

List of Nova Scotian Birds

Ref: Ferryman, Robert. 1817. *A descriptive catalogue of the quadrupeds and birds collected and preserved in the British North American colonies*. London: Darton, Harvey and Darton

The following is a list of fifty-five Nova Scotian birds, arranged in contemporary AOU Checklist Order, published in his *catalogue* by Robert Ferryman. The *catalogue* starts with twelve numbered species of mammals followed by the birds, numbered from #13 to #67. *Catalogue* was intended to accompany Nova Scotian and British birds on exhibit which accounts for some of the birds briefly named and/or lacking enough details to identify them. I have placed eight birds in this category at the end. This leaves a list of forth-seven, of which almost 30 are identified to species level.

I have listed the common name followed by the name given by Ferryman, the catalogue number and, any notes included. The most likely common name, as identified by a species name followed by a question mark, is based on my own familiarity with historical names used by early observers and naturalists in Canada and relative commonness in Nova Scotia.

Common Name	Ferryman Name, Catalogue Number and details
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Bufflehead?	Dipper #61
Common Merganser	Gooseander #58
Ruffed Grouse	Birch Partridge #13 I do not venture decidedly to say that this is the Drumming Pheasant of the southern states of America; but in the spring, the male, probably as a lure to the female raised on some large dead log, makes a drumming noise, something like the sound of distant thunder; and so loud that on a still day, it may be heard at four or five hundred yards distance. It inhabits the thickest woods. It feeds, in the spring, on the tender shoots of various plants; in the autumn on the delicious fruit of the maiden-hair; and in the winter on the buds of the birch, for which it has the name of the Birch Partridge.
Spruce Grouse	Spruce Partridge #14 These are either very bold or very stupid birds. The whole brood to the number of a dozen or more are not infrequently found perching in the same tree near to each other. If their attention be engaged by some gentle noise, such as a low continued whistle, a noose of twine, or a fine wire, fastened to the end of a thin pole, may be raised quietly and put over the head of the lowest bird, without disturbing the one nearest or above him; and thus one by one, they may all be taken. They feed, principally, on

black spruce; and on this account have the name of the Spruce Partridge. The male is darker in colour than the female.

Common Nighthawk

Goat-Suckers #20

They are smaller and darker in colour than the Goat-suckers of England The male Goat-Sucker of England has a white spot on each wing, without any white on the tail. The male Goat-sucker of America has a white bar across each wing and a white long across the tail Goat-suckers are the Largest of the swallow genus.

Chimney Swift

Chimney Swallow #22

This bird generally builds its nest in a chimney.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Humming Birds #51

They are said to feed on the nectareous sweets of flowers. The fact is not so. While hovering on the wing they insert their missile tongues into the cups of various flowers, and from thence draw out the minutest microscopical insects, the remains of which I have always found in the stomachs of all those that I have ever dissected. The motion of their wings is so rapid as to appear not to move; and they produce a considerable humming sound.

Virginia or Sora Rail

Marsh Rail #63

Common Loon

Sea Loon #59

Green Heron?

Bittern #60

Smaller, and different in colour to the large English Bittern.

Owl species

Wood Owl and Jay #16

Like the English Jays they insult the Owl, whenever they chance to see him.

Black-backed Woodpecker

Three-toed Wood-Pecker #19

All other Wood-Peckers have two toes before and two behind: this alone has two toes forward and one behind.

Downy Woodpecker

Least Wood-Peckers #17

I shot the male while sitting at the entrance to his nest. Not being quite dead, he hung for some minutes by his claws; during this time the female came and expressed such marks of surprise, at the situation of its mate, as I never beheld in a bird before.

Hairy Woodpecker

White-backed Woodpecker #18

Eastern Kingbird

King Bird #57

The male is much attached to the female, and so bold in her defence, as to attack the stoutest bird of prey, even the eagle; and by mounting above him, and insulting and buffeting him, always succeeds in driving him away; for which he is called the King-bird; king of the place where he chooses to inhabit.

Empidonax flycatcher?

Green Flycatcher #32

The bill is particularly broad and flat and the vibrissae are singularly large. The dull green of the plumage so nearly resembles the green of the trees in which it is so generally found, that it is with difficulty and with minute attention that it can ever be seen.

Shrike species or Canada Jay

Grey Bird #67

Blue Jay

Blue Jays #15

These birds differ from the European Jays in but little more than colour.

Horned Lark

Ortolan or Winter lark #64

They assemble in large flocks, in the winter, and easily taken in horse-hair springes .[nooses]

Cliff Swallow

Martin #21

It differs in colour from the martin of England. Like the English Martin, it makes an ingenious nest, of clay, under the eaves of a house or some sheltered space; but the Martin of England leaves a semi-circular hole, close under the eave, for an entrance; for the American Martin finishes her nest with a neck drooping downward.

Winter Wren

Brown Wren #34

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It differs somewhat in colour from the English Wren; and is smaller. Its song is weaker and the strains shorter, yet very sweet and pleasing.

Eastern Bluebird

Blue-Birds #30

They are most abundant, in Bermuda, from which they are best known by the name the Blue-birds of Bermuda; though they are not rare in many parts of America.

Thrush species

Lesser American Nightingale #40

This bird has been confounded with the Greater Nightingale. It's song is equally sweet but not so loud.

American Robin

American Robin #66

I resembles the Robin of England in nothing more than having a red breast. It is a turdus, or Thrush; and it has the song of the Thrush, though neither loud, nor varied nor sweet.

Gray Catbird

Cat-Bird or Grey Nightingale #41

The song of this bird is loud but not as soft and pleasing as either of the two former Nightingales. This is a character that belongs equally to all species of Nightingales. If at any time disturbed, or interrupted in their song, they have an alarm-note something like *chur, chur*. In this bird it faintly resembles the mewling of a young cat; therefore it obtained the name of the Cat-Bird.

has

Brown Thrasher?

Great Nightingale or God's Bird #39

It has often been remarked that the Trans-atlantic birds are richer in plumage, and less interesting in their the birds of Europe. [likely Buffon] may be with respect to southern British American Colonies.

songs, than

However true this

states, it is not so in the

Wherever I have been, I have

of singing bids, than I have ever

their songs perhaps not so loud, but

melodious.

seen a greater variety
heard in England, and
as varied and as

This bird has all the general characters of the English Nightingale. It delights most in thick shades, and sings more by night than by day. It is known to the Indian by a name, which in their language signifies God's bird on account of the superior sweetness and fancied divinity, of its song.

Cedar Waxwing

Chatterer #28

They sometimes appear in large flights, in Nova Scotia, in summer, and feed chiefly on cherries, in that season; from which sometimes they are called Cherry-Birds.

Pine Grosbeak

Large Red Bull-Finch #26

They inhabit the thickest woods; they brave the rigours of the severest winters; and, in the frozen season, feed on the buds of trees.

Female of the Red Bull-Finch #27

Purple Finch

Rose Linnet #36

Similar to, but larger and redder, than the Red-linnet of England.

Snow Bunting	Yellow-billed Snow-Bird #38*
Snow Bunting	Black-billed Snow-Bird #37 These two have hitherto been confounded. They appear in large flocks in the winter.
Dark-eyed Junco	Nun #29 ** These birds are common about Panama and the isthmus of Darien; and are sometimes but rarely seen in the swamps and lowlands of Nova Scotia.
Bobolink	Bobalincorne #35 It has, by some, been considered the best song-bird in America. It is, perhaps, the loudest for its size, but by no means the sweetest. It sings, sometimes while on the wing, like the sky-lark of England; but it falls far short of the English sky-larks melody. The female is brown, very shy, conceals herself in the grass, and is rarely seen. These are the Rice-birds of the southern states.
Common Grackle	Blackbird #31 I differs from the Black-bird of England in shape; it is longer and thinner: it has a black bill and a yellow iris. The English Black-bird has just the reverse. It has no song; and in fact, more of a pie than a turdus or thrush.
Warbler species B T Bue Warbler (fem)?	Gray Motacilla #42 All the genus are soft-billed and pleasing warblers.
Common Yellowthroat or Parula Warbler	Yellow-throated Motacilla #47
American Redstart	Flame-sided Motacilla #49
Magnolia Warbler	Yellow and Black Spotted Motacilla #44 [45]
Blackburnian Warbler	Orange-throated Motacilla #48
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Chestnut-sided Motacilla #44
Yellow-rumped Warbler?	Yellow-crested Motacilla #43
Black-throated Green Warbler or Black-throated Blue Warbler	Black-throated Motacilla #46
Magnolia or Yellow Warbler	Brimstone-sided Motacilla #65

Warbler species	<p>Yellow Motacilla or Willow Wren #50</p> <p>Somewhat larger and more spotted on the breast, than the large Willow Wren of England. All the Motacillas go southward, as the cold weather approaches. They all feed on insect-food; and they are all most pleasing songsters. [this description does not fit well with any Nova Scotian bird]</p>
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<p>Rose-breasted Bull-Finch #24</p> <p>The song “similar to the English Bullfinch. It sometimes sings while flying: its descending notes are very sweet.</p>
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<p>#25</p> <p>This is generally believed to be the female of the Rose -breasted Bull-Finch. It is very true that all I have killed of this plumage have been females; yet I am much disposed to consider it as a distinct species.</p>
Ferryman does not provide enough information to identify the following species:	
Unidentified Species	<p>#23</p> <p>This bird was caught on a rope of a ship I was in, on my last passage from America, at least three hundred miles from the nearest land. It must be recollected that not any species of flies that far out at sea; of course, this bird must have been not only weary from long flying, but faint for lack of food.</p>
Unidentified Species	<p>#33.</p> <p>This was caught, while dying, in the fold of a sail, more than two hundred miles at sea.</p>
Unidentifiable species	Greater Spring Bird #52***
Unidentifiable species	Lesser Spring Bird #53
Unidentifiable species	Spring Bird #54
Unidentifiable species	Spring Bird #55
Unidentifiable species	<p>Spring Bird #56</p> <p>These birds first hail the approach of spring, and dissipate the gloom of a long winter by their cheery songs.</p>
Unidentifiable species	Ice-bird #62

* Since the species seem to be similar it seems possible that the confusion is created by the variety of plumages in a flock of Snow Buntings over the course of the fall, winter and spring.

** “Non” is likely the Acadian short for Quebecois “nonette” (little nun, i.e. dressed in black and white which was the name given to the Dark-eyed Junco)

*** It seems likely that some of these “spring birds” are sparrows; perhaps #52 is a Fox Sparrow, and some of the others might include the common and memorable spring songsters such as the White-throated Sparrow, and Song Sparrow, but essentially these birds are not identifiable.