

# **Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas: A community effort to map bird distribution and abundance in NS**

**Final Report, March 31, 2009**

**Project Summary:** The Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas (MBBA) is a five-year project to determine breeding bird distribution, abundance and status in NS as well as in the other Maritime Provinces. This information will be used by various agencies, including federal, provincial and municipal governments, environmental consultants, land managers and industry, to identify critical wildlife habitat as well as species and areas of conservation priority, and will direct management decisions and conservation policy in NS for the next twenty years.

**Long-term goal:** Map the distribution and relative abundance of all birds breeding in NS and make this information available to policy makers, wildlife and land managers, industry, environmental consultants, researchers and educators via a comprehensive online database and hard copy publication.

**Goals for 2008:** Provide NS volunteers with the support and training they need to maximize the value of their contribution to the Atlas project and hire staff to help achieve survey coverage targets in less-populated areas (i.e., regions with fewer participants). Funding was provided by NS HCF for the latter.

**2008 Objective:** Ensure that NS receives the survey coverage needed to map breeding bird distribution and relative abundance on all land and habitat types.

## **2008 Activities:**

- 1) Presentations and workshops for Nova Scotia volunteers
- 2) Coordinate and carry out the 2008 field season
- 3) Hire field staff to conduct point counts and survey for breeding birds in less-populated areas

## **Key results:**

- Staff led four training sessions/presentations in Wolfville (presentation – 50 participants), White Sands (workshop and point count demonstration – 40), Cape Breton Highlands National Park (workshop – 50) and Bridgewater (presentation – 30), as well as a 2-day workshop for NS Regional Coordinators in April (13).
- There are approximately 450 NS volunteers are registered for the Atlas project
- 21,131 individual bird records were entered for NS in 2008 bringing the total number of bird records for NS to 64,364 over the course of the project
- Details of survey effort for both staff and volunteers are summarized in Table 1
- In NS, staff conducted point counts and surveyed in several areas that have thus far had difficulty recruiting volunteers: the Cobequid Region (where no point counts had been completed prior to 2008 and now all are complete); the Guysborough Region where several squares are difficult to access; and in western Nova Scotia near the Digby area

- NS volunteers conducted more point counts this year in 2008 than in either 2006 or 2007
- Nearly 50% priority squares now have a minimum of 20 survey hours and 671 of 774 NS squares have some survey coverage (Figure 1)
- More than 50% of NS priority squares have point counts completed and the remaining squares still requiring point counts have been identified for 2009 and 2010 (Figure 2)
- Sufficient data is now available to begin looking at changes in breeding bird distribution between the first and second atlas periods (Figure 3)

Thank-you to NS HCF for your continued support of the Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas!

Table 1. Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas survey effort for staff and volunteers in NS for 2008 and total effort over the course of the Atlas project (2006-2008).				
	Atlassing Hours	Squares Atlassed	Point Counts	Squares with point counts
2008 - staff	352	61	339	26
2008 - volunteers	4,319	467	1,139	141
2008 - total	4,671	528	1,478	167
NS totals (06-08)	14,158	671	3,129	357
Maritimes Total (06-08)	26,052	1,520	6,681	560

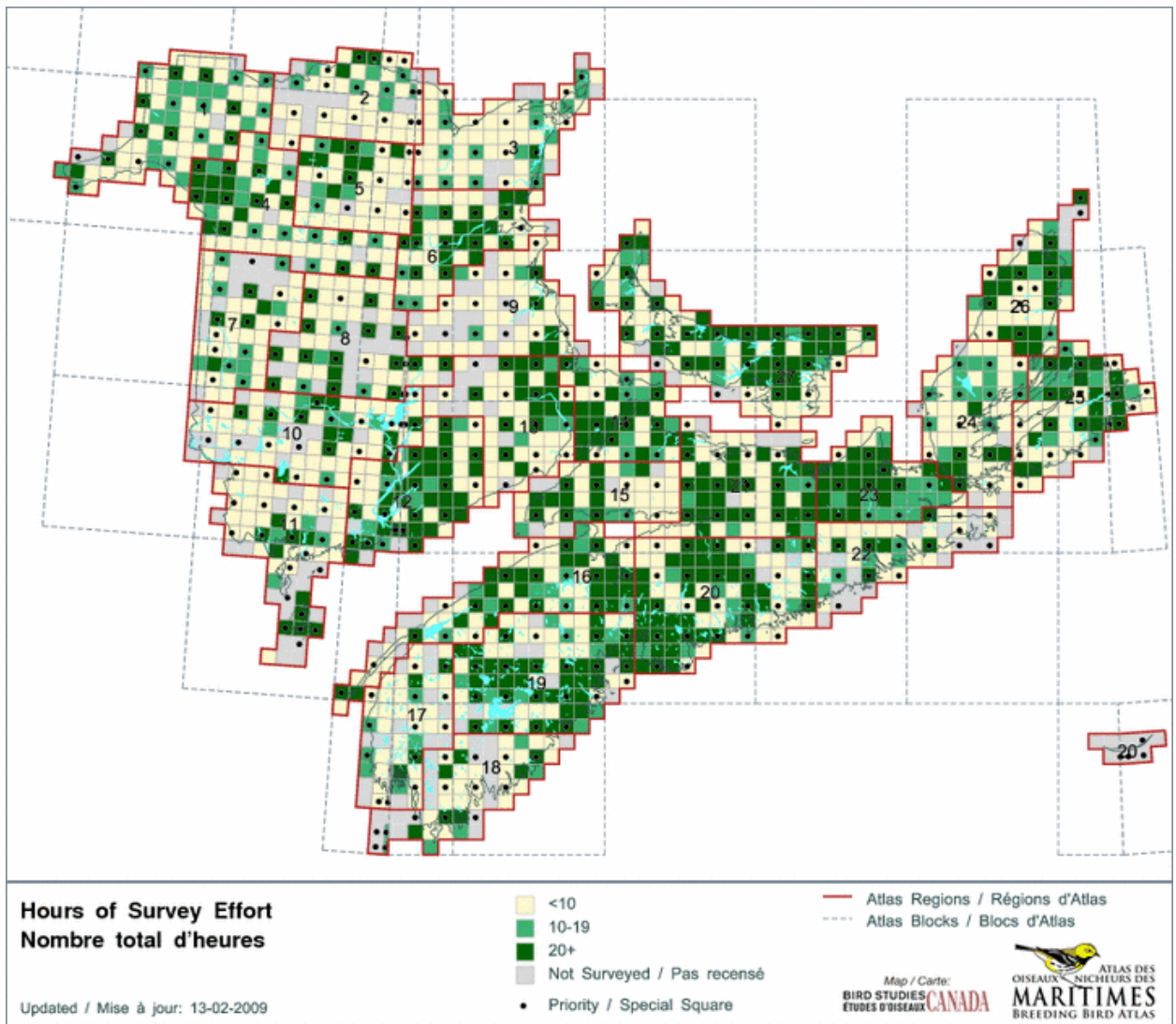


Figure 1. Survey effort by square for the second Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas (2006-2008).

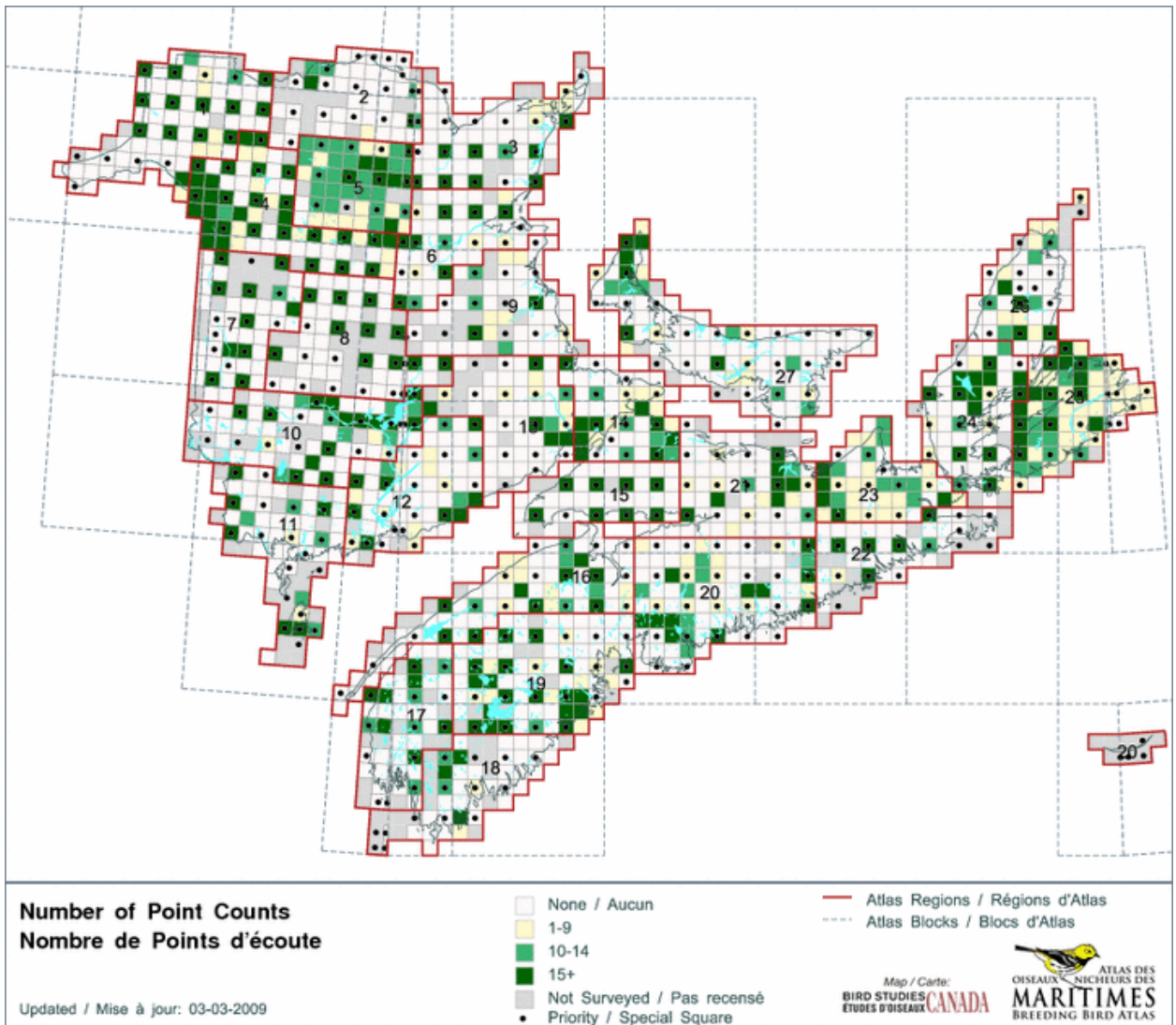


Figure 2. Number of point counts completed during the second Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas (2006-2008).

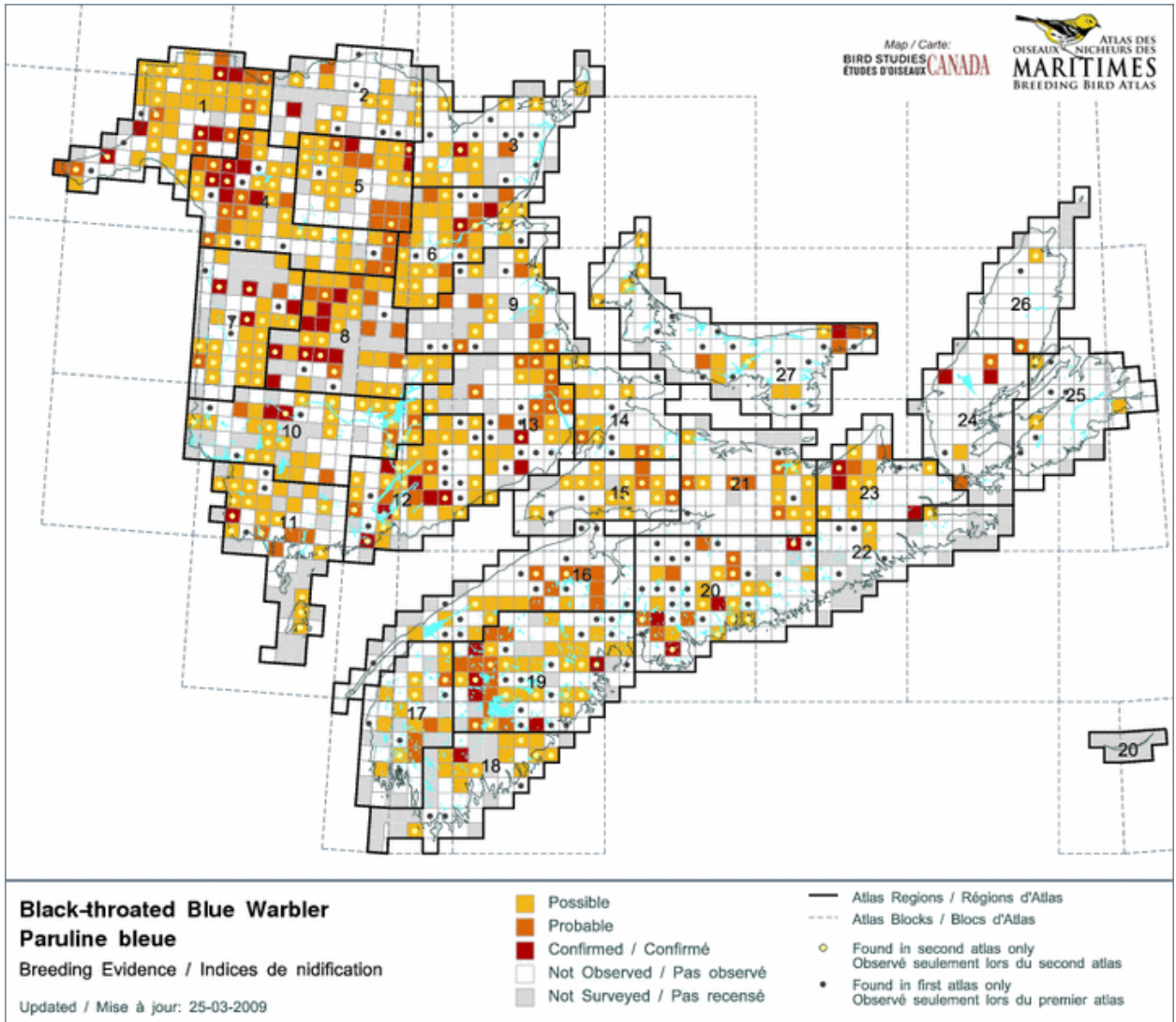


Figure 3. Change map for Black-throated Blue Warbler. Squares with black dots are squares where Black-throated Blue Warbler was detected during the first Atlas but not yet during the second Atlas effort. Squares with yellow dots are ones where Black-throated Blue Warbler has been detected during the current Atlas but not during the first Atlas. The Black-throated Blue Warbler is being detected more frequently during the second Atlas effort than during the first indicating its population's distribution may be expanding.