

Atlassers go for GREEN!

By Becky Stewart and Kate Bredin

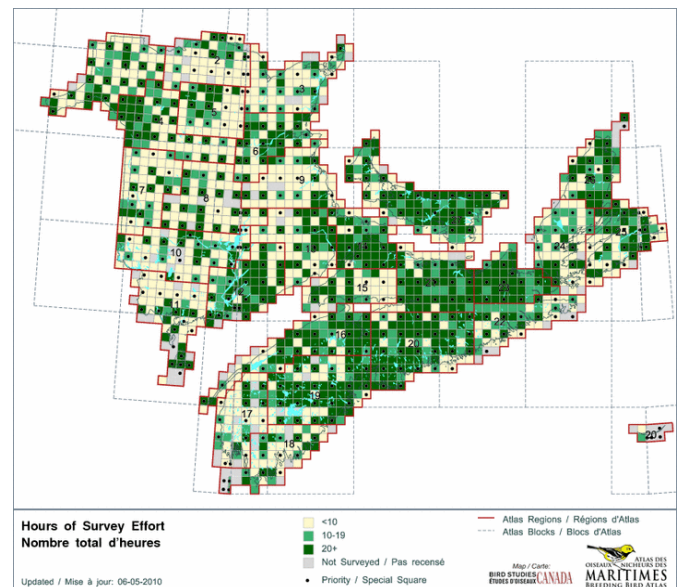
Spring 2010 has suddenly sprung, and that means the “prime” atlassing season is here. Breeding bird sightings from across the region are popping up on provincial listservs. As we all too quickly approach this, our last season, what should we think about and what do we need to do to organize and prepare ourselves for the final Atlas field season?

The theme for planning 2010 is “think big picture”. This big picture is the overarching goal to map the distribution and abundance of all Maritimes breeding birds, and to assess whether there have been changes in breeding distribution since the first Atlas. We want to make sure that the distributional changes that we see when comparing the first and second Atlas reflect real changes that have occurred on the landscape. And, at the square level, we want to be confident that if a species is “missing” from a square where it was detected during the first Atlas, it is truly because that species no longer occurs in the square, and not because we haven’t looked hard enough for it. In other words, to detect real changes, we need to ensure the Maritimes have even and adequate coverage.

The first step to guarantee even and adequate coverage is to ensure that a) every priority square has a full 20 hours of survey effort, and b) that during those 20 hours all habitats were visited, and, c) all potential species were surveyed for. In 70% of priority squares this task is complete. BUT, that means 30% of priority squares still need more survey effort. Secondly, we want to ensure that in every priority square we have completed at least ten point counts. We have nearly reached our goal with the exception of a few priority squares in each region. Completing those last required point counts will help create the very first picture of the relative abundance for all Maritime breeding bird species!

While we have done very well with point counts, we have fallen far behind in making abundance estimates. Very few squares have abundance estimates at all.

Because abundance estimates were done for the first Atlas, we have a unique opportunity to look at changes in abundance, because participants estimated abundance for many squares in the first Atlas. However, this will only be possible if we get comparable estimates of abundance this time round. The Maritimes Atlas is the only second generation atlas in Canada to have the potential to compare breeding bird abundance between 2 atlas periods, so let’s make the most of it!



Hours of survey effort thus far during the second Atlas effort. Dark green squares are those with over 20 hours of survey effort and are considered “complete”.

Another important goal of the second Atlas is to surpass the coverage of the first Atlas and lay the groundwork for a third Atlas effort. (That’s right, in 20 years there will be another Maritimes Atlas). The better picture we have of current breeding bird distribution and abundance, the more useful that information will be both now and in the future. We are already on our way to achieving this goal—

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have more widespread coverage than in the first Atlas, and more non-priority squares completed.

So how does all this relate to your individual planning activities? *If your square does not have 20 survey hours, check to make sure that you have surveyed all the habitats that occur in the square, e.g., have you checked that marsh in the eastern corner for AMERICAN BITTERN and VIRGINIA RAIL? (For that matter, have you tried using your species at risk CD for LEAST BITTERN and YELLOW RAIL?). Check if you missed surveying for any type of species, e.g., have you gone out at dusk to check for COMMON NIGHTHAWK?*



American Bittern by Christian Artuso

If you have already spent 20 hours in your square, please consider surveying another priority square that does not yet have 20 hours of survey effort. What if all the priority squares in your region are assigned? If you are able, it would be great if you could help out a region with few volunteers. Of course this won't always be feasible so, if you can't travel to another region, please take on a non-priority square in your own region that has fewer than 20 survey hours.

What about point counts? In a number of squares, priority and non-priority, fewer than the required ten

point counts have been completed. These squares are “yellow” on the on-line point count maps. Data from any squares with fewer than ten point counts will be omitted from the final abundance mapping. So, let's top up those partially point counted squares so that the point count data that has already been gathered will not be lost. (And, of course, if you enjoy doing point counts, by all means take on another square for point counts as well).

Are you ready to go? By now you should have received your data forms for 2010 by mail. If you haven't, or if you need additional forms, please contact the office. As well, if you haven't spoken with your Regional Coordinator recently, now would be a great time to touch base and discuss plans for the coming field season. Your RC can help you minimize the duplication of effort and maximize overall coverage. If you plan to survey in a region without a coordinator, please contact the Atlas office.

While finishing off priority squares is the number one priority, it's not the only priority for 2010. Here is the complete list of “Big Picture” priorities for the final field season:

- 1) Finish 20 hours in all priority squares;
- 2) Target missing guilds and under-surveyed habitats in priority squares if necessary;
- 3) Top up point counts to a total of ten in squares where point counts have been started;
- 4) Make abundance estimates;
- 5) When this is complete for your square, finish nearby squares in your region and/or take on squares in a new region.

Beyond “where” and “how many”

By Becky Stewart

Many of us are all too aware that bird species, once common in our Maritimes communities, are declining. However, until very recently, the extent of these declines, in terms of number as well as geographic scope, was largely unknown. Knowing where the birds are and how many are there is a crucial first step to conserving bird biodiversity. Since 2006 you have been gathering the data to answer these important questions. And although 2010 is the final year of data collection, it isn't the end of the project...it is just the beginning.

The next step is to transform the data you have gathered into information that can be used to make the management decisions and take the conservation

action needed to preserve wild birds and their habitats. Many agencies are already using the preliminary Atlas results. For example, forestry companies like Bowater Mersey Paper Company Ltd. are consulting Atlas species at risk data prior to issuing harvest prescriptions and road construction locations. The Least Bittern Recovery Team has consulted the habitat descriptions and location information recorded by atlasers to delineate areas of critical habitat for this rare species at risk. Researchers writing assessment reports for the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (the independent body that identifies species at risk) are relying on Atlas data to describe species' Maritimes distributions and to assist in determining whether a species should be considered "at risk". The NS Nature Trust recently consulted the Atlas to gather information on a property they planned to acquire in southern NS. As well, all of the data from the Atlas have been incorporated into the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre's database. The Data Centre houses occurrence records for rare to uncommon species and handles hundreds of data requests annually from numerous agencies, including municipal governments, consultants, and educational and conservation groups. Lastly, data from the Maritimes Atlas was used in the North American Bird Conservation Region (BCR) planning effort currently being led by Environment Canada. The Maritimes is located in a BCR known as the "Atlantic Northern Forest", one of 67 distinct ecological units into which all of North America has been divided. Preliminary analyses of new Atlas data showing changes in species' probability of detection between the first and second atlas periods were used by BCR planners to identify priority species for conservation efforts within the Atlantic Northern Forest (see Box 1 on page 4 for an example).

These examples are just the tip of the iceberg. One area where the Atlas data have real "teeth" is in identifying species at risk and other species of conservation concern, and identifying locations where these species are concentrated, so these areas can be subsequently targeted for conservation efforts. It is the point count data, our new addition to this atlas, that provide the information needed to generate maps that delineate areas of high abundance. Point count data can also be used for population estimates at various geographic scales (e.g., Maritimes-wide, or the total proportion of a species Maritimes population present in a defined area). This information can be used to assign stewardship responsibility for that species to a jurisdiction. For example, the recently completed second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas found that an area known as the "Land Between" supports high levels of

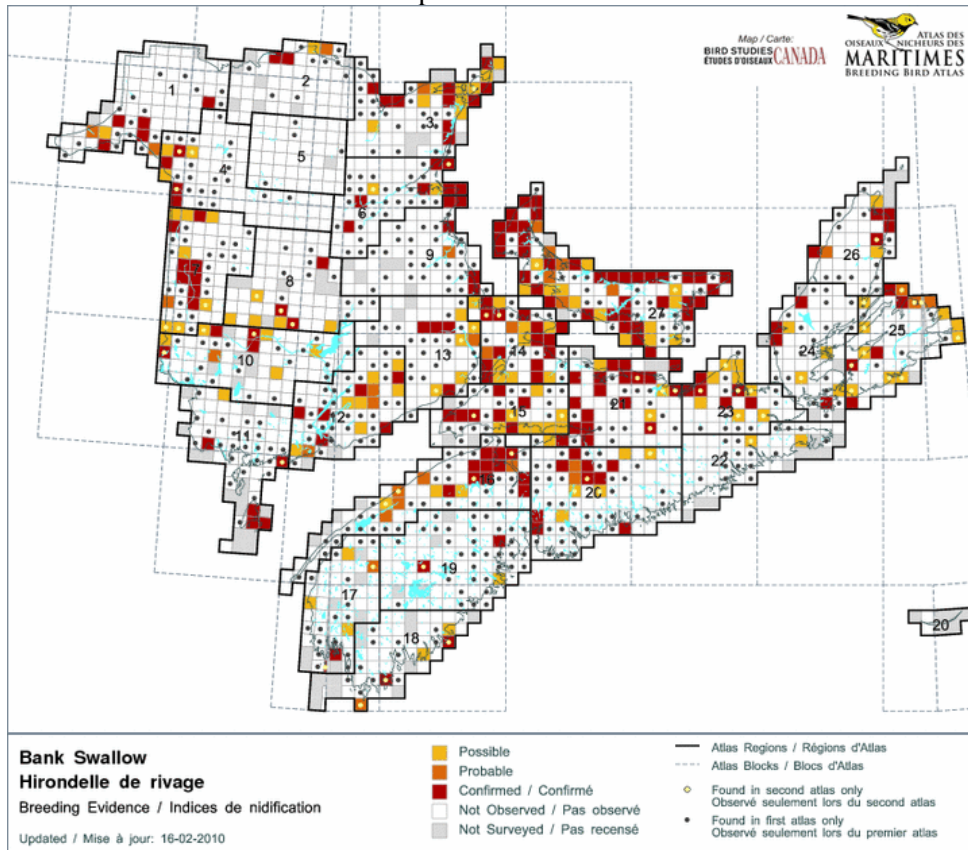
bird biodiversity including a substantial portion of Ontario's Golden-winged Warbler population (see Box 2 on page 5).

Andrew Couturier, Bird Studies Canada's Senior Analyst for Landscape Ecology and Conservation, and the individual responsible for creating all of the Atlas' online maps, has produced preliminary abundance maps for three Maritimes species—Northern Parula, Fox Sparrow and Canada Warbler—just to give you a taste of what will be done with all that point count data you've gathered (see pages 6-8). Examining the Northern Parula distribution and abundance maps side by side highlights the different information each conveys. The distribution change map shows where the Northern Parula has been "present" during this Atlas, and how this compares to where this species was present during the first atlas, while the abundance map highlights where this species is most concentrated. The maps for the Fox Sparrow, a boreal species with a limited Maritimes range, paints quite a different picture, showing the species to be most abundant in three areas of high elevation. Lastly, the abundance map for the Canada Warbler shows where this widespread but sparsely distributed species has been detected in the highest numbers and suggests that some areas of southwestern New Brunswick may be important strongholds. For the Canada Warbler, a recently designated species at risk, the next step is to examine the relationship between abundance and various landscape and habitat features. By the end of the project, similar maps will be produced for all species adequately represented on point counts. Plus, we will also be able to produce compilation maps for multiple species at risk or other groups of species (e.g., grassland birds), that can then be used to delineate high priority areas for conservation measures.

Of course, all this information does no good if it sits in a book on a shelf collecting dust until the next Atlas comes around. We know that isn't going to happen here, because several agencies are already using the Atlas. But we want to make sure that we maximize the Atlas' conservation value. Over the next year we are going to develop a comprehensive communications strategy surrounding the Atlas database and the importance of the information it contains. We will work to identify stakeholders and agencies whose activities impact birds and their habitats (positively or negatively) and make sure that stakeholders are not only aware that the Atlas database exists, but are able to access and use the information it contains to affect conservation action. With all the effort we've made to put Maritime birds on the map, we want to make sure they stay there for years to come.

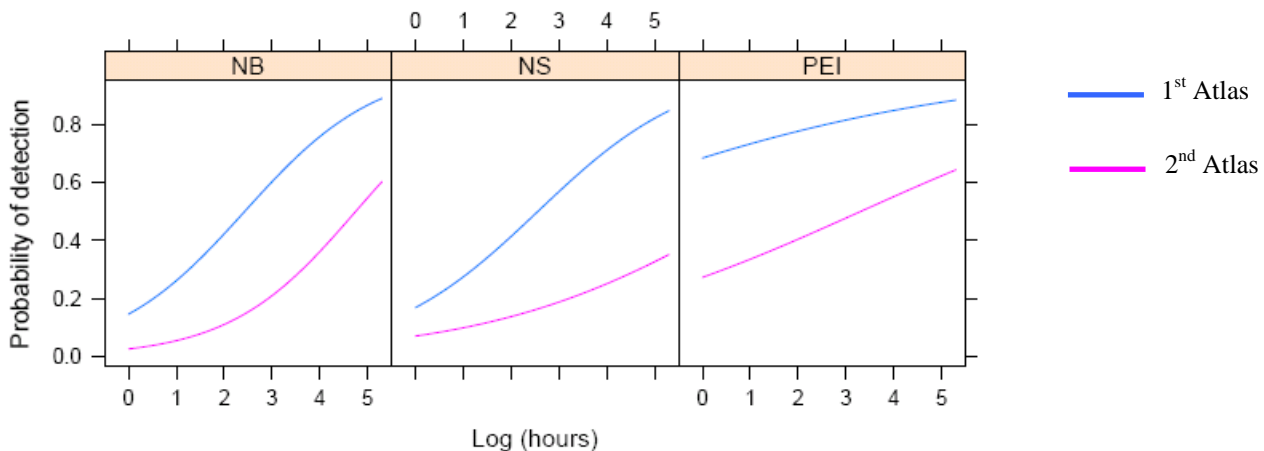


Box 1. Example of preliminary change analyses comparing Bank Swallow distribution and detection probabilities between the first and second Atlas periods.



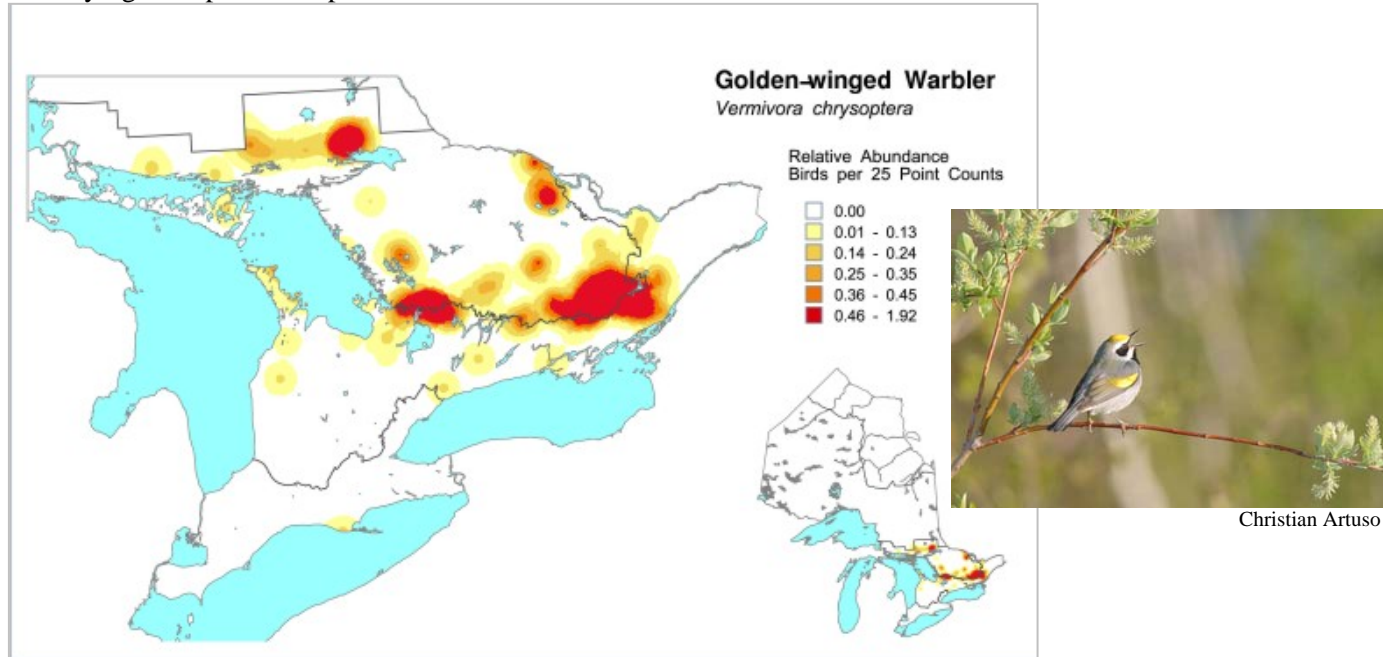
“Tinyfishy”

Distribution change map for Bank Swallow. Bank Swallow has been detected in less than 1/3 of the squares where it was observed during the 1st Maritimes Atlas. The species is noticeably absent from several previously occupied inland sites.

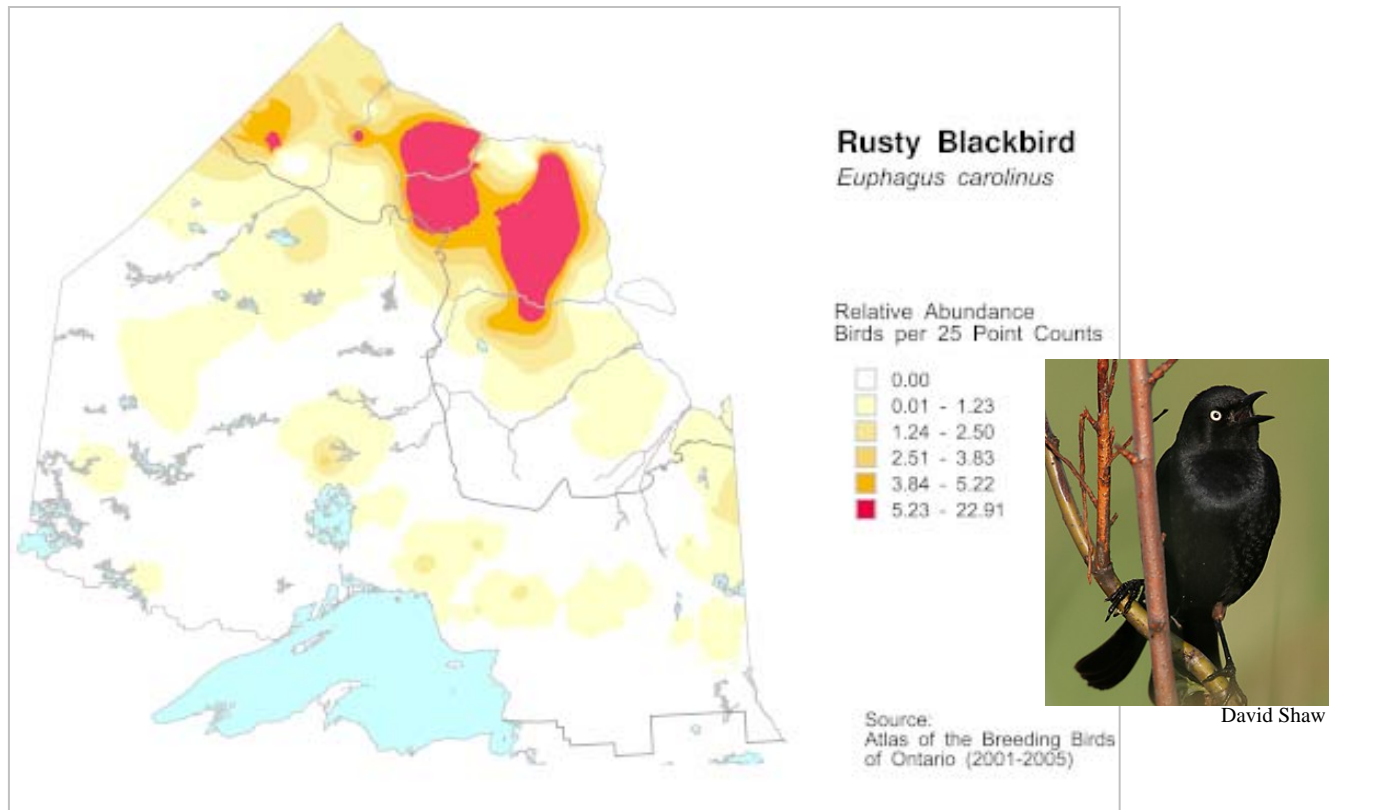


Preliminary analyses, done by Dr. Phil Taylor (Acadia University) for BCR planning in the Maritimes, found a significant decrease in the probability of detection of Bank Swallow between the first and second Atlas periods in all three provinces. The graph above shows the probability of detecting Bank Swallow in each of the provinces during the first Maritimes Atlas (blue line) and second Atlas (pink line). While for both atlases the probability of detecting Bank Swallow increases with increased hours of survey effort, the probability of detecting Bank Swallow during the second atlas is less than during the first atlas (i.e., the pink line is below the blue line). The probability of observing Bank Swallow has declined by 4.9%, 5.3% and 2.6% annually in NB, NS and PEI, respectively. The Bank Swallow is also a high priority candidate for assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Results like these will play a role in determining this species’ conservation status in Canada.

Box. 2. Relative abundance maps from the recently completed Ontario Atlas demonstrate the utility of these maps in identifying “hotspots” for species at risk.

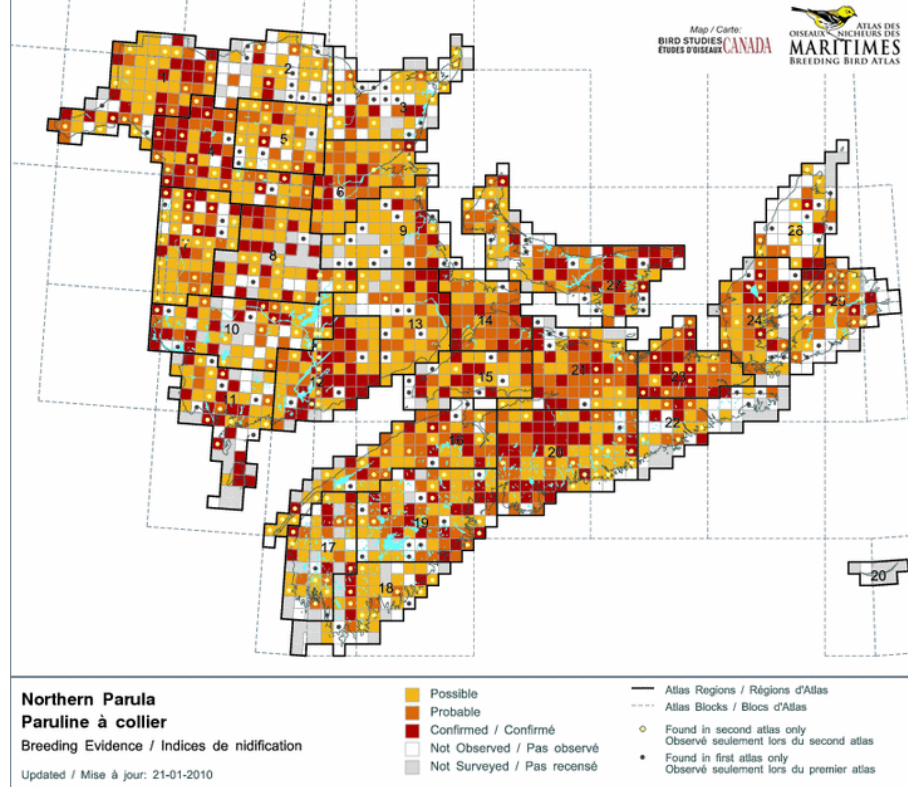


Relative abundance map for the Golden-winged Warbler (*Threatened*) shows an area in south-central Ontario, known as the “Land Between”, as a species stronghold. Population estimates indicate that the area supports 79% of Ontario’s Golden-winged Warbler population.



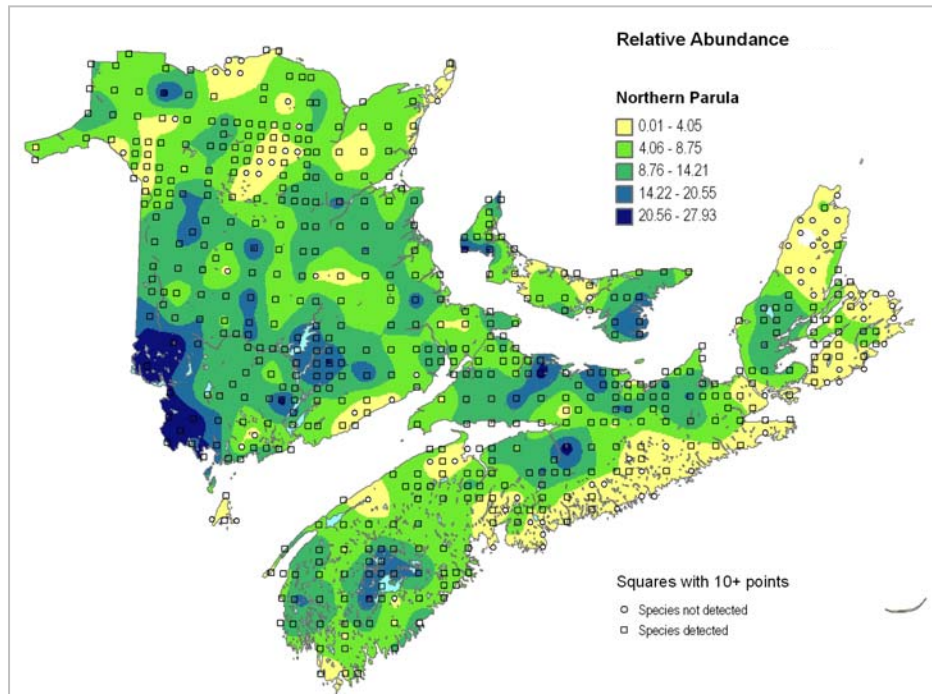
Abundance sampling revealed high, and previously unrecorded, densities of Rusty Blackbird, a species of *Special Concern*, in the taiga areas of the Hudson Bay Lowlands.

Box 3. Northern Parula's Maritimes distribution and pattern of relative abundance.



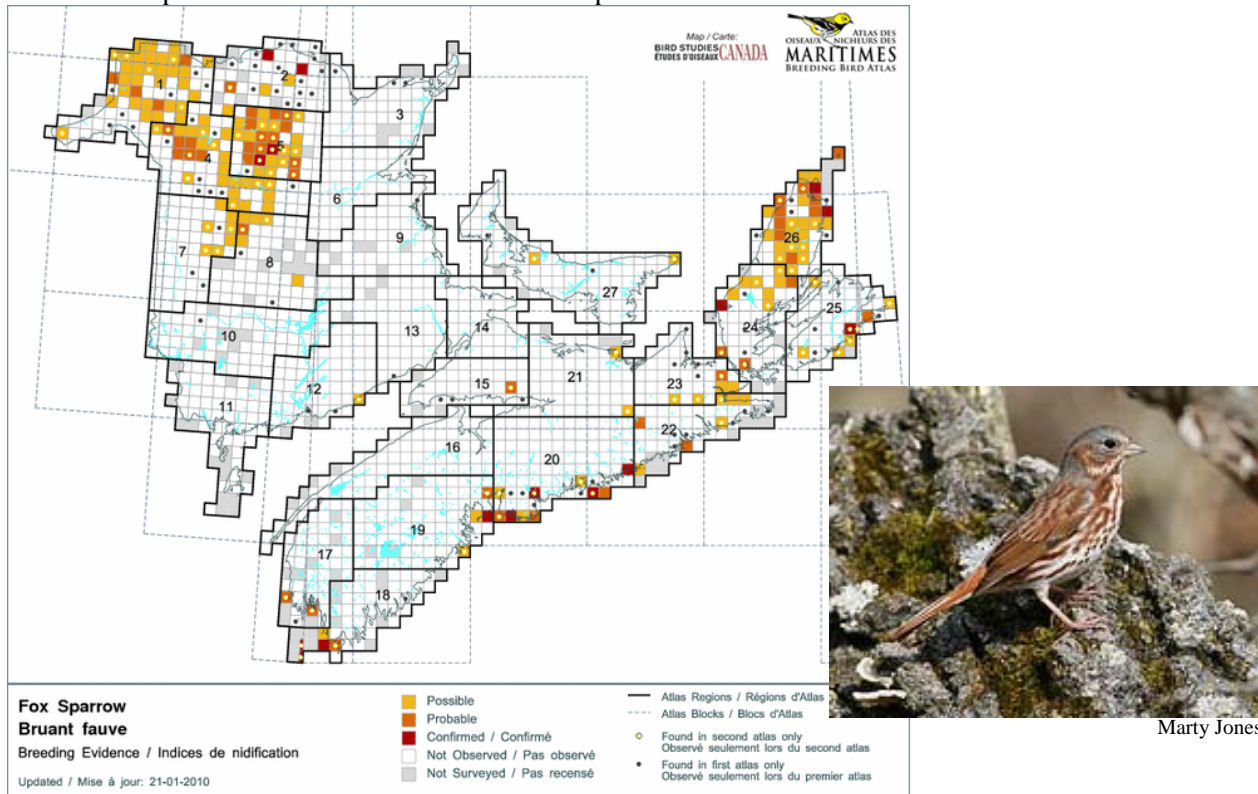
Brandon Holden

Map depicting change in the Northern Parula's distribution between the first and second Maritimes Atlas. Squares with yellow dots are ones in which Northern Parula has been detected during the 2nd atlas, but not the 1st. Squares with black dots are ones in which the species was detected in the 1st Atlas, but not the 2nd. The parula is widespread and has been detected in nearly every square surveyed.

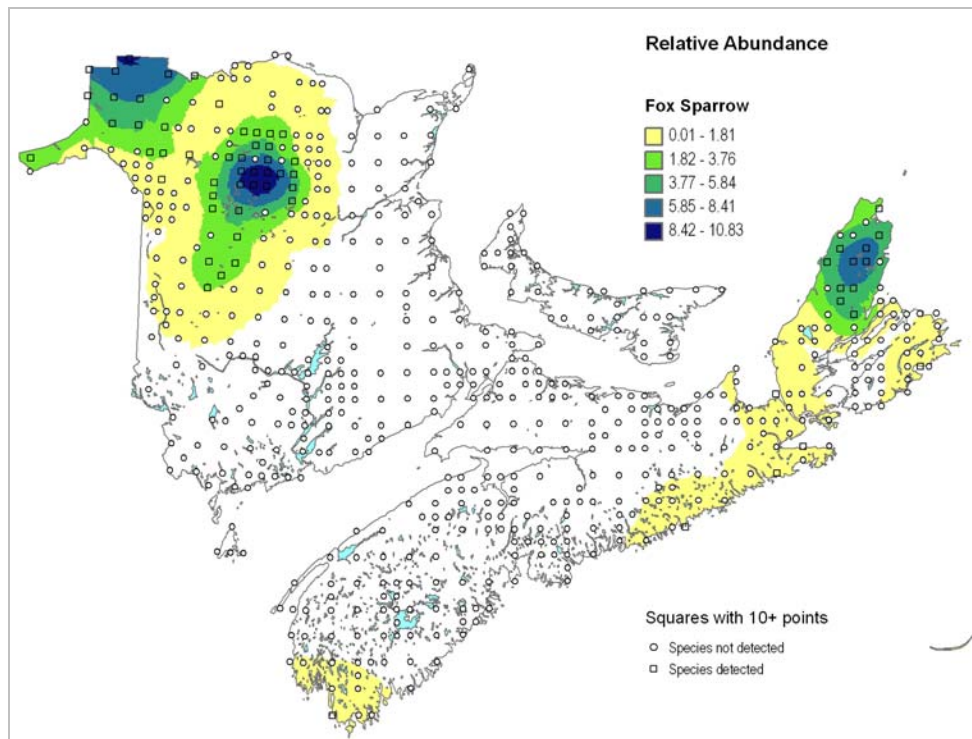


Relative abundance map for the Northern Parula. One of the Maritimes most abundant warbler species, Northern Parulas breed in coniferous-dominated forests in all three Maritimes provinces. Dark blue areas, like the southwest corner of New Brunswick, depict areas of highest abundance.

Box 4. Fox Sparrow's Maritimes distribution and pattern of relative abundance.

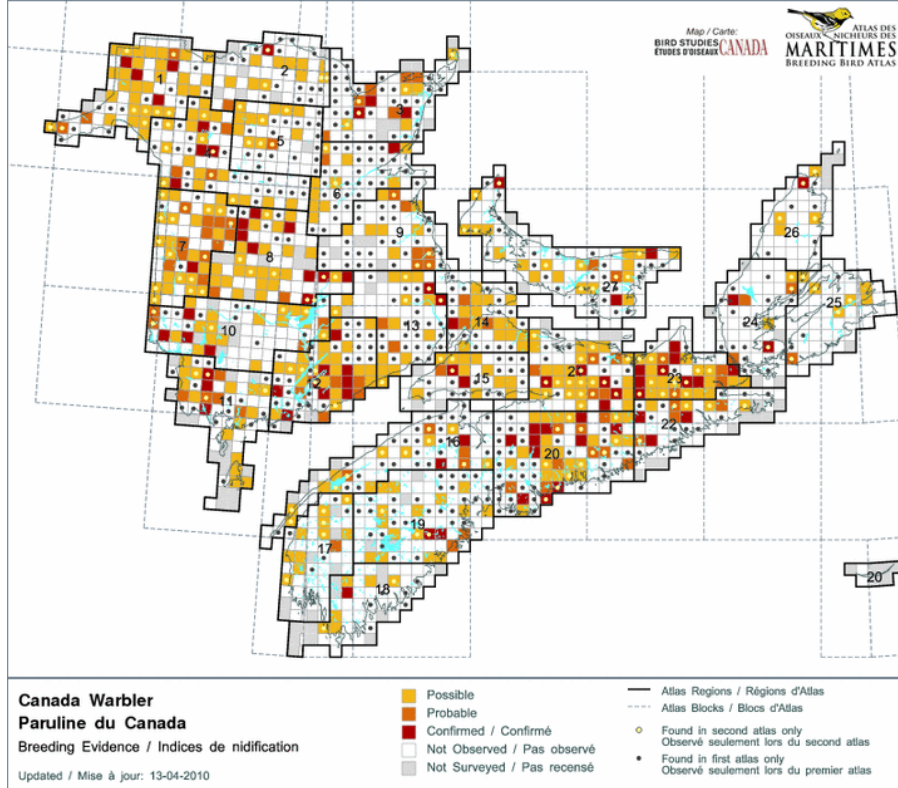


Change map for the Fox Sparrow. Fox Sparrow is restricted to cooler, boreal-like areas found at high elevations as well as along the coast.



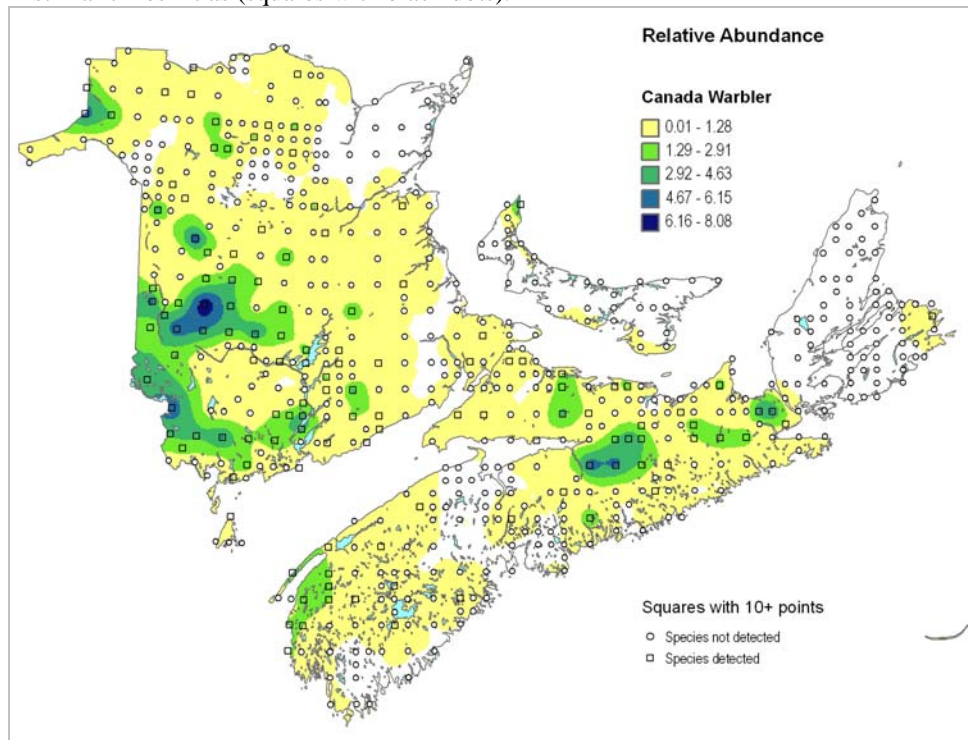
Not surprisingly, Fox Sparrows are most abundant in the Christmas Mountains and Cape Breton Highlands as well as in the northwestern NB.

Box 5. Canada Warbler's Maritimes distribution and pattern of relative abundance.



Merv Cormier

The Canada Warbler, recently designated as threatened, has been found in every province and region across the Maritimes. That said its distribution is somewhat sparse and it appears to be absent from many areas where it was previously detected during the first Maritimes Atlas (squares with black dots).



The relative abundance map for Canada Warbler highlights southwestern New Brunswick as an area of potential conservation importance for the species.

Priorities and Challenges from a Regional Perspective

Region 1, Madawaska

Region 1 has a total of 77 squares of which 19 are priority squares. The goal for 2009 was to complete all priority squares. However, the combination of bad weather and the isolated areas of the remaining squares discouraged many atlasers and not much was accomplished. At the end of the season, 8 of the 19 priority squares were sufficiently covered. Point counts need to be completed in 2 squares and the remaining 9 squares need 6 hours or less to be completed. Of the nineteen priority squares, 6 are completed or adequately covered, 15 have 60 or more species, and 16 squares have 10 hours or more. Excluding 3 squares that are too small to do, only 1 square has not been touched.

I also hope to do at least 15 hours in secondary squares and have at least 10 hours in the rest of the remaining squares. Atlasers have already started their work and weather permitting, region 1 should be adequately covered by the end of season 5.

Pierrette Mercier

1-418-737-1376

petem@globetrotter.net

Region 2, Restigouche

With several difficult-to-access squares, Region 2 remains a challenge. A small group of dedicated volunteers have worked hard each year to meet this challenge and this year will be no exception. Between staff and volunteer effort we hope to have all priority squares completed by the end of the summer. However, many gaps remain and any assistance in this region would be greatly appreciated.

Raymond Chiasson

506-753-6956

mnlp@nb.sympatico.ca

Region 3, Péninsule Acadienne - Acadian Peninsula

There are two goals to achieve this year in Region 3! For the last field season of the Atlas, most of the efforts should be put into completing the priority squares. We made great progress with those squares last year but a last push would make possible the completion of those. From our 18 priority/special squares, two of our priority squares are already considered completed and eleven would need from 3 to 10 hours to be considered completed hour-wise. So

the first goal this year would be to visit first the priority squares that you know need some hours put in. I think by only visiting those squares more frequently this summer, we could push the hours above the 20 hours bar, which is the number of hours needed to be considered completed. At the same time, it would raise the number of species observed in those squares to a level that could easily be considered enough to be completed. Keep in mind that we're looking for breeding evidences and that the closer you can get for confirming the species you see, the better it is. What is the second goal you ask? To just enjoy the time spent outside listening and observing those wonderful winged creatures and try to learn everything we can about those splendid flying angels!

Ivy Austin

506-874-2794

crisper@hotmail.com



Eastern Bluebird by Denis Doucet

Darken your pencils in 2010

For all those individuals sending data in to the Atlas office on paper forms, please make a conscious effort to use a **dark** (B or 2B) pencil. In 2009, some data were recorded with lighter pencils (staff are guilty of this too) and as a result the data were difficult for the machine to "read" and some scanning errors occurred.

Region 4, Tobique – Renous

The main area of concern in Region 4 lies in achieving adequate coverage in remote squares along the Renous Hwy and east of the Tobique River. This area is comprised of unpopulated forested lands and is somewhat difficult to access.

Only 4 priority squares are still in need of work. Coverage of these squares is already scheduled and should pose no problems. For the non-priority squares the primary goals are to complete those with less than 10 hours effort remaining, or missing a few species (12 squares). We also need to do 10 point counts in squares where already started (11 squares). After these goals are achieved, we need to bring as many remaining squares as possible up to 10 hours. Overall guild coverage within the region is fairly good though some species such as Bicknell's Thrush, Horned Lark and Black-backed Woodpecker need work.

If you will be travelling through Region 4, particularly along the Renous Hwy (Rte 108) or Tobique Valley (Rte 385), please consider spending a few minutes atlassing during your travels. If you do plan on atlassing here, please contact me (see below) so that your efforts can be directed where most needed.

Roy LaPointe
506-432-1900
birdyard@nbnnet.nb.ca



Bicknell's Thrush by Yves Aubrey

Region 5, Christmas Mountains

Greg Campbell and Ally Manthorne will be conducting HELP surveys in this region and will be finishing up priority squares, finding remaining species and getting in the full 20 survey hours.

Greg Campbell
506-364-5025
gcampbell@bsc-eoc.org

Region 6, Miramichi

With stomachs full of rum cake (rumour has it that Pam bribes all of her atlassers with cake), volunteers in the Miramichi region will be heading out to finish off priority squares and find some of the area's more elusive species.

Pam Watters
506-210-2170
Atlasmaritimes6@gmail.com

Region 7, Carleton – Victoria

While point counts have been completed, there is still quite a bit of work that remains to be done in Region 7. Several priority squares have fewer than 20 hours and most have far fewer species than during the first Atlas. Roy LaPointe plans to work in the northern part of the region and atlas staff in the southern portion of this region, unless we are able to find additional volunteers either from inside or outside the region. This region was very well covered during the first Atlas and we are hoping we can at least put in a comparable effort. Your help in this very beautiful region would be greatly appreciated. Please be in touch if you are able to assist in one or more squares.

Becky Stewart or Kate Bredin (Atlas office)
1-866-528-5275 (office)
506-540-1822 (field cell phone)
bstewart@bsc-eoc.org, kbredin@bsc-eoc.org or
atlasmaritimes@gmail.com

Region 8, Boiestown – Doaktown

There are 19 priority squares in Region 8 and to date 14 squares would be considered complete. Four other squares are at least half done and only one, 19GM02 (Bantalor Game Refuge) remains left with very little work carried out in that square. The preceding is in regard to atlassing only, as most of the point counts have been done by the Atlas field teams. The following squares are a bit remote and require work; 19FM86, 19GM02, 19GM04, 19GM24 and 20KS92. Should anyone have a chance to provide information from any of those squares it would be much appreciated. If all goes well there should be no problem finishing this Region.

Don Gibson
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gibsondg@nbnnet.nb.ca

Region 9, Kent

A big push needs to happen in the Kent Region this summer. Point counts have been completed in all but one square but almost all priority squares have fewer than 10 hours of survey effort. RC, Denis Doucet,



spent much of May tracking down early breeders but additional help is needed to make sure this region receives full survey coverage.

Denis Doucet

506-525-9673

ddodeguy57@gmail.com

I NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE!

As we all know the Atlas season is hectic but communicating with one another is very important and we want to make sure you know where everyone is and can get a hold of us at any time. The NB Field team, consisting of Colin McFarlane and Coordinator Becky Stewart, will be working in southwestern NB in the first part of June (from Charlotte County to Perth Andover) and then in the northern Region of Restigouche. Their field cell phone number is 506-540-1822.

The NS field team, consisting of Lucas Berrigan and Jean-François Jetté, will be working on the southwestern shore of NS as well as Guysborough County, and will likely move to Kent County and the Acadian Peninsula in the latter half of the month. Their field cell phone number is 506-540-1906.

A complete list of squares that Atlas staff plan to survey is available on the Atlas website. While we have put every effort into making sure we aren't duplicating any volunteer efforts the Maritimes is a big place so please contact us if these plans conflict in any way with your own. Field teams will check and return cell phone messages every two to three days and Becky Stewart will also check email. Kate Bredin, the assistant coordinator, will be in the Atlas office to answer any coordination or data entry questions you may have. Kate will also be working to coordinate surveys along the NS coast. Contact Kate in the Atlas Office at 1-866-5ATLAS5 (506-528-5275).

Region 10, Fredericton

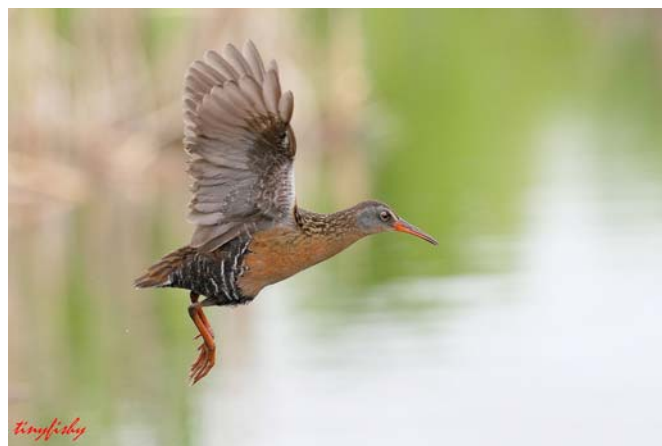
As we head into the final field season for the atlas, Region 10 (Fredericton) is looking good with respect to point counts: every priority square but one has been surveyed, and that last square will be complete next month. However, the situation with respect to general atlassing does not look quite so good. Much work is needed to increase the number of breeding confirmations, particularly outside of the Saint John River corridor. Additional effort is also needed, even for simple presence/absence, for species that are not surveyed well by point counts (e.g. waterfowl, marsh birds, nocturnal birds), so please try to get into those

'off-road' habitats. Atlassers should also make an effort to generate abundance estimates, both for any new records you make this year and for records you've submitted over the past four years. Lastly, while not a priority for the upcoming field season, we all (and I'm probably the biggest culprit) need to put more effort into filling out our rare species forms for previous years. Only a small percentage of these have been completed thus far, so many of you will be hearing from me on a regular basis over the next few months.

Dwayne Sabine

506-450-7302

Dwayne.Sabine@gnb.ca



Virginia Rail by "Tinyfishy"

Region 11, Charlotte

This region is well covered for point counts, and several priority squares have excellent coverage. However the two squares that encompass Campobello Island – 19FK66 and 19FK67 – have zero hours and zero species do far. So, if you are planning a trip to Campobello Island this summer – some basic Atlassing is needed there!

Scott Makepeace and Dwayne Sabine will be atlassing in the northeastern part of this region, while Atlas Staff will be working in the northwest. Don't forget this is the region with the first Tufted Titmouse breeding record for the Maritimes, and as this covers the extreme southwestern part of New Brunswick, it may hold many more Maritimes treasures (breeding prairie warblers?).

Scott Makepeace

506-453-2440

Scott.Makepeace@gnb.ca

Region 12, Saint John

This region has been relatively well covered with point counts completed in all priority squares with the



exception of two adjacent priority squares in the southern portion of the region. Efforts will be focused on ensuring that 20 hours of survey effort are obtained in each of the priority squares. Non-priority squares in the northeastern portion of the region have received little survey coverage and could benefit from additional survey effort (particularly since this region was well covered during the first Atlas effort).

Richard Blacquiére

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Region 13, Petitcodiac

Approximately half of the priority squares in the Petitcodiac region could use additional survey effort, although most of these squares have now been assigned. There are several non-priority squares, particularly once one travels any distance from the Moncton region, which could use additional survey hours. As well, the squares surrounding Fundy Park need quite a bit of work as well. Join RC Ron Arsenault and Les Amies de la nature on June 12, and Nature Moncton on June 19, to survey squares 20LR55 and 20LR56. For more information on these square bashes, contact Ron!

This region has been well point-counted - 261 point counts have been completed, surpassing the established target of 228! Two priority squares still need point counts - Scott and Ivy are expected to complete these. In addition, point counts will likely be done in square 20LR79, to give us at least 19 squares with a minimum of 10 point counts.

Ron Arsenault

506-758-3061

atlasmaritimes13@gmail.com

Region 14, Tintamarre

With a large number of dedicated volunteers, the Tintamarre Region is relatively well covered in both priority and non-priority squares. Of course, there are still some loose ends to tie up and some species totals to “bump up”. Julie will be encouraging atlasers that have finished their squares in the Tintamarre Region to help out their neighbours in the Chignecto Peninsula Region to the south and Kent region to the north.

Julie Paquet

902-661-3005

julie.paquet@ec.gc.ca

Region 15, Chignecto Peninsula

The Chignecto Region got a “headstart” this year when the Nova Scotia Bird Society held their out-of-

area meeting in Economy. Several priority squares are well on their way to being completed but need more hours and species to hit the completion mark. There is still a great deal of work to be done in this region and co-coordinators Joan and Dave would be more than happy to point you in the direction of a square that needs your assistance.

Joan Czaplay and Dave E. Harris

Joan - 902-406-6678

joancz@ns.sympatico.ca

Dave - 902-254-5304

Harrisda@gov.ns.ca

Abundance Estimates...we need them!

If you haven't had a chance to do so yet, it would be great if you could make abundance estimates for the squares where you have been working. Remember these are “estimates” so we are basically asking for your best guess. Right now we have estimates for just 10% of our records (a far cry from the number of estimates we had in the first atlas), which will make it very difficult to compare our results to the first atlas. The new online form for making abundance estimates is straightforward - give it a try. Simply login, choose a square and then click the “abundance score” button (it is directly under the “breeding evidence” form button). Because the abundance categories are very broad (0 = 0 pair 1 = 1 pair 2 = 2-10 pairs 3 = 11-100 pairs 4 = 101-1000 pairs 5 = 1001-10,000 pairs) it is easy to estimate species abundance in squares you have atlased on a regular basis. You can check page 12 of your atlaser guide, as well as past newsletters for additional instructions. If you have any questions or want assistance in making your abundance estimates, please contact the Atlas office. **Help us maximize our ability to compare between the first and second Atlas by making abundance estimates.**

Region 16, Annapolis Valley - Digby Neck

Things have progressed well in Region 16. Of the 75 squares in this region, 24 are finished, including 13 priority squares. The rest have been divided into four priorities. First priority are the eight remaining priority squares. Most of these have more than 20 hours but still need “topping up” in terms of species. Eleven squares are priority two. They have been completed in terms of species and hours, and all that remains are point counts. Almost all of the remaining squares are third priority. They have a reasonable chance of getting completed this year. Some of these had no data at all in the first atlas, such as 20LQ67 Aylesford Lake (65 species so far) and 20LQ28 Mount Hanley (55 species to date). Some squares, are the other way



around, 19GK33 had 68 species in the first atlas, but zero so far this time. A real anomaly is 20LR91 Cape Blomidon, which includes Blomidon Provincial Park. It had 71 species the first time, and only three to date. The five fourth priority squares are along Digby Neck are mostly water, and had either no or little coverage in the first atlas.

Being able to move people to unfinished squares in the final year makes me very optimistic about this region being well covered, due to the time and effort of all of the atlasers who have helped in the region.

Patrick Kelly
902-472-2322

patrick.kelly@dal.ca

Region 17, Southwest Shore

While coverage in this region has already surpassed that of the first atlas, there are still several priority squares that need additional survey coverage. A few dedicated volunteers have worked hard in this area over the past five years and hopefully with staff and volunteers we'll be able to give the southwest shore the coverage it deserves. Paul Gould hopes to organize a square bash for priority square 20KP74 (we'll post these details as soon as possible). Additional volunteers, either from the region or from away, would still be appreciated (there are several squares that have zero survey hours). Please contact Becky Stewart or the Atlas office to be assigned a square.

Becky Stewart or Kate Bredin (Atlas office)
1-866-528-5275 (office - Kate)
506-540-1822 (field cell phone - Becky)
bstewart@bsc-eoc.org, kbredin@bsc-eoc.org or
atlasmaritimes@gmail.com

Region 18, Lower South Shore

Coverage in the Lower South Shore is shaping up nicely as we enter the final field season. Almost all coastal squares have been assigned (although there are some still available) and both staff and volunteers have worked to cover the interior of the region. All priority squares should be complete by the end of July but like the neighbouring Region 17 there is still a great deal of work to be done in non-priority squares, some of which haven't been surveyed at all. If you would like to take on a square in Region 18 please contact us.

Becky Stewart or Kate Bredin (Atlas office)
1-866-528-5275 (office)
506-540-1822 (field cell phone)
bstewart@bsc-eoc.org, kbredin@bsc-eoc.org or
atlasmaritimes@gmail.com



Common Tern by John Chardine

Region 19, Mersey – LaHave

After four years Region 19 has approximately two dozen squares completed and another dozen almost there. Our dedicated atlasers have completed their home squares. Now mostly remote areas remain to be covered as best we can. In terms of Priority Squares (there are 20 plus 1 special square) we are generally in very good shape and all the remaining ones are being worked on and will be completed.

A goodly number of atlasers have agreed to take on new areas and so this promises to be a hectic but productive last year and we will leave "no stone unturned". If you want more challenges, but can only "dabble" (i.e. do just a little bit in a square), please let me know as there is still room to roam.

I'll be inland, travelling via truck on logging roads and canoeing a few waterways. Hopefully we'll also have a few boat trips to selected islands along much of our coastline. James will be scurrying around Lunenburg County. We both thank all of you for your tireless and competent work.

Peter Hope and James Hirtle
Peter – 902-682-2512
peterhope@ns.sympatico.ca
James – 902-764-2182
jrhbirder@hotmail.com

Region 20, Chebucto – Musquodoboit

Atlasers in Region 20 did a stellar job last year. There are no unsurveyed squares. Only four of the 92 squares have less than 33 species tallied in them - each of these are coastal squares and have less than 10% land in them. Of the remaining 88 squares, 35 have less than 67 species tallied, while all the rest have more than that (green). Point Counts have been done in almost all the priority squares, as well as in a dozen



more. 30 squares are considered complete. If you're wondering if your square is completed or close to it, just send me an e-mail. I'd be happy to discuss it with you.

For the fifth and final year the targets are to complete all the priority squares, bump up the total number of species in all squares that need work; bump up confirmations to probable or confirmed wherever possible, and finally to round out the sightings in each square: are there any groups of species (guilds) that are missing? Ducks? Raptors? Marsh birds? If you'd like someone to help you finish your square, just let me know. I plan to do nothing but atlas, all summer long!

Suzanne Borkowski

902-445-2922

suzanneborkowski@yahoo.ca



Bald Eagle by John Chardine

Region 21, Cobequid

Region 21 overall has good coverage but requires work in a few areas to "green up" the squares. One is the Noel Shore in squares 20MR21, 31, 41 and 51. Another is the Northumberland Shore area in Cumberland and Colchester counties in squares 20MR58, 20MR66, 67, 68, 77 and 87. Pictou Island (20NR37) also requires work. All atlasers are also encouraged to do the species population estimates in this final year. I am guilty of this neglect but the data is important for comparisons to the last atlas. Resident and "from afar" atlasers looking for new areas to explore this season are encouraged to atlas in the squares that I have listed. Results should be put online right away so everyone knows what is found.

Ross Hall

902-893-9665

ross.hall@ns.sympatico.ca

Stop, don't "X" out that Eagle

Figuring out when to record a bird as "X" (observed) vs. "H" (in habitat) is still proving to be a bit tricky. And unfortunately there appears to be a bias against certain species, raptors in particular. Please don't hesitate to mark a raptor as an "H" rather than "X". Although raptors have large breeding ranges, if you don't record them as "H" for fear they may actually be breeding in the square next door, the result is they don't get recorded at all. A better strategy is to record them as "H" and if the data verification committee later downgrades that record to "X", so be it. So, if you see a raptor in a square and there is appropriate breeding habitat (even a small amount) please record it as "H". If at anytime you aren't sure what code is most appropriate for any breeding evidence you may see, don't hesitate to contact your RC or the Atlas office for advice.

Region 22, Guysborough

Several atlasers including Susann Myers, Ken McKenna and staff will be working in this relatively unpopulated region in the hopes of finishing up this summer. If you are able to atlas in this region your assistance would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Tom Kavanaugh or the Atlas office to find out where to begin.

Tom Kavanaugh

902-366-3476

atlasmaritimes22@gmail.com

Region 23, Antigonish

Region 23 is in pretty good shape going into the final atlas year. My feeling as regional coordinator is that 35/43 squares are adequately surveyed for breeding evidence. All priority squares except the Lismore square (20NR56) are well covered and this small square requires 2 more hours for completion which John Kearney will complete. Seven easterly squares (Monks Head 20NR95; Ogden 20PR02; West Intervale 20PR03; South Merland 20PR04; Tracadie 20PR05; Boylston 20PR13 and Hadleyville 20PR33) need a few more hours and species. Ballantynes Cove 20NR87 could use a few more species.

The region has an adequate number of Point Counts, but a number of squares with less than 10 point counts will require some work to bring them up to at least 10 to be countable. Ken McKenna will complete this in June. Colonial species on Pomquet Island have yet to be counted and an expedition under Mark Pulsifer will take care of that.

Vesper Sparrows are on my wish list for this year as they were in 8% of squares last atlas, but yet to be detected for this atlas despite many squares with high blueberry fields. Other wish list species not yet detected are Marsh Wren, House Wren and House Finch. Although many squares are adequately surveyed, a number still require some night work looking for owls, rails and “inland shorebirds”. Since all common owls seem to be in good numbers this spring, now is an ideal time to look for owls in your square.

All in all, atlasers in the region are doing a great job. The Atlas head office would like us to spread our wings into nearby regions such as Guysborough and South-west Cape Breton and I strongly encourage you to adopt a neighbouring region’s under-surveyed square.

Ken McKenna
902-752-7644

kenmcken@eastlink.ca

Region 24, Southwest Cape Breton Island

A comprehensive plan has been developed to complete as many priority squares as possible in Region 24. Two out of fifteen priority squares are now deemed complete with the remaining thirteen near complete. The plan focuses on these thirteen squares in an organized manner. The deficient priority squares have been identified as requiring searching for expected species that have been missed, and/or requiring a few more hours or a few more point counts. Evening visits are in progress to pick up Woodcock, Owls, etc., in a number of squares. Two or three day visits are planned in the more northern squares where, in some cases, a four-wheel drive vehicle will be rented for access. These visits will take place in May with a follow-up in June to look for additional species and do more point counts. We expect additional data to filter in for some of the other squares in the region as the summer progresses.

Dave Johnston
902-625-1534

dwj.jem@ns.sympatico.ca

Region 25, East Cape Breton Island

Led by the three Daves (Harris, McCorquodale and Johnston), volunteers have done a bang-up job of covering East Cape Breton, both for point counts and general atlassing. In this region, there are several squares that need to be “topped up” and some additional species gaps to fill, but overall, the region is

well on its way to being complete. Thanks to everyone who has worked so diligently in the region.

Dave Harris and Dave McCorquodale

Dave H - 902-828-2663

davidharris2010@gmail.com

Dave M - 902-794-2172

david_mccorquodale@cbu.ca



Boreal Owl by Christian Artuso

Region 26, Cape Breton Island Highlands

2009 was our best atlassing year to date and we were able to reach the few remaining unsurveyed squares in our region. In this our final field season of the MBBA, Region 26 has a number of priorities that need completion. First on the list is to finish the point counts in our priority squares. Only two very remote squares have not reached the minimum number (10) of point counts required to be officially included. There are also a few priority squares that are missing a few PCs (mostly off road) to get to the stated goal of 15 that we will also try and finish. As well there are a number of other squares that we will attempt to get PCs for if time and weather allow. Second is to try and survey islands and coastlines using local fishing or whale watching boats and sea kayakers to check for seabird nesting on islands that are not easily viewed from the mainland. We have also planned a number of multi-day hikes to remote squares to try and get data on areas not normally visited by birders. To accomplish these goals we have assembled a core of experienced atlasers and avian research teams that work in this region. Because of the early spring we will be starting our main efforts a week to ten days earlier than our usual June 1st start date. For those not as adventurous there are a number of squares needing work that are easily atlassed from the Cabot Trail, or from side roads and well groomed hiking trails. If you are planning to visit the Cape Breton highlands this summer, and are interested in doing

some atlassing, please get in touch and I will be happy to assist you in finding locations that need work.

Fritz McEvoy
902-383-2063
atlasmaritimes26@gmail.com

Region 27, Prince Edward Island

Islanders have been working hard over the past 4 years and looking at the online effort maps it shows! (PE is truly a green island.) Only two squares still need point counts—and these have been assigned. One area that could use some additional attention is the northwest side of the island where several squares have less than 20 hours of effort. Please let Rosemary know if you are available to take on an island square.

Rosemary Curley
902-569-1209
frcurley@gov.pe.ca

About the Atlas

The Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas is a cooperative project of Bird Studies Canada, Environment Canada, the provincial governments of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, Nature NB, the NS Bird Society, the PEI Natural History Society and hundreds of volunteer bird watchers. The project will determine the distribution, abundance and status of all birds breeding in the Maritimes. For more information, to join the effort, or to donate to the project, please visit our website www.mba-aom.ca or call toll free 1-866-528-5275 (1-866-5ATLAS5)

2010...last chance to put Maritimes breeding birds on the map!



Heather Teeters

Thank-you Atlas partners and supporters!

