# THE MARITIMES MARSH MONITORING PROGRAM

## 2020

## THE FIELD SEASON THAT (KIND OF) NEVER WAS

Now that 2020 has finally passed us by, it is with tentative optimism that we look forward to the spring of 2021. This year wasn't a complete bust for surveys; once restrictions lifted, a few volunteers were still able to do 12 points over 3 routes, and found 31 species. As always we thank our Citizen Scientists for their unending enthusiasm and readiness to head into their marshes — fingers crossed that the only disappointment this year is that Black-billed Cuckoo that refuses to come inside the 100m radius so you can include it on the survey (don't worry, you can still include it in the comments!).

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE



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# 2020 highlights

- We published a collaborative academic paper with the Ontario and Prairie regions comparing in-the-field surveys with recorded surveys
- We submitted another manuscript for publication, comparing the landscape habitat requirements of waterfowl vs marshbirds (currently in review)
- The MMMP website has been upgraded — check it out for more resources including bird ID links, printable datasheets, previous newsletters, and more: www.birdscanada.org/maritimes-mmp
- We all got through the uncertainty of 2020 and made it here to 2021! A highlight for sure.

Photo: Laura Achenbach

Photo: Frank Horvath

Nelson's Sparrow. Photo: Amanda Guercio

## COVID-19 UPDATE

Citizen Science programming is up and running at Birds Canada, as long as regional guidelines are followed. Remember that the rules can change quickly; **it's your responsibility to stay updated on your local regulations** regarding travel, masking, and distancing before you head out on survey.

# PROGRAM SUMMARY

2020 has been a busy year for data analysis and program review. While we won't be able to start analyzing long-term population trends until 2024 (we need at least 10 years of monitoring data, minus 2020 and the pilot year of 2012), there are still factors we can examine until we reach that temporal milestone.

**Between 2012 and 2020, we have completed a total of:**

**4184 point counts**

**at 449 unique survey points**

**on 71 different marsh routes.**

Some preliminary insights our analyses found concerned habitat cover of trees, shrubs, open water, and herbaceous vegetation. Some positive habitat associations include 1) open water/floating plants for Sora and Pied-billed Grebe, 2) emergent herbaceous vegetation for Nelson's Sparrow, and 3) shrubs for American Bittern. Understanding relationships between habitat and marshbirds will allow us to make recommendations to wetland stewards and managers as to the ideal balance of these major characteristics to benefit wetland species.

Photo: Allison Manthorne

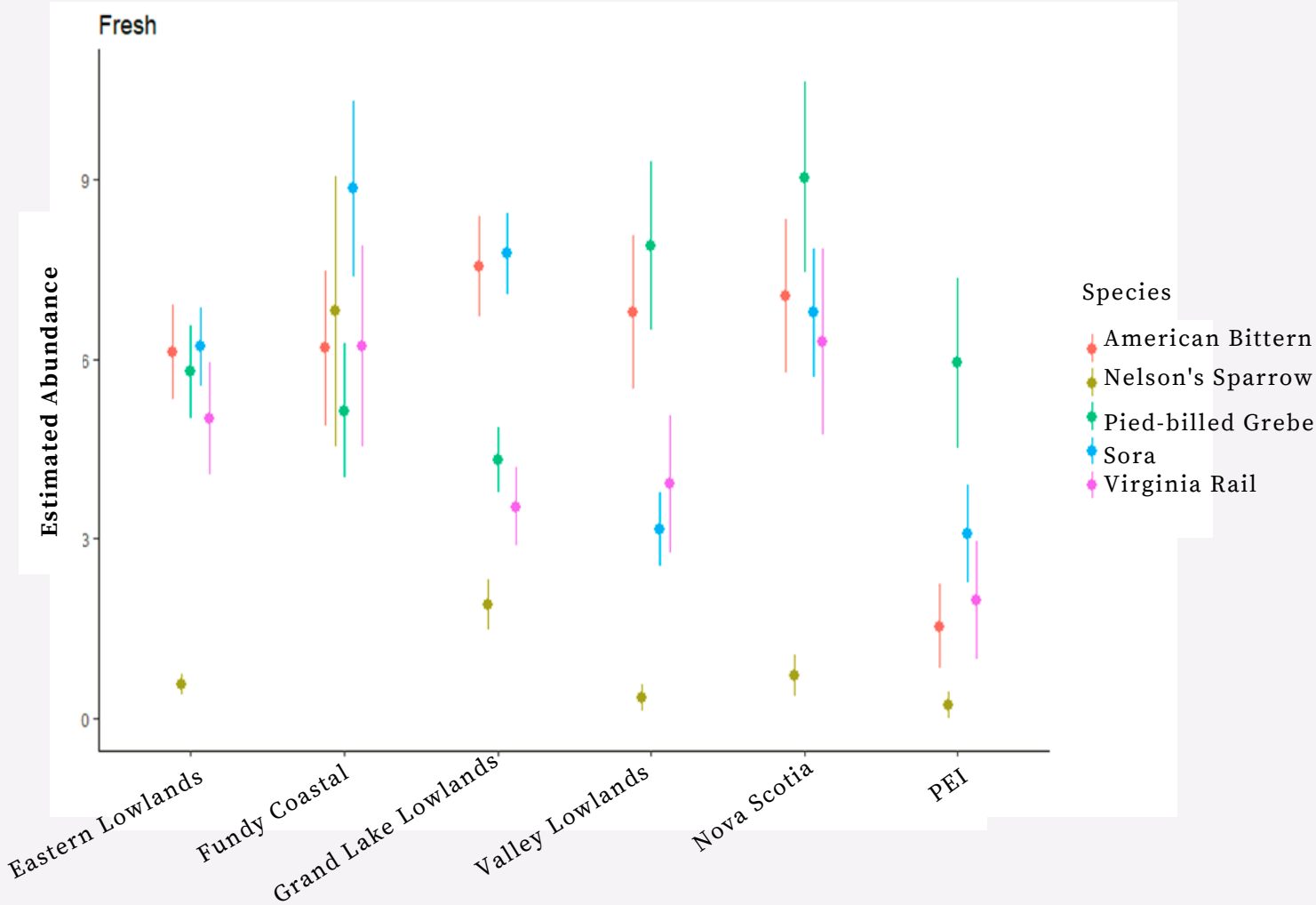
Tree Swallow. Photo: Peter Ferguson

Photo: Allison Manthorne

# PROGRAM SUMMARY, CONT'D

We also modelled where these species are found in NS, PEI, and four regions of NB, using data from 2013-2018. For freshwater marshes, the most abundant species were Pied-billed Grebes and Soras in Nova Scotia and the Fundy Lowlands ecoregion of New Brunswick, respectively, with about 9 individuals per wetland in each area. The typically saltmarsh-dwelling Nelson's Sparrow had the lowest abundance in these inland areas, except for NB's Fundy Coastal ecoregion, where they can still be found in the tall grass of these freshwater areas near the sea.

Stay tuned for more detailed analyses comparing waterfowl and marshbird habitat -- we'll share these results after our submitted manuscript is published.




Modelled abundance of five primary species in freshwater wetlands by ecoregion, 2013-2018.

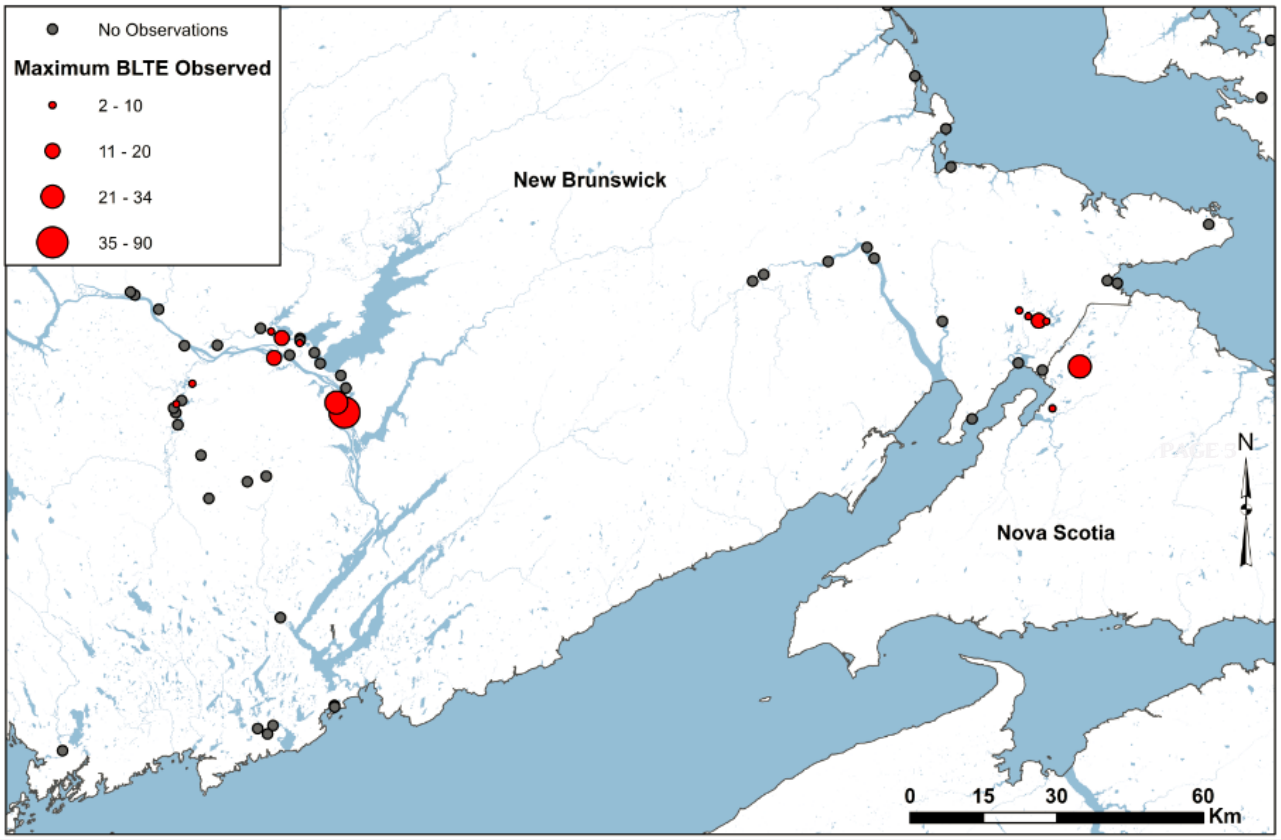
# SPECIES HIGHLIGHT : THE BLACK TERN

Black Terns are one of the three members of the genus Chlidonias (“swallow-like”), collectively known as the marsh terns, and the only one in North America. More commonly found breeding in central Canada, they are always a treat to find in marshes in New Brunswick and Amherst, NS. They often nest on floating mats of vegetation in the still water, male and female together building a shallow bowl to hold the eggs. Since 1966, the North American Black Tern population has declined by more than 50%; they were added to the program’s primary species list in 2016.

Photo: Paul J. Herdato

Photo: Ingrid Taylar

## MAXIMUM NUMBER OF BLACK TERNS OBSERVED BY SITE, 2016-2019



# BECOME A MARSH MONITOR: YOU CAN HELP SUPPORT THE MARITIMES' RICH WETLAND ECOSYSTEMS!

Photo: Holly Lightfoot

## ABOUT THE MARITIMES MARSH MONITORING PROGRAM

Many wetland ecosystems are in jeopardy, with increasing pressure from development and resource extraction. Birds Canada leads the Maritimes Marsh Monitoring Program to assess and monitor wetland-associated species and their habitats. Results help to identify conservation and management priorities for wetlands in the Maritimes and beyond. Birds Canada is a partner in the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (www.ehjv.ca), which aims to conserve wetland habitat for the survival of waterfowl and all migratory birds.

# FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO VOLUNTEER, CONTACT:


**Birds Canada is Canada's leading national charitable organization dedicated to bird science and conservation. Our mission is to conserve wild birds of Canada through sound science, on-the-ground actions, innovative partnerships, public engagement, and strategic informed advocacy.**

**www.birdscanada.org**

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