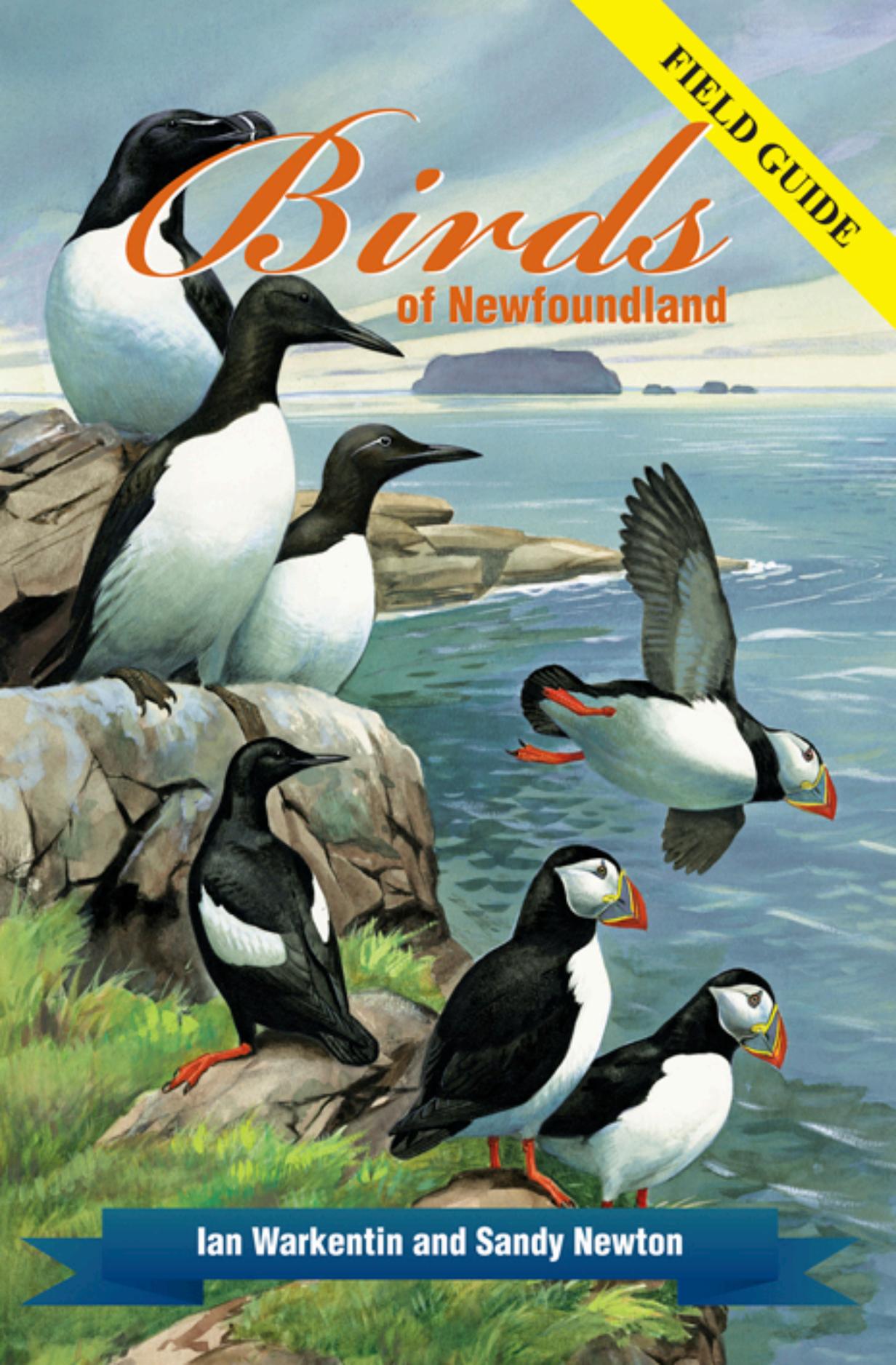


FIELD GUIDE

Birds of Newfoundland



Ian Warkentin and Sandy Newton

Foreword

For most people, particularly those living in urban settings, birds are the most obvious reminder of the multitude of wild creatures that inhabit the natural world. Birds can soar effortlessly through the air, gracefully chase down and catch the smallest of flying insects, or plunge deep into the ocean in pursuit of fish. They are endless sources of delight and wonderment.

One of the oddities about human beings is our need to name all that we see, hear, and touch. So when we see a bird—say, a medium-sized blue bird that loves peanuts—we’re inclined to wonder, “What kind of bird is that?” Then out comes the bird guide and a few minutes later a match is made: it’s a blue jay. Once identification is confirmed, we can brag to family, friends, and neighbours about the beautiful bird that chose our yard in which to feed.

Birdwatchers fall into two basic categories: avid listers who actively seek out new birds and keep detailed records of confirmed sightings, and casual observers like the one just described, who hang a backyard feeder and want to learn a few interesting facts about the birds they manage to spot in the wild. This book is mainly directed at this second group, although the depth of information may be of interest to anyone who likes to use a bird guide.

The *Birds of Newfoundland Field Guide* presents 171 species of birds out of the roughly 380 found on the island portion of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We’ve included the most commonly sighted birds—the species not covered are rare or itinerant visitors to the Island. Nor have we included birds seen in Labrador but not on the Island. This was a practical choice: the range of habitats (and thus the birds seen) in Labrador is too distinctly different from Newfoundland’s.

We chose to focus on one portion of the province to make this book easier to navigate for novice birders on the Island. We hope to provide a similar treatment of Labrador birds in a subsequent volume.

One of the key features of this guide is the inclusion of artwork by famed naturalist Roger Tory Peterson. A leader in wildlife conservation throughout much of the 20th century, Peterson used his skills as an artist to encourage the public to learn about and love nature. He believed awareness and education are the keys to ensuring protection of wilderness habitats, as well as the world's rich variety of animals and plants.

Guided by the same belief, our overriding aim was to create a guide to birds in Newfoundland that would be easy to use and accessible to all readers. It is our hope that it will encourage an appreciation of the natural world and the creatures that rely upon its resources for their survival.

Introduction

Located on the northeastern edge of North America and surrounded by the cold but food-rich continental-shelf waters of the North Atlantic, the island of Newfoundland provides prime nesting habitat for many birds that spend most of their life at sea. But for migrants that fly from southern regions to breed in Canada's boreal forest, this island's distant corner of the continent is just a bit too remote to be a viable destination for large numbers of species.

Compared to neighbouring provinces in Atlantic Canada, the island of Newfoundland has relatively few bird species. More than 400 birds are found at various times of the year within the boundaries of both Nova Scotia (which has less than half the Island's 111,390 km² landmass) and New Brunswick (two-thirds Newfoundland's size). The Island, on the other hand, reports only 378 species. To put these numbers in a larger context: just over 900 species of birds have been recorded across Canada and the United States, and there are roughly 10,000 bird species globally.

While the overall number of species in Newfoundland is low, each spring a spectacular diversity of seabirds do flock in enormous numbers to more than 300 nesting colonies along the Island's coast. In addition, the interior of the Island offers opportunities to observe scores of boreal forest birds that many Canadians and others who live further south seldom have a chance to see. All of this makes Newfoundland a rewarding place for birdwatching.

This guide has been designed so you can easily pack and use it whenever and wherever you enjoy the outdoors in Newfoundland. Before you head out—especially if you are new to birding—please read the following sections; they'll help you understand our symbols and terminology (**key terms are in bold**), and make it easier to identify the species you are most likely to encounter in the field.

How we talk about birds

Like most ornithologists and amateur birding associations in North America, we have adopted the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) as the primary authority for identifying, grouping, and naming the birds included in this book. The AOU's classification system uses the most recent knowledge of the physical, behavioural, genetic, and evolutionary characteristics for each bird species seen in North America.

Under this system, every bird has both a common and a **scientific name**. The latter—*Larus glaucoides*, for example—is a two-part Latin label that reflects how a species is related to other birds. The first word (*Larus*) is the bird's **genus**; all closely related species have the same genus name. The second term (*glaucoides*) identifies the **species**: birds that share a common appearance, genetic profile, and evolutionary history are members of the same species. More people might know *Larus glaucoides* by its **common name**—the Iceland gull.

Classifying birds is an evolving process. As observation and scientific study provide new information, our understanding of how species are related to each other can change. This, in turn, can affect both a bird's categorization and its scientific name. The Iceland gull, for example, was linked to and later split from the Thayer's gull (*Larus thayeri*) in recent decades, as new information about the two was acquired.

Common names can change over time and vary by region—in some cases, the same common name may even be used for more than one species. In Newfoundland, for example, both Leach's and Wilson's storm-petrels may be called Mother Carey's chickens. In this guide, we've included some of the colloquial names used on the Island.

When they study birds, amateur birders and professional ornithologists alike take note not only of which species are present, but also of their numbers. In Canada, detected declines in bird numbers trigger investigation and assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (**COSEWIC**). This independent body of experts is composed of representatives from provincial and federal wildlife agencies and departments, non-governmental organizations, and aboriginal groups. Based on COSEWIC's findings, a species may be listed as Endangered, Threatened, of Special Concern, or Not at Risk under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. We have included the COSEWIC category for any bird species designated as "at risk" (as of October 2008).

At-risk species require special caution when you come upon them in the wild, of course, but you should consider *any* bird's welfare when you birdwatch. Rapid movement will disrupt even the raucous chorus of a seabird colony. A slow and quiet approach, on the other hand, can reward you with

long periods in which to observe even the shyest of birds as they move about their habitat—and that, in turn, will give you a chance to make the positive identifications that add to the pleasure of the activity.

As you'll discover, birding provides a way to become more intimately acquainted with the natural world around you. When you take care not to disturb the activities of the birds you encounter, you will not only enjoy newfound wonders, you'll enable all those who follow you to do so, as well.

How to use this book

Our bird listings provide both general information about each bird species and specific information about its behaviour and presence in Newfoundland.

The image for each listing comes from one of three hands (see pages 17-18) and represents an “ideal” bird. Be aware that the appearance of an individual bird can vary according to its age and gender, the time of year, or the region it inhabits. The **Look for** information provides additional visual clues you may need to make a positive identification.

Arranged across the middle of each listing is a series of **icons** that convey the species' abundance and seasonal occurrence in Newfoundland, as well as its nest type. Greyed icons (or text) indicate that “it doesn't happen here”—in other words, a grey season icon tells you the bird is typically not present on the Island during that time of year, and grey nesting text indicates the bird does not nest here.

We also indicate where each species is most likely to be seen in Newfoundland (under **NF habitat**), as well as where it may be found in this hemisphere (**Range**). The latter information is a reminder that each species' survival depends on many environments and locations.

We also tell you if a species is **resident** on the Island and typically stays year-round at the same location (black-capped chickadee, for example), or if it **irrupts** out of its normal year-round range and appears here only when food resources are limited (white-winged crossbill), or if it migrates regularly between summer breeding and wintering locations (northern pintail). It should be noted that global climate change has led to more individuals of some traditionally migratory species remaining on their breeding grounds throughout the year (American robin).

Seasons: Seasonal icons represent at a glance the time(s) of year you are most likely to see a species in Newfoundland. Each symbol has its own seasonally relevant colour; full-colour icons mean that the likelihood of seeing the bird is exactly as the frequency bars indicate. If a species is generally seen less frequently in a particular season than suggested by the frequency bars, the seasonal icon is in silhouette. A smaller grey seasonal icon indicates that a species is generally not present on the Island at that time of year.



The four seasonal icons we use correspond roughly to these periods:

Spring	March 21 to June 20
Summer	June 21 to September 20
Fall	September 21 to December 20
Winter	December 21 to March 20

Nests: The following nest icons indicate at a glance where each species builds its nest:

 <p>Gr = Ground</p>	<p>Bk = Bank Bu = Burrow Cl = Cliff Cv = Tree cavity Fl = Floating Gr = Ground HS = Human structures</p>	<p>Sb = Shrub Sn = Snag Tr = Tree (both types) Tr/C = Tree (coniferous) Tr/D = Tree (deciduous) WV = Wetland vegetation</p>
---	---	--

 This icon indicates that a species is not known to breed in Newfoundland. Where it appears, the nest information is given in grey type to reinforce the point: such nests do not occur in Newfoundland.

Further notes about . . .

Breeding: Some of the species found on the Island in summer (the typical breeding season for most) are shown on our pages as non-breeders. There are two main explanations for this. Some of these birds breed in the southern hemisphere and occur in Newfoundland during their non-breeding “winter” season (the sooty shearwater, for example). Other birds remain here in their wintering grounds when they are young because they are either physiologically too immature to breed or too inexperienced to claim a nesting territory and attract a mate. By “choosing” to spend the summer in their species’ non-breeding range, these birds (such as the white-winged scoter) forego the energetically stressful demands of migrating to more northerly locations until later in their lives.

Nests: One way to locate birds during the breeding season is by looking for their nests. Some birds are very good at hiding them, however—you may never see the home of the more secretive species such as the gray-cheeked thrush. Others, particularly those that nest in colonies, are far less concerned about camouflage. The nest categories we use for breeding species indicate the locations of their nests and the type of vegetation or structure that supports or conceals them.

Voice: You will often hear a bird before you see it; people who spend a lot of time birding in dense vegetation soon become proficient at identifying birds by sound as well as by sight. And while birds are generally known as marvellous singers, there is great variety in the types of sounds that they make: gulls, for example, give brief (if sometimes raucous) calls, whereas the rose-breasted grosbeak sings in melodious phrases. Even within a single species, the frequency of singing may vary: some individuals sing repeatedly and others only occasionally. Songs are sex-specific—they are most frequently given by males to advertise their territory to potential mates and defend it from competing males—and they are sung most often in the early morning and late in the day. Thus, typically, birds normally sing only during the breeding season, but they give simple call notes at any time of the year.

Trying to reflect bird vocalizations in words is easy for a few species—the yellow warbler seems clearly to sing *sweet-sweet-I’m-so-sweet*—but in most cases an “English version” of a bird’s call or song is not as helpful. The **Listen for** section in our species descriptions “translates” the most commonly heard vocalizations of each species—but it can be well worth your while to supplement the written word with commercially available recordings or visit online birding sites that have audio clips of songs and calls.

Understanding what you see

Bird plumage: The main way to identify a bird (and to determine its gender and age) is by the colours and patterns of its plumage. Shape, size, posture, behaviour, and habitat can also provide clues, but ultimately it's the plumage—both individual field cues (such as bars, bands, and spots) and the overall feathering—that yields a positive identification.

Birds change in appearance over the course of their lives, and their looks may also vary by sex and season. Nearly all birds grow to adult size within weeks or months of hatching, but their feathering is a different matter. Young birds of many species acquire the plumage of breeding adults by the age of one, yet years must pass for other species before they attain adult feathers: a bald eagle does not fully develop its characteristic white head and tail until its fifth year, for example.

Birds undergo a series of changes in plumage when they are young. Many birds hatch without feathers; **natal down** then develops in the first few days of life, to be replaced later by **juvenal (or juvenile) plumage**—the first true set of body and flight feathers. Birds may then experience several **moult**s—when feathers are lost and replaced—which yield a variety of **immature plumages**, before finally growing the feathers of the **definitive adult plumage**.

Once a year, usually in late summer or early autumn, many birds undergo a complete moult, during which all their feathers are replaced. Our **Look for** entries do not indicate any seasonal changes in appearance for species that experience only this single annual moult.

Some species also experience additional partial moults during the year, which involve different amounts of head and body feathers. This partial moult often occurs in spring (though the timing varies among species) and alters the birds' appearance for the breeding season. Many birds exchange a drab winter plumage for brighter summer feathers at this time, which can help them attract a mate. Our **Look for** entries use **winter** to refer to the appearance of these birds after the complete fall moult, and **summer** to indicate how they appear during the breeding season.

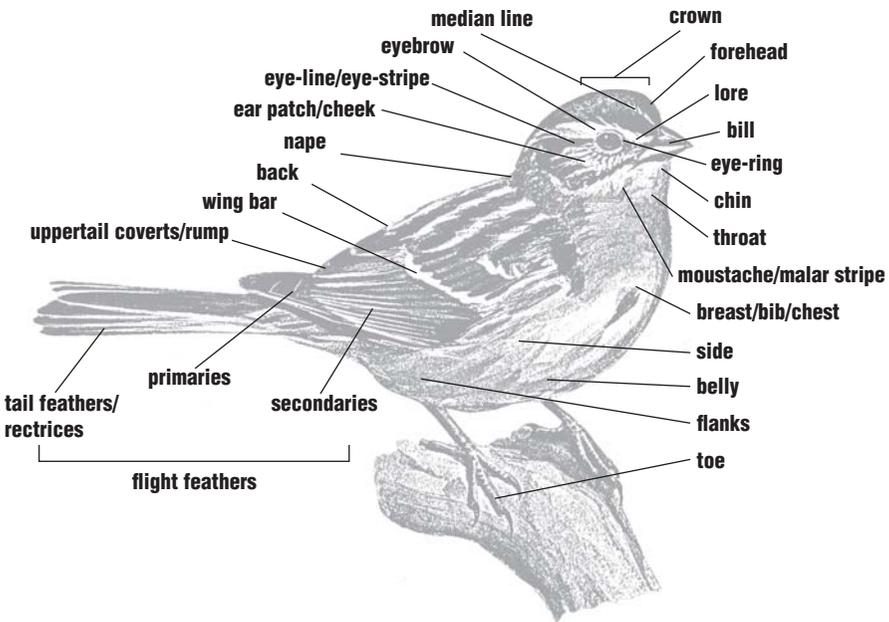
In many species, males and females have different plumages. Frequently the male is more colourful than the female, but not always: female phalaropes, for example, are more ornate than males. Where plumages of male and female are distinct, we describe both.

For some species, timing of plumage replacement further complicates the matter—both sexes may not moult at the same time. Many male ducks, for example, wear their summer plumage throughout the year, except for a short period in late summer when they change into a typically drab **eclipse plumage**. They soon resume their “summer” plumage, which they wear all winter. When relevant, our listings describe one adult female plumage and

two (seasonally determined) male plumages for such species. Our ability to put things into tidy categories is hampered by biological reality; we have tried to keep this complex process as simple as possible.

Not all feathers are created equal: As you might expect, birding comes with some technical language. Experts describe plumage in specific ways; we have adopted some of these terms, while attempting to hold the jargon to a minimum. The terms we've used are explained below.

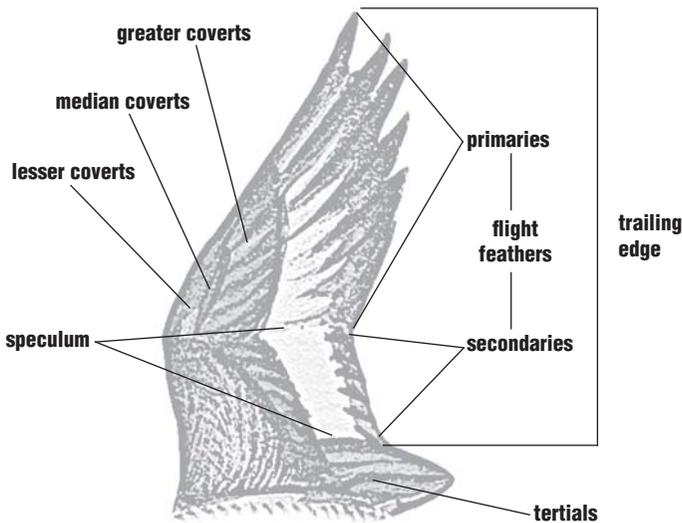
Feathering of the head can be amazingly intricate. Distinctive markings are particularly common on the **forehead** and **crown**; often there are stripes marking the top (median) or sides (lateral) of the head. Lines running back from the base of the bill and above the eye create an **eyebrow**. Varying lengths of the feathers surrounding the eye may be coloured to create an **eye-ring** (partial or complete), or a line of colour (**eye stripe**) may extend both forward and backward from the eye, or just behind it. The **ear patch** or **cheek** is an area behind and below the eye that often has a patch of different-coloured feathers. The **moustache** or **malar stripe** extends down from the



base of the bill (or perhaps the eye) in front of the ear patch.

The shape of the wing—long and pointed for high soaring, for example, or short and round for manoeuvrability in dense vegetation—can be useful in identification, but the colours of the wing feathers are also key. **Flight feathers**, on the trailing edge of the outer (**primaries**) and inner (**secondaries** and **tertials**) sections of the extended wing, provide lift. A second group of feathers (**coverts**) protects the upper and lower sides of the wing and smoothes the flow of air across its surfaces. Coverts lie in bands on the wing (**lesser**, **median**, and **greater**); distinctive colour in the greater or median coverts can create **wing bars** (very helpful in differentiating species). Likewise, the secondaries may be coloured, creating a similarly distinctive **speculum** (many ducks have this feature).

Tail shape is also an identifying cue: tails can be forked, or have longer outer or inner feathers. Colour or pattern on the **tail feathers** or **rectrices** and **tail coverts** is also helpful: look for differences in the shade or colour of upper tail coverts (**rump**) or undertail coverts, as well as the presence or extent of spotting or barring on otherwise dark rectrices.



Looking for birds in all the right places

As with all wildlife, birds are inextricably linked to their environments, so we have included major and minor habitat tabs along the edge of the page for all our bird descriptions to indicate the type of environment in Newfoundland in which you are most likely to see each species. They are:

Ocean & Coast
Forest

Fresh Water
Urban

Barrens & Brush

Each roughly reflects the resource needs of our birds, and is described in more detail below.

Humans love putting the elements of the natural world into such categories—like trying to force square pegs into round holes. Remember that these tips can help you identify the bird you are looking at, but are by no means foolproof—birds do not read guidebooks.

More about our ocean & coast habitats

The continental shelf extends more than 400 kilometres out from the coast of Newfoundland in some places, and these relatively shallow waters support a diversity and abundance of fish and other marine life. The same rich fishing grounds that drew Europeans to our shores more than 500 years ago have attracted seabirds to these waters for much, much longer.

Every year during the breeding season (May through September), these birds feed not only themselves but also the nestlings that wait by the thousands in large coastal colonies. There are more than 300 seabird colonies on the Island, and they host tens of thousands of gannets, puffins, murres, kittiwakes, and other species. The birds nest on rocky outcrops and islands, primarily along the east and northeast coasts. The rest of the year, most of these species are **pelagic**—they live on the open ocean to the east, or as far away as the shores of Africa and South America.

The many bays, inlets, and estuaries on Newfoundland's coast also provide ample feeding and nesting opportunities. For birds seeking the shelter of grassy islands (terns) or dense vegetation along the shore (eiders), there is plenty of habitat. Likewise sand and pebble beaches, especially around the southwestern corner of the Island, are a summer haven for shorebirds such as the piping plover.

In winter, Newfoundland's coastal habitats provide food resources, in the water and along the beaches and rocky shorelines, for several species that breed further north in Canada and in parts of Europe. These include a range of shorebirds, as well as sea ducks such as the scoters. With so many birds around, these coastal habitats are even attractive to species on the hunt for an avian feast, such as gyrfalcons.

More about our freshwater habitats

Not only is Newfoundland surrounded by salt water, but the Island is also dotted with thousands of bodies of fresh water—lakes, ponds, bogs, marshes, rivers, and streams. These bodies of water tend to freeze in winter, so most aquatic species use freshwater habitats during the breeding season only; those that stay on the Island year-round typically winter along its coasts. These include many ducks, the mergansers, and the kingfisher, as well as migrants from farther north.

The opportunity to catch trout draws some bird species to the larger lakes: loons and mergansers, for example, as well as ospreys and bald eagles. Ducks feeding on invertebrates or aquatic vegetation are most likely to be found near the shallows of larger lakes or on ponds surrounded by dense vegetation in which they hide their nests. The harlequin duck, an Endangered species, is distinctive because it prefers to nest along fast-flowing streams in the Island's forests. Other species, such as the grebes, construct a floating nest to protect their young from Newfoundland's limited but tenacious set of land-based predators (mainly squirrels, mink, marten, and foxes). The red-winged blackbird also seeks out freshwater ponds, but it is largely limited to the Island's southwest corner—a distribution pattern displayed by species in several habitat types.

Some “land birds” are also closely associated with fresh water because they prefer riparian habitat—areas that border (and are influenced by) rivers, lakes, and streams. These birds require forest stands, but both feed and nest at the water's edge, which is where you are most likely to see them.

More about our barrens & brush habitats

People visiting a Newfoundland barrens for the first time might be excused for thinking they were in northern Scotland or Iceland, or on some other island much farther north in the Atlantic. Barrens are large, flat, open stretches of low-growing tundra-like plant cover: grasses, mats of spongy mosses and lichens dotted with pitcher plants, and dwarf ericaceous shrubs. Interspersed are bogs, fens, and sheep laurel (*kalmia*) heaths, as well as thickets of stunted balsam fir and black spruce—known here as “tuckamore”—which may be only waist high yet hundreds of years old.

These areas occur all across Newfoundland, and are frequented by a distinct set of birds. The climb to the barren and rocky habitat atop the Long Range Mountains, on the Island's west coast, brings you to the realm of the rock ptarmigan, while the “partridge” you see at lower elevations is most likely the willow ptarmigan. On the same lowland barrens, the wavering *hu-hu-hu* sound of the snipe is heard from early summer.

A range of shorebirds also makes their home in these open habitats, usually not too far from freshwater ponds and streams. Many warblers, sparrows, and other songbirds typically nest in open habitat, though they also make use of nearby forest stands.

Several northern birds of prey hunt over open barrens, where they are more likely to have an unobstructed view of the movements of small mammals. Seasonal and nomadic patterns mean that these raptors, as well as longspurs and buntings, are seen only in winter when they move south to Newfoundland to avoid harsher arctic conditions.

More about our forest habitats

Although the pine-clad hills of Newfoundland have largely disappeared as a forest type—because of over-harvesting in the early 20th century and the more recent devastation caused by white pine blister rust—coniferous forests abound on the Island, particularly in the western and central regions.

As in other northern regions of Canada, much of Newfoundland's boreal forest is naturally and extensively fragmented. Many of the birds found in it are well accustomed to moving from tree stand to tree stand across openings created by bogs, fens, ponds, and rivers. For some (such as swallows and flycatchers), the open spaces immediately next to a patch of forest are important places to forage for flying insects, while the forest itself provides nesting habitat. Other species (juncos, sparrows, and some warblers) prefer to nest in more open habitat and eat the seeds and/or insects they find there—they use the trees as singing perches and places to forage for arboreal insects.

Still others (various finches and grosbeaks, the siskin) focus their foraging on conifer seeds but, because they range widely in their search for new sources of fresh cones, they are just as likely to be seen in open areas as continuous forest. The merlin and northern hawk owl both take advantage of these movements in and out of forest cover, hunting in open areas for inattentive birds going about their daily business of foraging and caring for their young.

Newfoundland also has large areas of dense and continuous forest. The moist maritime climate and cold snowy winters on the Island's west coast and Northern Peninsula, for example, promote balsam-fir-dominated stands with fern-covered forest floors. Central Newfoundland also receives lots of snow but its warmer and drier summers result in more forest fires; these conditions favour stands of fire-tolerant black spruce with mosses carpeting the forest floor. Less common, stands of deciduous trees, including yellow and white birch, trembling aspen, and red maple, are found in recently disturbed areas, in nutrient-rich valleys, along streams, and on warmer south-

facing hillsides. Large treed tracts draw birds that depend heavily on insects for their diet or use denser forests for breeding.

Some of these birds forage on the forest floor (the thrushes and ovenbirds) or at the very tops of the trees (Tennessee warblers). Others pursue insects that live in the crevices and crannies of tree bark (nuthatches, creepers, black-and-white warblers), poking and prodding to extract their food. Often these birds are difficult to spot, but the sound of the spiralling flute-like songs of the thrushes as they join the morning chorus lets you know that they, and many others, are present.

More about our urban habitats

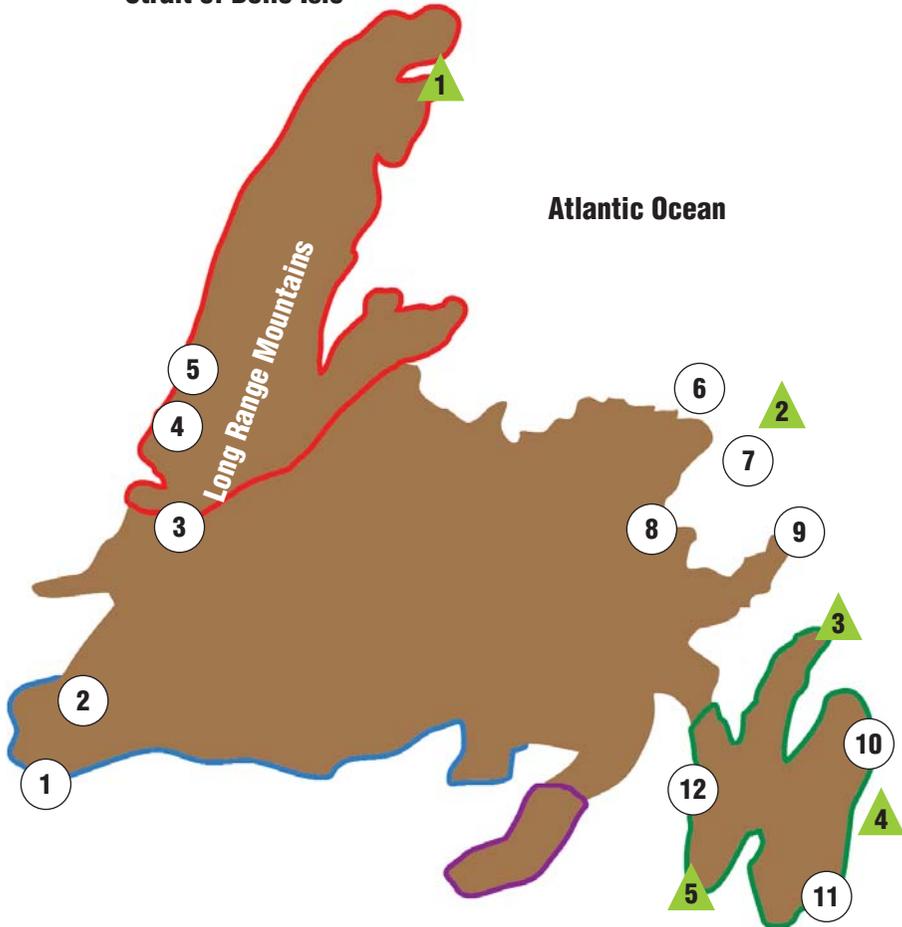
Newfoundland does not have metropolitan centres as large as those on the rest of the continent, yet it is home to several species known for their close association with humans in both North America and Europe. Three of the species we have linked to our urban areas (rock pigeons, house sparrows, and European starlings) are exotic invaders brought to North America by Europeans a century or more ago. They have since spread to all parts of the continent including Newfoundland and are, for many people, among the birds they encounter most often. A fourth species (common grackle) also extended its range as humans modified the environment, and is now often found in urban settings.

In the bird world, successful invaders are those that adapt quickly to local conditions (often created by humans) and fill roles not served by other species. These birds are typically prolific breeders capable of easily moving about the landscape in search of new locations in which to forage and nest. They can tolerate a wide range of climate, nesting, and foraging conditions. They are generalists: they don't have specific diets or require special circumstances to nest. Rock pigeons, house sparrows, and European starlings all forage for a wide variety of seed types—the latter two species (along with the common grackle) also eat a range of insects.

They are by no means the only birds you will see in Newfoundland's communities, of course. Many of our cities and towns have extensive greenbelts and treed streets and yards, not to mention garbage dumps, all of which draw in other native birds. As elsewhere in the world, the prevalence of backyard birdfeeders has attracted a variety of seed-eating species that normally depend on cones and other forest-based seed sources (such as grosbeaks, finches, siskins, and crossbills), making them much more easily viewed.



Strait of Belle Isle



Key to Newfoundland locations mentioned in the text

- ① Port aux Basques
- ② Codroy Valley
- ③ Corner Brook
- ④ Tablelands
- ⑤ Gros Morne National Park
- ⑥ Wadham Islands
- ⑦ Cabot Island
- ⑧ Terra Nova National Park
- ⑨ Cape Bonavista
- ⑩ St. John's
- ⑪ Cape Race
- ⑫ Argentia

-  Northern Peninsula
-  Avalon Peninsula
-  Burin Peninsula
-  South Coast

Seabird ecological reserves in Newfoundland

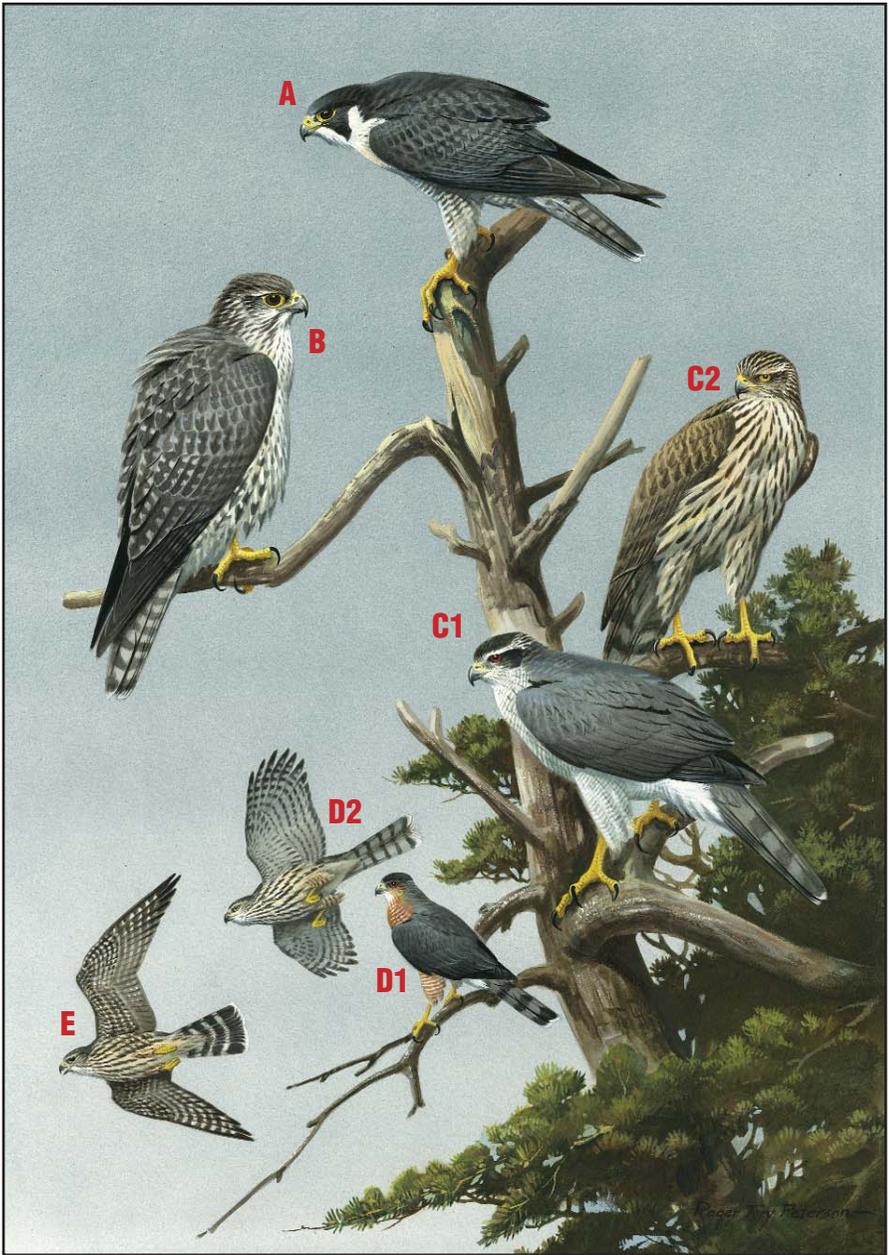
- ▲1 Hare Bay Islands Ecological Reserve
- ▲2 Funk Island Ecological Reserve
- ▲3 Baccalieu Island Ecological Reserve
- ▲4 Witless Bay Ecological Reserve
- ▲5 Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve



A. Northern gannet; A1 adult,
A2 immature

B. Double-crested cormorant;
B1 adult, B2 immature

C. Great cormorant; adult



A. Peregrine falcon; adult
B. Gyrfalcon; adult; gray morph
C. Northern goshawk; C1 adult,
 C2 immature

D. Sharp-shinned hawk; D1 adult,
 D2 immature
E. Merlin; adult



All birds pictured are adults.

- A.** Golden-crowned kinglet; A1 male, A2 female
- B.** Ruby-crowned kinglet; B1 male, B2 female

- C.** Black-capped chickadee
- D.** Boreal chickadee
- E.** Winter wren
- F.** Brown creeper
- G.** Red-breasted nuthatch; male

Great black-backed gull

Larus marinus

In NL also known as saddleback.



North America's largest gull is named both commonly and colloquially for its dark wings and back, a colouring it acquires by the age of four. The great black-backed resembles the herring gull in juvenile plumage, but is much larger and also paler on the head and neck. It feeds mainly on fish and marine invertebrates, but will scavenge from other sources including the eggs and chicks of other seabirds, and human refuse. Prized for their feathers and eggs, great black-backed gulls were nearly extirpated in the nineteenth century. Protection (and the proliferation of human refuse) helped numbers recover.

adult

Peterson plate #14 (includes immature)



NF habitat: On the coast of the Island year-round; in winter also often found offshore, as well as in urban areas and around harbours and garbage dumps. Large breeding colonies are located on Newfoundland islands—notably the Witless Bay and Hare Bay islands, and Cabot Island and the Wadham Islands.

Listen for: A repertoire of calls that are similar to those of other gulls.

Look for: All birds – Much larger than other gulls. Large bill; pinkish legs. **Adults** – White except for distinctive slate grey-black back and outer wing feathers; white tips on flight feathers create distinct fringe along wing. Yellow bill has red spot on lower mandible. **Immatures** – This species has a four-year plumage sequence to reach the adult stage. First year: mottled brown and grey gives back, wings, and tail a checkered appearance; bill is black. Second summer birds have lost mottling on white parts and back is largely black; wings still resemble first-year plumage and bill has black tip.

Nests: Loose colonies mainly on islands or other areas near water that are safe from terrestrial predators. Some individual nests inland in rock crevices. Nest is usually built on the ground of coarse plant matter.

Range: Circumpolar. Breeds in North America on Baffin Island, along the east coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador, along the north shore of the St. Lawrence, and as far south as Cape Hatteras. Winters coastally throughout the Maritime provinces, along the Great Lakes system to Lake Huron, and south along the Atlantic coast to Florida (and lately to the Gulf of Mexico). Also common in northern Europe.

Newfoundland and Labrador's official bird is one of our most easily identifiable colonial nesting seabirds. A member of the auk or alcid family, which includes guillemots, murrelets, and dovekies. The chunky puffin's brightly coloured parrot-like beak, facial markings, vivid orange legs, and rapid wingbeats (it flies like a wind-up toy) are easy to spot. It dives for small fish and can carry several at a time in its bill. Its lifespan can be more than three decades.

Atlantic puffin

Fratercula arctica

In NL also known as sea parrot, hatchet-bill, hatchet-face.



Length: 26–29 cm

adults summer
Peterson plate #17
(see plate #16 for adult winter)



Gr, Bu



NF habitat: Along the coasts. The three largest breeding colonies in North America are found in this province—on the Witless Bay islands (260,000 pairs), Baccalieu Island (75,000 pairs), and on the Gannet Islands in Labrador (38,000 pairs). Smaller, isolated breeding colonies are located at the Bonavista lighthouse, Elliston, and Cape Pine.

Listen for: A low moan in burrows, an *aarrrr* in flight, and a variety of other grunts and notes.

Look for: Adults/summer – Upperparts and throat glossy black; underparts white. Face pale grey-white with large red, blue-grey, and yellow bill that grows as bird ages. Legs and feet orange-red. **Adults/winter** – Bill loses colourful exterior plates and becomes less triangular shaped. Light areas on head now darker. **Immatures** – Similar to adults in winter but with much smaller bills.

Nests: Colonies usually on grassy coastal islands. Nest is in a burrow in the ground or in a rock crevice, and sometimes lined with soft plant matter.

Range: Breeds along the east coast of North America, mainly from the Maine-New Brunswick border north to Labrador, on the west coast of Greenland, and in a few other isolated northern locations. Millions breed in Iceland. Winters offshore, mainly between the Atlantic provinces and Greenland, though some birds are found as far south as Maryland.

Acrobat in flight, with easily identified black, cream, and orange colouring, the American redstart is one of our more memorable warbler visitors. Redstarts regularly fan their tails and droop their wings in a “flash pattern,” which may help them flush into the open the flies, moths, leafhoppers, and beetles that they eat. They also eat small berries in late summer. Like other warblers, American redstarts are vocal during breeding season, and have a varied high-pitched song. Unlike the others, however, males keep their immature plumage for 18 months and seldom breed in their first year.

American redstart

Setophaga ruticilla



adult male (above); adult female (below)
Peterson plate #25



NF habitat: Near small openings in moist second-growth forests, particularly those with dense alder or willow thickets.

Listen for: The male’s song of repeated (sometimes doubled) notes—*tsee tsee tsee tseet*—in either a downward or upward arrangement. Also the sharp alarm note *chip* and a sibilant *tsip*.

Look for: Adults/male – Upperparts (plus throat and upper chest) glossy black. Belly creamy white; sides of breast orange-red. Bases of outer flight and tail feathers have large central orange-red patches. Bill flattened and black. **Adults/female** – Upperparts olive-grey (darker on back, wings, and tail); underparts (including throat and upper chest) white. Lemon-yellow wash on sides; stronger yellow on wings and tail. **Immatures** – Similar to adult females, but yellow has more orange. Males retain this plumage for about 18 months; may have patchy black feathers on head, breast, or back during first full summer.

Nests: In deciduous trees or shrubs, usually close to the trunk and no higher than about 4 m from the ground. Nest is built from grasses, strips of bark, and other plant materials, and lined with hair and soft grass.

Range: Breeds from Newfoundland through southern Canada to B.C., and into the eastern U.S. as far south as Texas. Winters in the Caribbean islands, southern Mexico, and Central and northern South America.