



Migratory Bird Initiative

How Birds Canada Plays An Important Role In Understanding Wildlife Movements

The organization's ever-growing Motus Wildlife Tracking System provides key data for migratory bird conservation.



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Disponible en español

Birds in This Story

Gray-cheeked Thrush
Latin: *Catharus minimus*



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Gray-cheeked Thrush. Photo: Mick Thompson

Since 1960, **Birds Canada** has been working to conserve wild birds through sound science, on-the-ground actions, innovative partnerships, public engagement and science-based advocacy. With their Ontario-based headquarters located on the north shore of Lake Erie in Port Rowan, the non-profit organization currently has about 50 employees working across Canada.

Birds Canada works on a diverse array of conservation endeavors from community science projects like the **Canadian Lakes Loon Survey** and the **Christmas Bird Count** to education, outreach and monitoring research at **Long Point Bird Observatory**. Dr. Silke Nebel, vice president of conservation and science at Birds Canada, explains that the organization “takes action to increase the understanding, appreciation and conservation of Canadian birds. We use data collected by more than 70,000 citizen scientists across Canada to identify significant impacts to bird populations and take direct conservation actions to work towards reversing bird declines.”

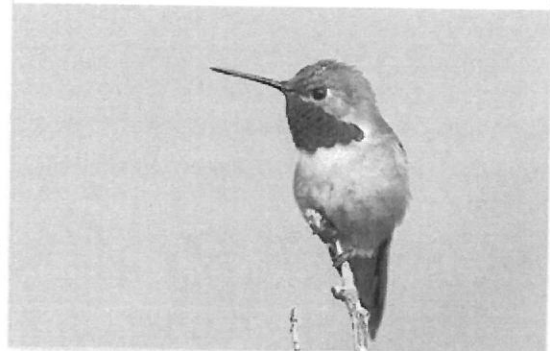
One of the pressing needs in conserving migratory animals is a better understanding of how they move and where they go throughout the year. Today, Birds Canada runs one of the most widely used and fastest growing technologies that is capable of tracking small wildlife across the hemisphere—even species as small as butterflies and dragonflies. The **Motus Wildlife Tracking System** has opened a whole new world for answering important conservation questions for migratory animals, like understanding the **impact of neonicotinoid insecticides on songbird migration**, the **role of weather on dragonfly migration**, and the **timing of Gray-cheeked Thrush migration** from South America to Canada.

Motus works by attaching a tiny “backpack” on the animal which transmits a radio signal at set time intervals. Then, when the animal passes close enough to a receiver station, usually within about 5 km, the individual is logged at that location and time. Birds Canada curates all data from across the ever-growing Motus network of more than 1,000 receiving stations across four continents. Stu Mackenzie, director of strategic assets and one of the driving forces behind

Birds Tell Us to Act on Climate

Pledge to stand with Audubon to call on elected officials to listen to science and work towards climate solutions.

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Motus, says “Motus is an altruistic collaborative research network that enables anyone to play a part in tracking migratory birds, bats, and insects, and contribute to their conservation. Motus is rapidly expanding across the Western Hemisphere revealing new information and enabling conservation of additional species at every turn.”

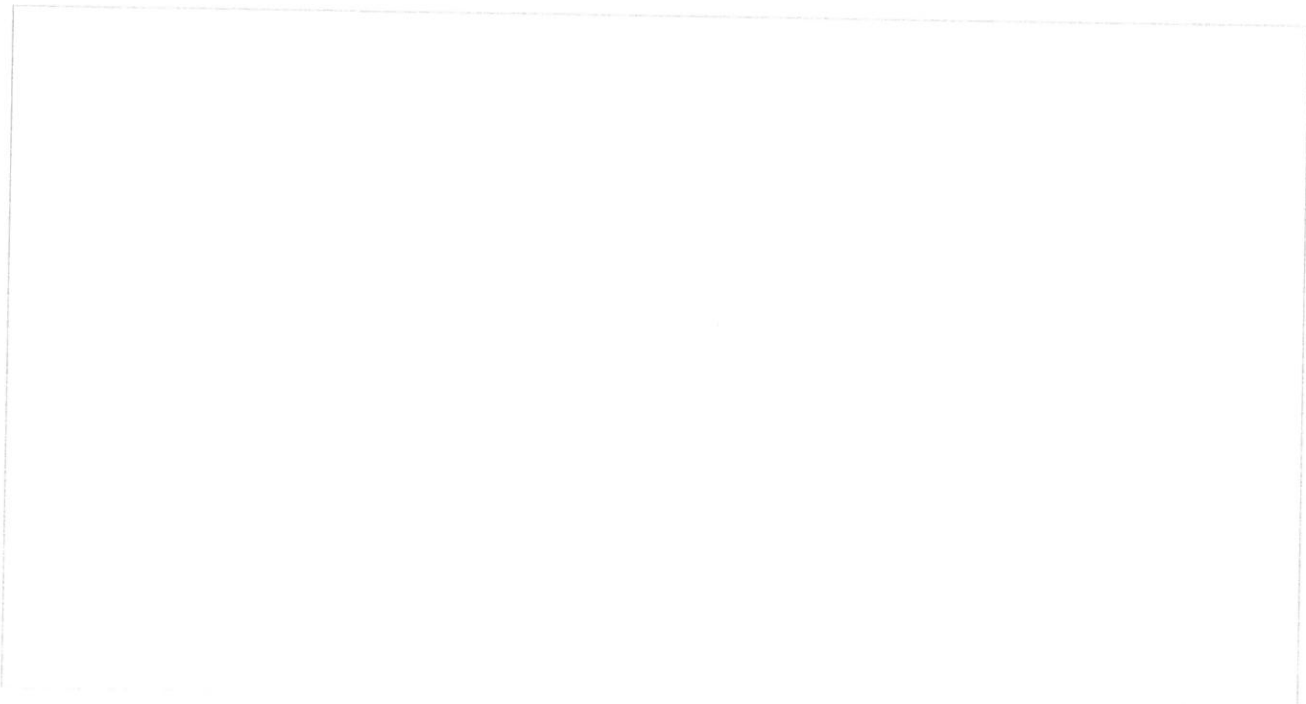
As a partner of the **Migratory Bird Initiative**, Birds Canada has helped integrate Motus tracking data into exciting interactive visualizations that will appear on the Bird Migration Explorer. This partnership will engage the public across the Western Hemisphere in the wonder of bird migration and help promote conservation—from Canada’s boreal forest to the diverse ecosystems of South America. “Motus is an important and exciting part of capturing a comprehensive picture of bird migration, and visualizing these data in the Bird Migration Explorer allows others to explore these data and discover these connections for themselves” says Melanie Smith, Audubon’s program director for the Bird Migration Explorer.

Audubon is in the process of installing Motus stations at seven Audubon Centers across the country, including **Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary** in Florida, **Sharon Audubon Center** in Connecticut, and **Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary** in California. These new installations will fill gaps in the Motus network while using the amazing connections that Audubon Centers have with their local communities to help the public witness bird migration in innovative ways.

Dr. Jeff Wells, Audubon’s vice president of boreal conservation, says, “Birds Canada’s research on the distribution and abundance of birds across Canada, their migratory ecology and the factors that impact their survival continues to be vital to ensuring a healthy future for birds and for our planet. They are a trusted and crucial partner in efforts to support the protection of tens of millions of acres of new Indigenous Protected Areas across Canada.” As we confront the challenge of addressing the loss of 3 billion birds, most of which are migratory, and the potential loss of two-thirds of North America’s bird species due to climate change, international partnerships will be critical to stewarding the future of migratory birds.

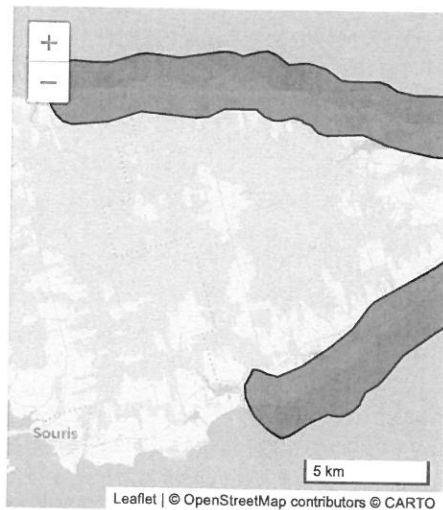
The Motus Wildlife Tracking System is now entering an exciting new phase of development, with an ambitious Motus Strategy to 2030. This plan maximizes the greatest strengths of the system, setting a course for Motus to become a global research network delivering critical information to conserve hundreds of smaller flying animals. The model to achieve this involves growing a network of well-resourced regional hubs coordinated through national and international directors, and mobilizing a diverse, coordinated community of champions, including technology partners, educators and an engaged public. If you are interested in the Motus Strategy to 2030 and opportunities to invest and collaborate, please contact Pete Davidson (p davidson@birdscanada.org).

Related



PE016: East Point

GLOBAL KEY BIODIVERSITY AREA



SITE INFO

46.44°N 62.09°W

Elevation: 0 to 51 m

Area: 91 km²

IMPORTANT LINKS

IBA Site [Go to the IBA Canada webpage for this site.](#)

Thresholds [See the thresholds for species at this site.](#)

Review Site [Share your knowledge of this site!](#)

BIRD SPECIES MEETING KBA CRITERIA

SPECIES	NUMBER	DATE	SEASON	GLOBAL DATA	GLOBAL DATA ISSUES	NATIONAL DATA	NATIONAL DATA ISSUE:
Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	5	2022	WI			D1a	One Year of Data
Long-tailed Duck <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	7,500	2020	WI	A1d	One Year of Data		
Piping Plover <i>Charadrius melodus melodus</i>	10-14	2002-2010	SU			A1a	Out of Date
Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>	800-2,600	2020-2022	FA			D1a	

SITE DESCRIPTION

East Point is the easternmost tip of Prince Edward Island, extending into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is located about 25 kilometers east-northeast of the town of Souris. In the east of this site there are red sandstone cliffs about 15 to 20 meters high. The tablelands above the cliffs are characterized by mixed coniferous and deciduous woods. The cliff faces have wave-cut footings, and shallows with reefs exposed at low tide extend about 0.5 km seaward from the point. The tidal range is about 3 to 4 metres, and the sea is often partly ice-covered through late April. Rip tides occur at this site.

BIODIVERSITY

Large numbers of Razorbills are found off East Point in the late fall. Several hundred individuals are regularly observed each November, with a high count of 2,600 birds reported in November 2020. It is believed that Razobills and other seabirds feed in the tide-rips at this site.

East Point is a major concentration point for migrating birds. Long-tailed Ducks, Black Scoters, and Common Eiders are three of the most frequently reported species, and are

often reported in large numbers. During spring and fall migration, several hundred to a few thousand of each of these species are regularly reported. Smaller numbers of Surf Scoters, White-winged Scoters, and Black Guillemots stop at East Point during migration. Songbirds and birds of prey also migrate through East Point before continuing northeast to Cape Breton.

The site's cliffs and beaches also provide habitat for birds. Small numbers of Piping Plovers nest on the beaches at this site, with two pairs reported in 2021 and one pair in 2022. Great Cormorants nest on this site's sandstone cliffs, with a recent high count of 75 individuals in March 2020.

East Point is a popular birding location because of the opportunity of seeing rare species. The point has occasional influxes of Common Terns, Bonaparte's Gulls, and jaegers. Notably, a Crested Caracara, which is mainly a South and Central American species, was present at East Point during the summer of 2023.

There are known to be bat hibernacula sites near East Point. At these sites, species in the genus *Myotis* overwinter in old wells that are lined with stone. Gray seals are frequently reported off the point as well.

CONSERVATION




The marine areas at the base of the sandstone cliffs are overseen by Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The land above the cliffs is mostly privately owned, and the lighthouse, which is now automated is managed as a tourist attraction. Because of the large number of tourists and birders in the East Point area, disturbance of nesting cormorants colony by fishing interests, which is prevalent at other cormorant colonies on Prince Edward Island, is likely limited. The Prince Edward Island Fish and Wildlife Division monitors the Great Comorant colony at East Point.

In 2006, a ten-turbine wind farm was constructed just outside of the boundary of this site. In 2019, the Prince Edward Island Energy Corporation proposed adding seven turbines to the facility. The expansion has received resistance from the local community, partly because of the large numbers of migratory birds that pass through East Point, but is expected to proceed.


Coastal erosion is a concern in portions of this site, as it is along much of Prince Edward Island. During Hurricane Fiona in 2022, up to several meters of shore were lost on northern coast of the island.

IBA	East Point			
Site Summary	East Point, Prince Edward Island			
PE016	Latitude Longitude	46.444° N 62.089° W	Elevation Size	0 - 20 m 91.03 km ²
Habitats: coniferous forest (temperate), open sea, coastal cliffs/rocky shores (marine)		Land Use: Agriculture, Fisheries/aquaculture, Tourism/recreation		Potential or ongoing Threats: Disturbance, Persecution
IBA Criteria: Globally Significant: Congregatory Species				
Conservation status: IBA Conservation Plan written/being written				


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2000



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Site Description











East Point is the eastern-most tip of Prince Edward Island, which extends into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is located about 25 km east-northeast of the town of Souris. The cormorant colony is located on red sandstone cliffs, which are about 15 to 20 m high, and extend for about 1 km to the southwest of the point. They are the highest cliffs for 15+ km in either direction from the point. The tablelands above the cliffs are characterized by mixed coniferous and deciduous woods. The cliff faces have wave-cut footings, and shallows with reefs exposed at low tide (tide-rips at other times) extend about 0.5 km seaward from the point. The tidal range is about 3 to 4 metres, and the sea is often partly ice-covered through late April.

Birds

East Point supports a large Great Cormorant Colony with an average of 107 nests recorded over a 12 year period (1987 to 1998). This represents over 1.5% of the estimated North American Great Cormorant population. A peak of 202 nests was recorded in 1991, while a low of only 9 nests was recorded in 1995.

There is some foraging by seabirds (not large numbers) in the tide-rips off the point, and there have been suggestions that migrating Peregrine Falcons concentrate here as well.

Criteria Version: Date Range: Display:

Species	↓ T A I	Links	Date	Season	Number	IBA Criteria		
						G	C	N
Great Cormorant		  	1987 - 1992	SU	280 - 404		✓	
Piping Plover		  	2001	FA	4 - 8			✓
Piping Plover		  	2000 - 2002	SP	4			
Piping Plover		  	2001 - 2019	SU	4 - 6			✓

Note: species shown in bold indicate that the maximum number exceeds at least one of the IBA thresholds (sub-regional, regional or global). The site may still not qualify for that level of IBA if the maximum number reflects an exceptional or historical occurrence.

Conservation Issues

The marine areas at the base of the cormorant cliffs are overseen by the federal Fisheries and Oceans department; the land above the cliffs is mostly privately owned, except for the East Point Provincial Park and the Coast Guard lighthouse. The lighthouse (now automated) is leased to private interests for tourism.

Disturbance to this colony by fishing interests (which is prevalent at other colonies on P.E.I.) may be limited by the amount of tourism that occurs in the area during the summer. The Prince Edward Island Fish and Wildlife Division monitors populations at this colony annually.

The IBA Program is an international conservation initiative coordinated by BirdLife International. The Canadian co-partners for the IBA Program are Birds Canada and Nature Canada.

KBA Thresholds for Bird Species

Search:

Species	IUCN Status	COSEWIC Status	Global Population	Continental Population	Nat Pop
Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Least Concern	440	4,600,000	D1a: 46,000	D1a: 5
Long-tailed Duck <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Vulnerable	Not Assessed	3,200,000	D1a: 32,000 A1d: 6,400 (AND 10 RU)	D1a: 10,000
Piping Plover ⓘ <i>Charadrius melodus melodus</i>	Not Evaluated	Endangered	406	A1a: 3 (AND 5 RU)	
Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>	Least Concern	Not Assessed	1,200,000	D1a: 12,000	D1a: 760

Showing 1 to 4 of 4 entries