

Rusty Blackbird

Euphagus carolinus nigrans

STATUS

Special Concern 

Not Listed



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Species Description

The Rusty Blackbird is medium-sized (21-25 cm), with yellow eyes, a pale yellow eye ring, and a narrow pointed bill. Males are glossy black with a greenish tinge and females are dark grey-brown. They have black legs and feet and a rounded tail.



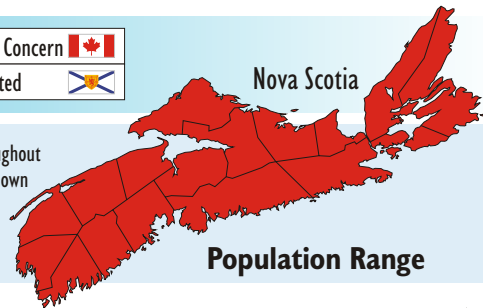
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Beaver pond

Infrequently sighted throughout the province with an unknown population size. Winters in the east-central United States.



Population Range

Habitat

In Canada, the *nigrans* subspecies occurs only in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Quebec. It breeds from April to August in coniferous-dominated wooded streams, swamps, and bogs. It is also found in wet forested areas near beaver ponds.

Rusty Blackbirds are typically observed near wet areas in coniferous-dominated forests. They tend to be solitary, unlike other gregarious blackbird species.

Interesting Points

- The Canadian breeding population is thought to contain 70% of the Rusty Blackbirds in the world!
- This species may have declined by 85% over the last 40 years.
- There are similar declines in several other bird species (e.g. Olive-sided Flycatcher, Chimney Swift) with the same habitat and food requirements (insects).

Similar Species

Common Grackle:

Larger (28-34 cm); longer bill and tail; black plumage with greenish-purple iridescence to the head, neck and breast; tail is keeled (v-shaped).



Brown-headed Cowbird:

Smaller (17-22 cm); shorter bill and tail; dark eyes. Males: brown head; shiny black body with green-blue iridescence. Females: solid brown-gray.



Male



Female

Threats to Survival

- The conversion of wetland breeding habitat to agricultural or urban land.
- Loss of wintering habitat in the Mississippi Valley flood plain forests (reduced by 80% over the last 150 years).
- Blackbird control programs in the United States.



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Female

How You Can Help

Any information on distribution and habitat will help in our understanding of this species. Report sightings and nest observations to the Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas (www.mba-aom.ca/) and Maritimes Nest Record Scheme (contact tony_erskine@ec.gc.ca).



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Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

Contact: Environment Canada (506) 364-5044 or www.ec.gc.ca

Info: www.cosewic.gc.ca

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or sightings@speciesatrisk.ca