable” maps are accessible from the Atlas homepage either by clicking on the large map icon or by selecting “Bird Maps” from the “Data and Maps” drop-down menu (web address <http://www.mba-aom.ca/jsp/map.jsp>). Once on the “Bird Maps” page you can choose to see a summary map for all species or, you can look at an individual species map by making

a selection from the two drop-down menus below the main menu. Don’t forget to hit the “Display map” button after you have made your selection. You can use the “Switch” button to compare results between the first and second Atlas.

Once your map is displayed, each individual square is “clickable”. Clicking on a square will generate an up-to-the-minute data summary of which species have been recorded in that square. As well, if you scroll to the bottom of the map, there are several other types of summaries that you can choose to generate, including square summary sheets and lists of completed point counts.

### *Square Summary Sheets*

Square Summary sheets help you track your progress in your square and to compare the current results with those from the first Atlas. They can be reached by going to the “Data and Maps” drop-down menu, from the clickable maps or by going directly to <http://www.mba-aom.ca/jsp/squareinfo.jsp?lang=en>.

On the summary sheets, species are listed in a table format along with the highest breeding evidence code obtained for that species thus far during the second atlas and the level of breeding evidence detected during the first Atlas. Species that were previously detected in your square during the first Atlas but not yet recorded in your square during the current Atlas are underlined (giving you an idea to focus on for the coming year). From the table you can also see the percentage of squares in your region where each species has been reported for both the first and second Atlas.

**Don’t hesitate to contact us at the Atlas office with any questions about online data entry or any other online tool!**



## Tips on finding the elusive Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*)

By Bernard Forsythe

This medium sized owl, being both rare and nocturnal, is seldom encountered, only flying during daylight if disturbed. It preys on small mammals found in coniferous and mixed species woodlands but will hunt in open fields if a small mixed growth wooded area is nearby for roosting and nesting. The Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) is a favoured food. Long-eared Owls will follow the cycles of this rodent of open fields, only staying in the area during the years voles are at their highest numbers. As vole numbers decrease, the owls move on to find another site where the vole cycle is on the upswing. In a location where vole numbers are high, winter and spring is the best time to look for Long-eared Owls. Finding a winter roost could lead to breeding evidence in the spring.

Long-eared Owls roost close to the trunk in thick conifers or in dense thickets that one would not usually try to walk through. Sometimes up to a dozen owls will be found at a roost. Bits of soft feathers will often be seen clinging to branches where the owls fly through thick cover. Whitewash and pellets also accumulate around a roost. Investigating a mobbing flock of small birds will also help locate owls. When an intruder approaches, Long-eared Owls draw their bodies up vertically and compress body feathers giving themselves a stump-like appearance. Usually ear-tufts are held close together. The face is tawny-orange and the underside has a checkered look, quite unlike the barring of the underside of the much larger Great Horned Owl.

Breeding begins in late winter. Courting calls after dark consist of a series of single low, soft “hoos”, almost dove-like. They do

not build their own nest. Egg-laying begins in early April in old nests of crows or hawks. Crows usually nest near the edge of woodlands, next to clearings, and also along treed fencerows or small wooded areas around open fields. A good idea is to make a note of old crow nest locations so they can be later checked if Long-eared Owls are detected nearby. Viewed from the ground with binoculars, a pair of ear-tufts can often be seen above a nest occupied by Long-eared Owls. Look too for feather fluff on nearby branches, lost from adults flying to and from the nest. The young leave the nest in late May. After fledging, the young sometimes will be spotted until they learn how to take advantage of dense cover. If the adults become alarmed at a nest, they often fake injury, giving a long series of squeals, barks, moans, etc., and sometimes will flop around on the ground as if mortally wounded.



Long-eared owl, photo by Denis Doucet

In a year with lots of available food, Long-eared Owls may stay in a small stand with only a few trees, sometimes even next to houses. If owls are detected at such a site



and there are no old nests present, a man-made nest site is worth a try. I have been fortunate in having two of my nest platforms occupied by Long-eared Owls. To make a Long-eared Owl nest, fasten chicken wire between two opposite branches, about 6m above the ground. Let the chicken wire sag between the branches like a basket—the “basket” should be about the size of a crow’s nest. Then, fill in the basket with a thick mat of dead grass, twigs, dead leaves, lots of moss, etc., making sure there are no holes in the lining for an egg to drop into.

Shy Long-eared Owls do not like to be approached by humans. Any roost or nest site found should not be disturbed, to allow this beneficial owl to help control rodent numbers. A visit to record breeding evidence should be very brief.

## Quick Tips and Frequently Asked Questions

By Becky Stewart

### *“1<sup>st</sup> Visit” Column on the Breeding Evidence Form*

In this column, record the 1<sup>st</sup> visit when you observed breeding evidence for that species. Once recorded, the “1<sup>st</sup> visit” number doesn’t change. For example, if on my 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to my square I hear a Yellow Warbler singing, I would record “03” in the 1<sup>st</sup> visit column. If on my 5<sup>th</sup> visit I see another Yellow Warbler, this time carrying nesting material, I would leave “03” in the 1<sup>st</sup> visit column but change the breeding evidence from “S” to “NB”.

If a bird is observed casually, i.e., not during active atlassing, record “00” in the 1<sup>st</sup> visit column. If you later encounter this species during a regular atlassing visit to the square, change the “00” to the appropriate visit number. Similarly, if a species is observed but no breeding evidence is detected (“X”),

record “00” in the 1<sup>st</sup> visit column until a visit when breeding evidence is detected.



Yellow Warbler, photo by Christopher Clunas

*How do I fill out the rare bird and casual observation forms without a GPS?*

When filling out a Rare/Colonial Species form online, the system demands that you provide a UTM location for the detection and won’t let you continue until this section of the form has been filled out. Don’t worry if you don’t have the UTM location for your sighting. There are two ways to deal with this situation: 1) determine the UTM coordinates directly from the square’s topographic map (described on page 12-13 of the Guide for Atlassers) or, 2) enter “0” for both the Easting and Northing coordinates, then use the site description section of the form to detail where you made your observation. We encourage atlassers to determine the UTM coordinates whenever possible (but don’t let this become a source of stress). The same rules apply when filling out Casual Observation forms and as long as you have recorded the square in which the species was detected, the data will be accepted.



### *Casual observation card vs. breeding evidence form*

Everything you see or hear during the breeding season can be entered into the atlas database, whether you are in your square(s) or not. But the question is: "When should I use a Casual Observation Form and when should I use a Breeding Evidence Form?" The bottom line is that you should use whichever form reduces your workload. So if you are travelling through a square one time and you see a species carrying food, your best option would be to record that observation on a casual form. However, if you are recording multiple casual observations for a single square (say as you are travelling to work everyday) then it is probably easier to record all of your observations on one breeding evidence form. If you choose the latter, simply enter "00" in the 1<sup>st</sup> visit column to indicate that the observation was casual and not made during a formal visit to that square.

For those entering their data online, when you submit data as a Casual Observation, the system automatically generates a Breeding Evidence Form for you so that the next time you make an observation in that square (if there is a next time), you can enter your observation onto that same form.

### **Estimating abundance**

*By Andrew Horn*

It's a little-known fact that there are as many Bald Eagles nesting around Bras D'Or as there are Yellow-rumped Warblers. Of course, it's a little-known fact because, well, it's wrong. But that's the impression you'd get if your only information came from a map of breeding confirmations for each species -- like the one shown in the book for the 1986-1990 Atlas, where each square with breeding has one big dot. That's why it's so important that atlasers not just

confirm breeding, but also measure abundance.



**Bay-breasted Warbler, photo by Merv Cormier**

Many atlas projects leave these tasks to hired experts, but our atlas trusts the task to us volunteers. The data end up being just as good (because there's much more fit), and of course the area we can cover is much, much bigger. For the current atlas project, there are two ways to measure abundance: abundance estimates and point counts. As we reach the midpoint of the five-year atlassing period, it's time for all of us -- not just the "experts" -- to give both these methods a try.

#### *Abundance estimates*

The first method is simply to make an educated guess about how many pairs are breeding in your square: 0, 1, 2-10, 11-100, and so on. It's easier to do this than you might think, though there's certainly no point in even trying until you've got a reasonable handle on your square (say, 20 hours or so).

One way to do it is to think of your favourite bits of your square -- that patch of mature beech-birch forest, or that bed of cattails.



You probably have a good feel for how many Black-throated Blue Warblers you saw in the former, and how many Red-winged Blackbirds you found in the latter. You probably also can pick out, on the map, roughly how much of that area you found them in. Now just look at your square's habitat map, 'guesstimate' how many of those little areas there are in your square, multiply, and voila: you have a pretty good guess of that species' abundance. Granted, it's likely to be off by, well, quite a lot, but that's why the abundance categories are so generously wide. Once you've estimated the number of breeding pairs, your estimate will fall into one of six abundance indices, and it is this index number that you enter in the abundance column on the breeding evidence form (see Box 1 below).

**Box 1. Figuring out abundance estimates**

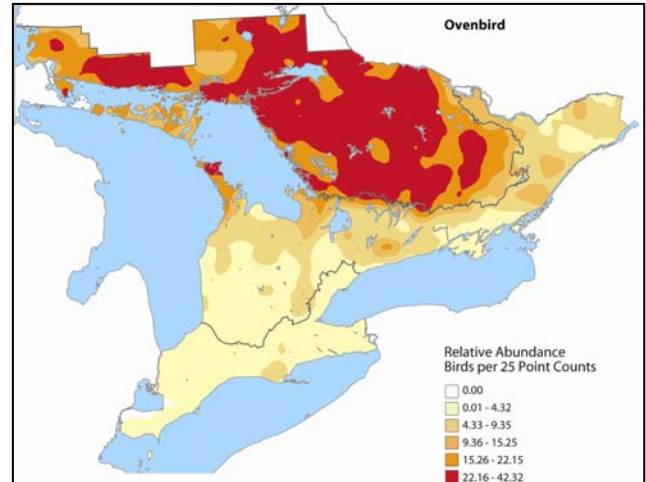
Estimated number of breeding pairs	Index
0	0
1	1
2-10	2
11-100	3
101-1,000	4
1,001-10,000	5

*Point counts*

The second method for measuring abundance, point counts, strikes fear in the hearts of many atlasers. Certainly a noisy dawn chorus can be pretty daunting; not only are some species tricky enough to identify on their own, but in the first few hours of the morning when the counts should be done, everyone's singing at once.

If you doubt your song identification skills, you are not alone, but your skills needn't be even close to perfect for you to get started. Go out to your backyard or other favourite

spot early-ish in the spring and listen. How many species can you identify in about five minutes? How many sounds do you hear that you can't identify?



**Ovenbird relative abundance in Ontario, provided by the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas.**

Chances are, you'll immediately find that you're better at recognizing bird sounds than you think. More importantly, though, this little exercise will force you to take the plunge and try. Once you've taken the plunge, your ears will be open to new birds wherever you go, and after a couple such visits to your square you'll have identified that handful of species you missed on your first day. Of course going out with a local song-whiz helps tremendously with those last few species. But it's important not to go out too soon with them; otherwise your ears will sit back and let the whiz's ears do all the work, when -- again -- the most important thing is to get yourself listening and build your confidence. **Once you're able to identify all (or all but one) of the species at each count station -- and this will happen faster than you think -- then you're ready to start submitting your point count data.**

As atlasers, we're all members of the largest research team ever assembled in the Maritimes. We can survey a wider area than



any "expert" team could ever cover. So, while you should follow the atlas methods closely and be as accurate as you can, don't let yourself be frozen by the fear that the number of robins in your square might be off by a bit, or that a junco at one of your point counts might have really been a Wilson's Warbler. The atlas project is designed in such a way that such inevitable boo-boos won't wreck the overall results, and your participation is what gives the atlas such terrific coverage.



**Blackburnian Warbler, photo by Karen Chiasson**

## **Moose Island atlassing trip**

*By Ivy Austin*

This summer, with funding from the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, seven atlasers had the opportunity to survey Moose Island, the largest island associated with the Five Islands Provincial Park, located in Colchester County, NS. Situated in the north part of the Bay of Fundy, the island is 2 kilometres long and a kilometre at its widest point. Over 100 years ago, there was a farm on the island but little by little the remnants of once ploughed fields have been replaced by young aspen forest. Much of the island is covered with mature coniferous trees except the east tip, where there are primarily deciduous trees.

Despite a less-than-perfect weather forecast (in fact the weatherman was calling for high wind and lots of rain), the Moose Island atlassing trip took place on the weekend of June 22nd. On Friday night, five self-described "nature nuts" - Andrew Macfarlane, Cindy Spicer, Kathleen Spicer, Sapphire Spicer and myself, were ferried out at high tide. We arrived to an island paradise...well "paradise" if you don't mind the large numbers of "No-see-ums" that inhabit the island (which didn't live up to their name since I could definitely "see-um" and they were the biggest I had ever seen in my life). Friday night, we surveyed around camp, which we had set up at the east end of the island. That night we saw 2 little brown bats and heard a Barred Owl. The owl kept us up for a good part of the night, calling right behind the Spicer's tent. On Saturday our atlassing party increased by two when, David Chiasson and Heidi Sivret, arrived by kayak.

Saturday morning was great; we got up at 5 AM, quickly got ready and left camp—excited to start filling in our breeding evidence card. However, the birds didn't seem aware of our efforts and remained quiet for most of the day (actually, the birds' silence could likely be better attributed to the fog that engulfed the island). Two species found in high numbers were the Dark-eyed Junco and the Black-throated Green Warbler. Hermit Thrush was also plentiful and we confirmed that they were breeding on the island when we found a broken eggshell along the path. However, the highlight of the morning was a Pileated Woodpecker that seemed surprised by our presence (I guess the birds on the island don't encounter humans that often). It began to call excitedly and quickly took off, out of sight. Andrew began imitating a Pileated call in an effort to bring the bird back and, sure enough it worked! The Pileated



returned to check out the “new woodpecker”.



**Brown Creeper, photo by Ivy Austin**

By noon, it began to rain but we didn't give up and continued atlassing throughout the afternoon. Lucky we did because a pair of Brown Creepers with a fledgling was the highlight of the afternoon. The Creeper family was found near the camp, just at the limit of the island's coniferous forest. Initially we heard one of the creepers calling. Once we tracked down the tiny noisemaker, we saw that it was being followed by a second, paler creeper—a fledgling! Soon a third Brown Creeper joined the “party”. We must have stood there for at least half an hour, watching the family group forage and taking pictures. At one point, the fledgling stayed still for about 5 minutes providing us with an excellent photo opportunity! Later, when I was looking through my photos at home, I realised why the fledgling had stopped at that particular spot-- there was a Brown Creeper nest right beside it. A half an hour of watching and we hadn't even seen it! On Sunday morning, we managed to get in a few more hours of atlassing before the boat came to pick us up. Since time was in short supply, we focused on trying to confirm some of the species that we observed the day

before. Although we weren't successful in obtaining many confirmations that morning we did add a good bird to our list— a Black-throated Blue Warbler singing from the top of a deciduous tree. In total, we managed to see, or hear, a total of 38 species and confirmed breeding for 10 of those species. In the end, we were glad that we had ignored the weather forecast because the trip was better than we had expected--a great time was had by all and no doubt we all have very good memories of the trip.

### **How Diane Griffin Completed her Kensington Square 20MS54**

*By Roving reporter*

Nearly 11 hours of work, 44 species recorded and 11 confirmed over a 2 week period from June 30<sup>th</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 – that summed up the first season in Kensington Square for self-described moderately good birder Diane Griffin and her helper, neither of whom were crackerjack acoustic birders. A lot of time was spent exploring the square and finding some accessible woodland in the 10,000 hectares of privately owned landscape in PEI's potato belt. The highlight was asking a conservation officer if there were any Bald Eagle nests in the area, then following the directions and recording the nest with young. A close second was finding an open barn and a Barn Swallow carrying a fecal sac (FS). This was not easy.

Diane's Regional Coordinator told her she needed to find at least 75 species to complete her square in 2007, and learned that a square is not completed until about 65% of the species recorded have Probable or Confirmed Evidence of Breeding. Diane spent 20 hours and 10 minutes to find 79.

Here's how she went about it:

1. Trips in April (before the snow was gone) and May to look for owls. She saw a



Great Horned Owl and later heard young begging in the nest (NY). She also found singing American Woodcock (T) and Wilson's Snipe (S) in the process. When she played her Boreal Owl call, coyotes answered nearby. That was thrilling.



Wilson's Snipe, photo by Denis Doucet

2. Two trips in the first half of June allowed Diane to build up her species list and put many species in the Probable category. Diane focused on species not previously recorded and habitats not yet visited. Highlights were a Brown Thrasher and Northern Mockingbird, and in a small patch of woodland, a Goshawk nest, contents unseen (AE). She was also able to record some evidence of confirmed breeding in common early season breeders that she had missed with her late start in 2006. For example, American Crow fledglings not capable of extended flight (FY) and a nest of Common Ravens (NY). A visit with old friends who have a cottage in the area was helpful. Nests of Common Grackle (NY) and Mourning Dove (AE) were pointed out for Diane to record. A visit with new friends who summer in PEI revealed nesting Tree Swallows (AE), where the Bobolinks hang out (P), and the regular passing of a Harrier (T), also seen firsthand.

3. By the end of June, Diane wanted to “up” the number of confirmed species in the square so she enlisted the help of three birding buddies (one eager to learn more about the process) for a final 7 hour fling starting at 6:00 a.m. They concentrated on watching for adults carrying food and especially for fledged young. Hairy Woodpecker fledglings (FY) and a Brown Creeper (H) were found in an old balsam fir stand while White-throated Sparrows (CF) were found in a woodland clear-cut. An Ovenbird nest (NY) was a first for the group. By the end of the day Diane had found her 78<sup>th</sup> species with a Sora (S) and she had confirmed 25 species. In July a resident of Kensington reported a Merlin nest (NY) in her driveway, bringing the list to 79 species. Diane phoned her cottage friends in August and learned that they had seen the fledged young of Belted Kingfishers (FY) below their cottage where Diane had previously spotted a hole in the bank. They also reported that fledged Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (FY) had come to their feeder. Diane's final Tally for the year: 23 Possible, 28 Probable and 28 Confirmed.

What's next for Diane? She was glad to finish this square and had already started on another, involving her friends in overnight stays and even earlier morning starts. She knows she could improve her warbler count in the Kensington square and when Diane queries the # of confirmed species on the online bird maps she would like to see her square in dark green indicating 30 or more species confirmed. Still, there are three more years to go and many other squares that need attention. She is putting her faith in the casual observations of others to reach that goal for the Kensington square.



# About the Atlas

The Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas is a joint project of Bird Studies Canada, the Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, the provincial governments of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island as well as the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists, the Nova Scotia Bird Society, and hundreds of volunteer bird watchers. The project will determine the distribution, abundance and status of all birds breeding in the three Maritime Provinces. The Maritimes have been divided into 1770; 10 x 10 km squares which volunteers systematically survey for evidence of breeding birds. For more information, to join the Atlas effort, or to donate to the project, please visit our website [www.mba-aom.ca](http://www.mba-aom.ca) or call toll free 1-866-528-5275 (1-866-5ATLAS5).

Support for the Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas in 2007-2008 provided by:



Funding for fall newsletter provided by:

