

## Final Report

### Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas: Engaging and Training Volunteers for Bird Conservation

#### (1) Project Summary

The Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas is a five-year, scientifically-designed project to determine the distribution and abundance of all bird species that breed in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Participants are assigned one or more 10 by 10 km square(s) in which they spend 20 hours, noting all bird species present and the level of breeding evidence observed for each species (this activity is referred to as “atlassing”). Breeding evidence categories range from “possible” (e.g., a singing male in appropriate breeding habitat) to “confirmed” (e.g., a nest with eggs). The first Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas was undertaken from 1986-1990, and involved 1,120 people and 43,000 volunteer field hours. Today, these data are still the most current information available for many Maritimes bird species. However, new and up-to-date information is needed to identify bird biodiversity hotspots and conservation priorities. Our goal, for 2006, was to recruit, train, inform and offer support to up to 300 Nova Scotia volunteer participants in the second Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas, leading to higher quality data for use in research on, and conservation of, Nova Scotia’s birds and bird habitat. Atlas participants spent a total of 7,700 hours collecting data and submitted over 32,000 individual bird records to the Atlas’ online database. Data from the Atlas’ first field season, as well as, species and effort maps can be seen online at [www.mba-aom.ca](http://www.mba-aom.ca).

#### (2) Project goal and objectives

##### *Project Goal*

Our goal was to recruit, train, inform and offer support to up to 300 Nova Scotian volunteer participants in the second Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas, leading to higher quality data for use in research on, and conservation of, Nova Scotia’s birds and bird habitat.

##### *Project Objectives*

1. Provide information and training to 300 NS Atlas volunteers for the 2006 field season;
2. Hire three paid field crews to provide on-site training sessions to Atlassers and to “top-up” point count surveys in regions with fewer volunteers; and;
3. Undertake the first field season of data collection for the 5-year Atlas project.

#### (3) Results

Three hired teams, consisting of 2 bird experts each, were hired to provide on site training to Atlas participants throughout the 2006-2007 field season. When not leading training sessions, teams surveyed and conducted point counts in low populated and/or remote areas throughout the Maritimes. Teams led 21 sessions in Nova Scotia during June 2006. These sessions were attended by over 100 Nova Scotia volunteers. Hired teams also conducted breeding bird surveys in 54, 10 x 10 km atlas squares in Nova Scotia and conducted 189 point counts.

550 Atlas participants (over 300 from NS alone) spent a total of 7,700 hours collecting data (Figure1), detected 205 bird species, conducted 450 point counts, collected data in 818 squares and submitted a total of 32,000 individual bird records. Figure 2 provides a sample of the

information gathered for an individual species and other data summaries and species maps can be found on the Atlas website ([www.mba-aom.ca](http://www.mba-aom.ca)).

(4) Assessment and recommendations for follow-up steps to the project

The number of volunteers, field hours and records submitted have all surpassed that of the first year of the first Maritimes Atlas. In the coming 2007 field season we will continue to support our volunteers through on site training sessions. Staff-led training sessions will be tailored to the needs of each session’s participants—sessions for first-year volunteers will focus on basic atlassing techniques while experienced volunteers will learn how to do point counts. Our goals are to obtain newly-trained volunteers to whom “not-yet-covered” squares can be assigned and to train experienced volunteers to conduct point counts as well as encourage them to take on extra squares.

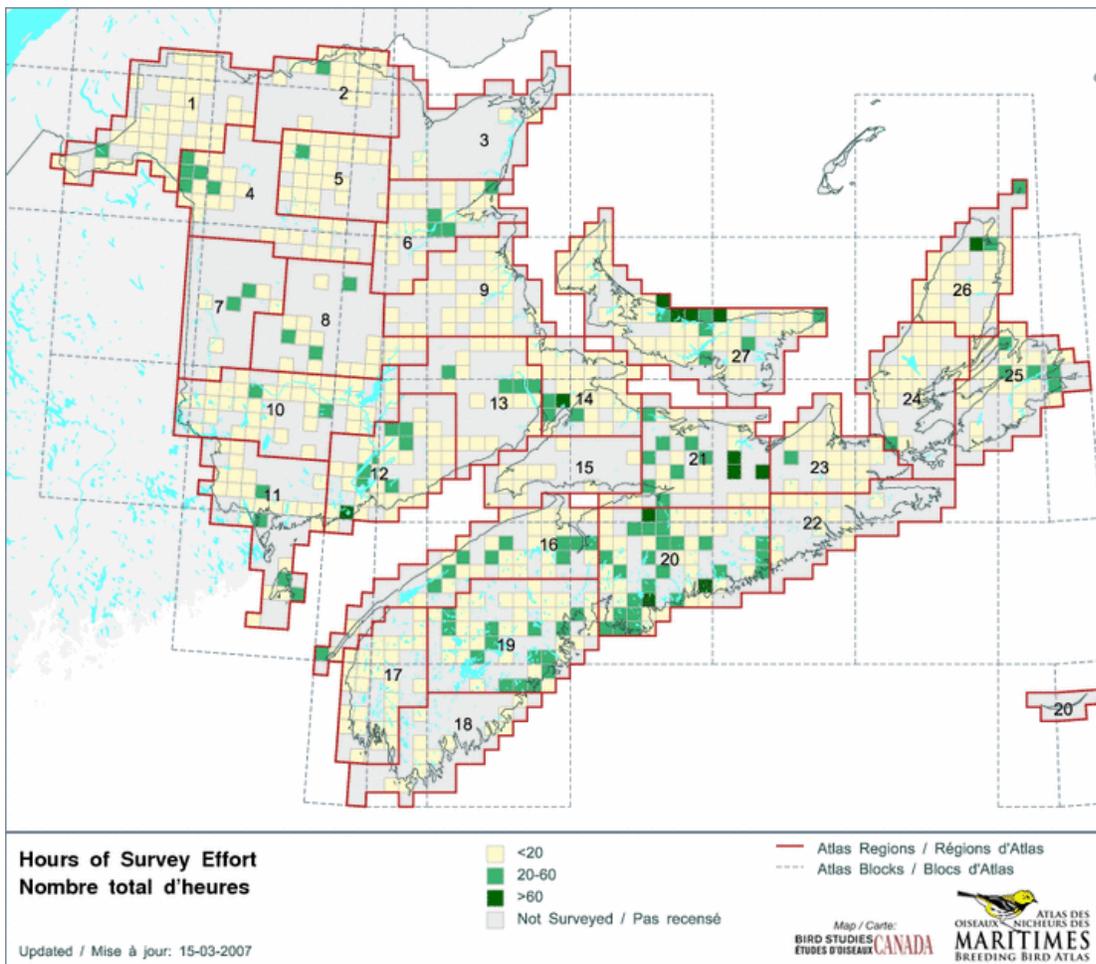


Figure 1. Number of survey hours per 10 x 10 km Atlas square for the first field season of the second Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas.

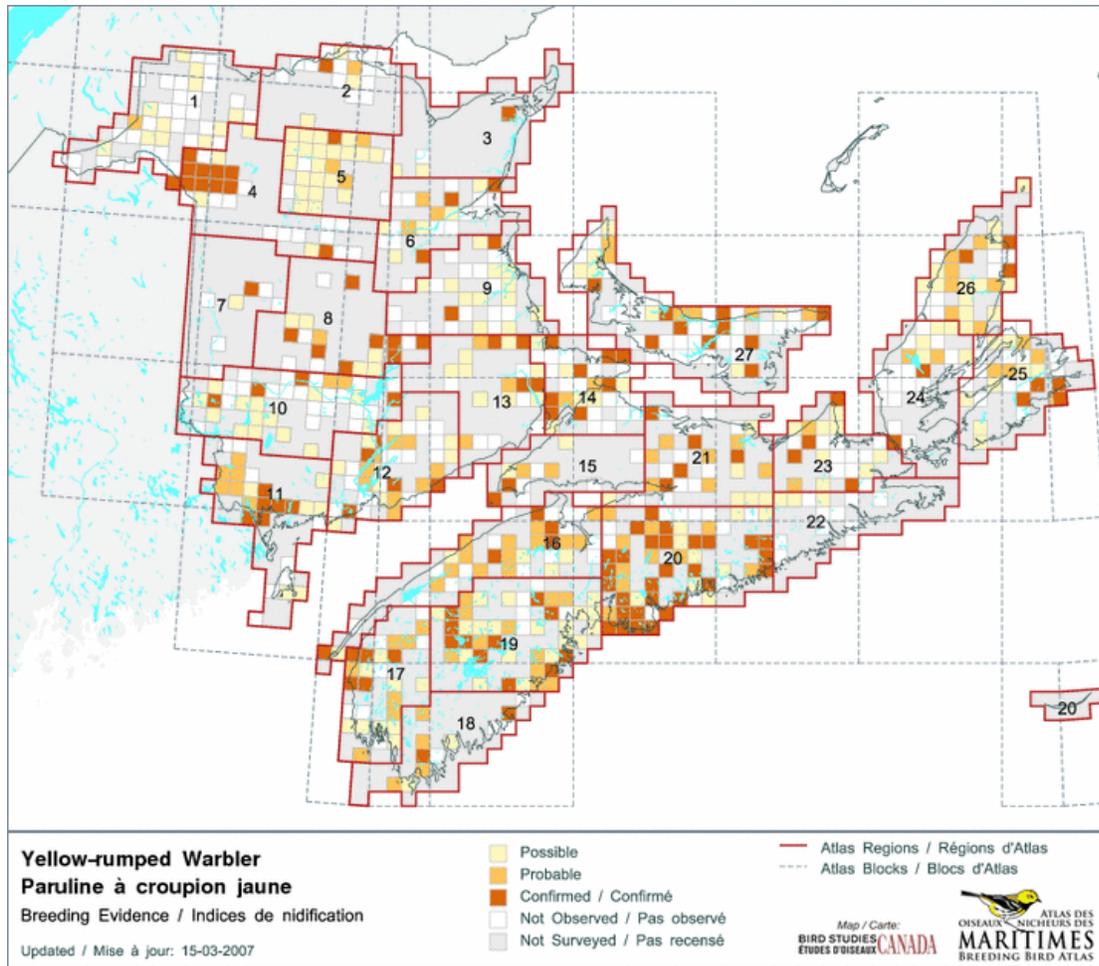


Figure 2. Map shows the Atlas squares in which the Yellow-rumped Warbler was detected and the level of breeding evidence obtained for this species in each square. Similar maps have been produced for all of the species detected in 2006.