

# Rusty Blackbird

*Euphagus carolinus nigrans*

**STATUS**

Special Concern 

Endangered 

49



© HOMME D'ENTREPRISE

## Species Description

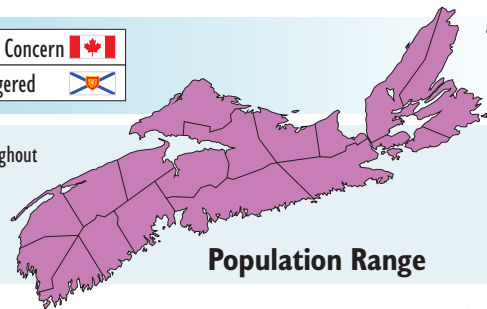
The Rusty Blackbird is medium-sized (21-25 cm), with yellow eyes and a narrow pointed bill. Breeding males are glossy black and females are dark charcoal-grey. They have black legs and feet and a rounded tail. Non-breeding plumage is rusty-coloured.



© GOVERNMENT OF N.S. BY ROGER TONY PETERSON

© BECKY STEWART

Occurs infrequently throughout the province. Winters in the east-central United States and sometimes in Nova Scotia.



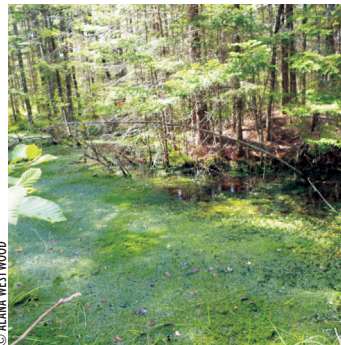
**Population Range**

## Habitat

The Rusty Blackbird breeds from April to August in wetlands including coniferous-dominated wooded streams, swamps, and bogs. It is also found in wet forested areas near beaver ponds.



© ALANA WESTWOOD



Rusty Blackbirds are typically observed near wet areas in coniferous-dominated forests. They sometimes overwinter in Nova Scotia, so keep an eye out for them year-round.

## Interesting Points

- The Canadian breeding population is thought to contain 70% of the Rusty Blackbirds in the world!
- This species may have declined by over 90% in the last 40 years.
- In Canada, the *nigrans* subspecies occurs only in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and in the Magdalen Islands of Quebec.



© ALIX D'ENTREMONT



© RUSSEL CROSBY

Non-breeding plumage (top and bottom photos)

## Similar Species

### 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.



© HANS TOOM

Male

### 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).



## Threats to Survival

- Loss of wooded wetland breeding habitat.
- Loss of wintering habitat in the Mississippi Valley flood plain forests (reduced by 80%).
- Climate change and drying wetlands.
- Blackbird control programs in the United States.
- Mercury contamination.



© STUART SLATTERY, DUCKS UNLIMITED

## How You Can Help

Any information on distribution and habitat will help in our understanding of this species. Participate in the Rusty Blackbird Migration Blitz and report sightings to eBird. Report nest observations to Project Nestwatch:

[www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/pnw](http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/pnw)



© MEGAN CROWLEY

## Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

**Contact:** Environment Canada (506) 364-5044 ext. 5060 or [www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca)

**Info:** Rusty Blackbird Working Group <http://rustyblackbird.org>

**Sighting Reports:** 1-866-727-3447 or <http://ebird.org>

**Stewardship:** Rusty Blackbird Migration Blitz <http://rustyblackbird.org>