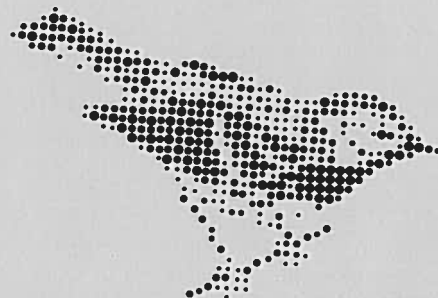


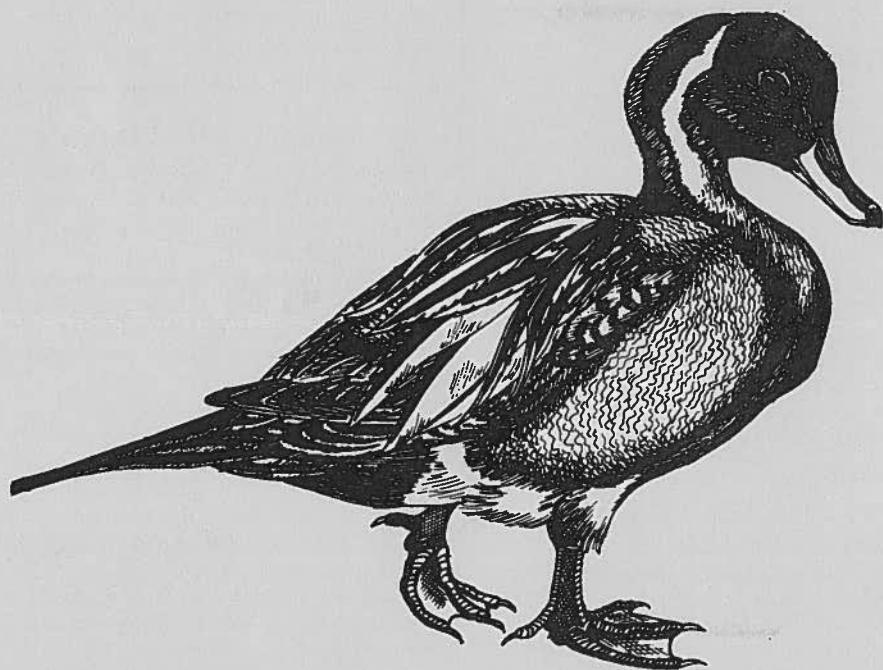
# MARITIMES BREEDING BIRD ATLAS NEWSLETTER



No. 6

Editor: Judith Kennedy

Summer, 1986



*Northern Pintail* - Jocelyn Bhuyan-Deichmann

## NEW BREEDING SPECIES FOR CANADA!

Maritime atlasers are already in the limelight with the discovery of a new breeding bird for Canada, the Glossy Ibis, *Plegadis falcinellus*. This significant record proves how important a project such as the atlas is in motivating birdwatchers to look for changes in breeding distribution.

Saint John region atlasers Jakko Finne, Don McAlpine, Mark Phinney, Scott Makepeace and Scott Gilliland were banding Great Blue Herons and Double-crested Cormorants on June 14 when they made the find. Manawagonish Island has lured Glossy Ibises before, but this nest with 3 eggs is the first breeding

evidence recorded in Canada. Sadly, a week later all three eggs had been predated by either Black-backed Gulls or Crows.

The breeding range of the GLIB has been expanding northward in recent years, and the birds have been regular visitors to New Brunswick for several years. As many as 14 birds have been seen in the province in one year (1985). Atlasers in other regions should monitor other suitable spots for this species, as well as watching the Manawagonish site for the return of the colonists.

The Saint John region has been a hotbed of ornithological sightings this year. In addition to the Glossy Ibis, 2 new

breeding species for the Maritimes and one for New Brunswick were reported. A Wilson's Phalarope performed a distraction display to lure Mark Phinney and Scott Makepeace away from her 3 chicks. While still on Grassy Island, Kings Co., Mark and Scott discovered nesting Greater Scaup. A subsequent visit in the company of other atlasers put the count at 21 nests, the southern-most nesting record to date. These 2 species are new additions to the Maritimes breeding bird list. New for New Brunswick is Gadwall, again courtesy of Mark Phinney. A nest containing 9 eggs was found on Manawoganish Island after the female was flushed. It may be a while before these breeding species are established, as the Gadwall nest was also predated.

Three cheers for the dedicated atlasers who made these exciting finds in our first year!

## SPECIES DOCUMENTATION

Any species not listed on the data card, and any species your RC has specified for your region must have a corresponding Species Documentation Form. The only exception is if the breeding evidence recorded is 'X', in which case a Doc. form is not necessary. If you don't submit a Doc. form for one of these species, your RC will ask you for one. Our computer programme will not accept records for these species unless we tell it we have a form. It is much easier in the long run to complete the form while the details are fresh. Please don't feel we are questioning only the accuracy of your identification. In many cases we need extra information for conservation uses as well as formal verification of the record. Fully completing the form, including 100 m x 100 m UTM reference, will be particularly useful for the former.

## ATLAS DAY A SUCCESS

Over a hundred people took part in organized outings for Atlas Day this year, and many more people visited their own squares as part of the Maritimes-wide effort. Regions which reported Atlas Day gatherings included:

Region 6, Carleton; Region 11, Saint John; Region 12, Moncton; Region 13, Border; Region 16, Yarmouth; Region 17, Keji; Region 18, Halifax; Region 19, Guysborough; Region 20, Antigonish; and Region 21, PEI.

Some of the organized outings were full-fledged square bashes, and the preliminary results look good. Numbers of species observed often reached the expected totals for the square, although the confirmations were not up to the required 50% level. This is not surprising for a one-day venture, though. Other regions concentrated more on learning the correct use of breeding codes, becoming familiar with atlasing in general and getting to know each other. No region reported a competitive bent to the day, and hence there is no honour roll of regional "confirmists". The award for the youngest atlaser, however, goes to Inga Hansen, aged 3 months, who accompanied her mother, Gay, on the Border region outing. From all reports, everyone in all regions had a great day, with beautiful weather assisting the birding.

A common problem in the outings was that many of the early singing birds were missed due to later-than-usual starting times which were set to accommodate atlasers with long distances to travel. Next year this could be solved by meeting in the square the night before Atlas Day, and getting an early start from the campsite or motel. Group birding can really put a dent in the coverage requirement for a square. Trading trade secrets is another perk. A day with a more seasoned birder can rival a month of independent study. Mark your calendar for next year; we'll be out again in full force. □

## PREPARE FOR YEAR 2

Many atlasers will have come close to meeting adequate coverage criteria in their squares this year. If you're one of them, you should give some thought to where you would like to atlas next year. Until we have computerized the 1986 data it will be difficult to assess how even our coverage across the three provinces is. We must feel confident that we will achieve coverage in all priority squares before we can make the decision to cover

secondary squares as well. Often the remaining priority squares in your region (or province — think big!) will be some distance away. However, these squares still need to be covered. Three or four atlasers from one area could get decent coverage of these more distant squares in a couple of weekend bashes. It can be a lot of fun to work in a new square that has different habitat types. Don't under-estimate what you can do. Next year you'll be that much more experienced and able to cover a square in less time. Ask your RC which priority squares are still available. In the fall or winter issue of the newsletter we will be able to publish a map showing the square coverage for 1986. Like a gold-mine, a good square may have a staking rush; start thinking about your 1987 work in advance. □

## DELIVERING DATA

Now that your RC has heard of some of the good sightings from around the Maritimes, he/she will be more anxious than ever to see the results from your square(s). As soon as you have completed your work, send your card(s) in to your RC. To avoid witnessing agitated behaviour by your RC, please make sure your card(s) are in the hands of your RC no later than August 31st. If you are waiting to confirm one or two late nesters, please send your card in for the deadline anyway. You can always submit another card, or notify your RC of the additional record later.

Remember, the card you submit should be as complete as possible. We really do need your name, address, atlaser number, region, square, dates and hours. Your atlaser number appears after your name on your newsletter address label and should be filled in as a four-digit number.

Each species should have only 1 code for breeding evidence. If you've been upgrading your sightings throughout the season, make sure only the best record is on the card sent to your RC. The breeding codes are listed in the handbook in ascending order, so you should be able to pick out the best code on your card. Species marked as 'X' do not need abundance estimates. Please be careful when filling in your card. It is very easy to mark the wrong species, and an accidental slip can cost several hours of double-checking to correct. Note: the card you submit will not be returned to you; you should keep a record of your 1986 work in case we have to consult you. □

## CLOSE TO THEIR LAND

Oftentimes one is hesitant to burst into someone's yard with explanations of bird mapping projects. Perhaps it is an innate respect for private property, or maybe a fear of looking foolish in the eyes of a non-birder. But the brave among atlasers who have approached landowners have been well-received and inundated with information about nesting birds. Talking with a person who has lived in a square for decades is often the quickest way to find a few less-obvious species. Farms often have Phoebe-bridges and Cliff Swallow-eaves, and the owners know where they have seen hawks every year. You may not get a full identification, but a good tip can save hours of fieldwork, and often results in a much-needed confirmation. Armed with a smile and an atlas i.d. card, you will very likely be rewarded with Maritime hospitality and a species or two for your records. Give it a try. □

## LATE IMPORTANT DATES

Somehow the June coming-out date for the Breeding Season Chart was thrown by the wayside, and July left a trail of AYS but still no sign of the long-awaited document. But the 'safe dates' are here at last, and if you haven't received a copy of the chart from your RC already, it's probably on its way.

Dates given will provide a general time-frame for the breeding season of each species. Knowing when a species lays its eggs or raises its young will help you to play your fieldwork to target certain species. It will also be useful in screening out migrants at the beginning of the season. We have a whole winter to become familiar with the breeding dates for each species, so we'll be well-prepared next year. □

## OWL/RAIL TAPES AVAILABLE

To help atlasers locate some of the more elusive species, we have made a tape of owl and rail calls. These species will often respond vocally to a tape of their call, alerting you to their presence in a square. Each RC has a copy of this tape which has about 5 minutes of calls for the following species: Saw-whet, Screech, Barred, Long-eared, and Great Horned owls, and Virginia and Sora rails. You may make a copy of your RC's tape for your own use, or buy one from the atlas office for \$3.00. Don't forget about these species just because they are seldom seen. We want our maps to be complete for all families of birds, but some of them require a little more effort. □

## ATLAS LORE

Not only can tales of atlas adventures bring back happy (and sometimes frustrating) memories of days spent in a square, they can also provide new ideas or techniques for atlasers. Send in news of the triumphs and defeats you've experienced in pursuit of our feathered fauna. Here's the scoop from 2 atlasers:

"Two pairs of grackles built nests side by side on a ledge of an old tractor. Before any eggs were laid, the owner, Ralph Faulkner, decided he needed to use the tractor. Not wanting to disturb the birds, he built a wooden shelf of dimensions similar to the original nest site, and nailed it to a nearby edger. Ralph slid the nests onto a pane of glass and transferred them to their new location, positioning them as nearly as possible to their original spots. Despite work going on around them, one pair returned to the nest and laid 3 beautifully marked eggs."

— Roslyn MacPhee

"On June 23, Azor Vienneau and I were atlassing in my St. Mary's River square. We had seen dozens of agitated juncos but hadn't yet been able to confirm the species. A very upset female was hanging around the edge of a fir thicket beside the road but she was not doing anything confirmable. Azor suggested we both go behind a bushy young red maple about thirty feet down the road, and he would then come out and walk away while I remained hidden and watched. We did this, and within seconds of Azor's emergence and retreat, the junco started to calm down, her chips getting softer and lower-pitched. She moved down toward the ground and then flew across the road. Two minutes later she came back with a beak full of caterpillars and disappeared into the thicket, and we had our confirmation. This trick has been known for decades to bird photographers who use blinds, but it seems to be equally effective in atlassing.

"The same day, we heard a Brown Creeper calling and after a few minutes we saw it. It had a moth in its beak and was flying from tree to tree in a small area. Then it flew to a fir about fifteen feet in front of us and started down the trunk head-first, like a nuthatch. Suddenly a saucer-sized patch of the tree trunk started to vibrate. It was a clump of 5 or 6

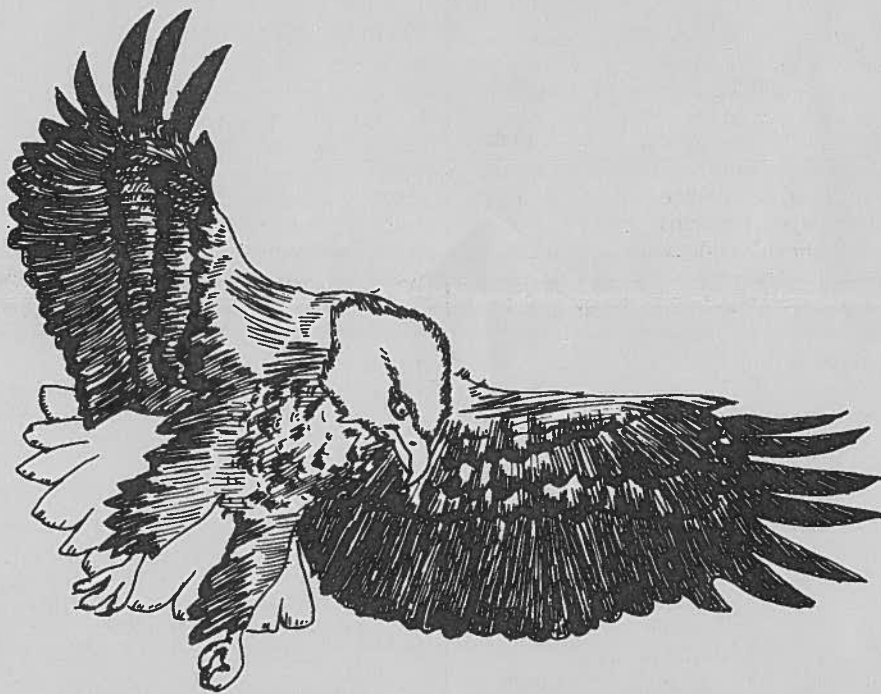
fledglings clinging to the bark.

The adult fed the moth to one of them and then they all took off, the young birds to nearby trees where they again lit on the trunk. When we moved a little further into the woods we heard a chirring sound from a dead tree. It sounded like young woodpeckers, but it was softer and lower-pitched than the sound young Hairy Woodpeckers make. There was a hole near the top of the tree and we watched for less than two minutes before a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker flew in and began feeding the young. These confirmations were not much more than fifty feet and five minutes apart and really made our day."

— Fred Scott □

## CASUAL RECORDS

Records collected outside your assigned square are still of interest. Just fill in a separate card, even if it is only one record. Try to provide the same information as for your regular square (i.e. square number, region, dates, etc.). If you don't know the square number, it's important that you describe the location in as much detail as possible so that we can determine the square by consulting the topo. maps. Send the card in to the appropriate regional coordinator, or the atlas office if you're not sure of the region. It's perfectly apropos to submit more than one card per season, and casual records often provide data which would otherwise be missed. □



*Bald Eagle - Jocelyn Bhuyan-Deichmann*

## 1985 DATA

Any atlasers who collected data in our trial season in 1985 are welcome to send their records in for that period. You should keep the 1985 records on a separate card, with the year marked clearly in the space provided. Please do not combine your 1985 records with your 1986. At the moment our policy for 1985 records is that only records which are not duplicated in the 1986-1990 time period will be incorporated in the database. As the project progresses, however, we may refine this policy, in which case it will be much simpler to treat the 1985 data as a separate unit. □

## HELP WANTED

Had an amusing or interesting atlassing adventure lately? Was your owling outing too exciting to keep to yourself? Write them down and send them in to the atlas office for inclusion in future newsletters. Whether they're entertaining anecdotes or hot tips on how to find breeding evidence for a particular species, they are welcome.

Also pencil or pen and ink drawings are needed to illustrate the newsletter. The sketches don't **have** to be of birds, but should be pertinent to the atlas project. Yet another great way to invest your time! □



- Courtesy of Council of Maritime Premiers

## AIDS TO ATLASSERS

by Fred Scott

In addition to topographic maps, there is another kind of map which can be extremely useful for atlassing. It is called an orthophoto topographic map. It is basically a mosaic of aerial photographs overprinted with contour lines, elevations and place names. The maps are on a scale of 1:10,000 (10 cm = 1 km) and each sheet covers an area of approximately 6.5 x 4.6 km. They cost \$3.00 per sheet (plus tax) and are available from the Provincial Map Library, Torrington Place, 780 Windmill Rd., Dartmouth, NS, B3B 1T3. Sets of index sheets, showing available coverage in the

series, can also be obtained free from the same source. The index sheets show the 10 km square boundaries as well as the orthophoto map sheet boundaries, so it is easy to see how many sheets one needs to cover a square.

Though the orthophotos are not as sharp as proper aerial photos, it is easy to distinguish hardwood, coniferous and mixed forest, agricultural lands of many types, and even to tell grassy bogs from shrubby bogs. The maps are extremely useful in two ways: they make it possible to estimate accurately the amount of habitat in a square, and they are very useful for planning purposes, especially where access is difficult and one doesn't want to waste valuable time. □

## OUR THANKS TO:

Nova Scotia Museum  
New Brunswick Museum  
Nova Scotia Land Survey Institute  
Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests

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**The Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas**  
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