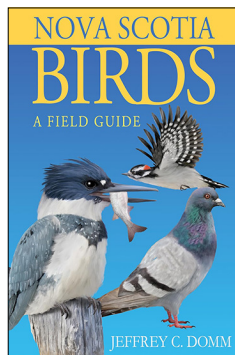


Nova Scotia Birds: a Field Guide. Third Edition

By Jeffrey C. Domm. 2024. Formac Publishing Company Limited. 224 pages, 27.95 CAD, Paper.

The newest edition of this field guide (previous editions published in 2005 and 2012 were titled the *Formac Field Guide to Nova Scotia Birds*) is written and illustrated by Jeffrey Domm, a well-known and prolific nature illustrator, artist, and writer based in Belnan, Nova Scotia. It is a treat to have a Nova Scotia-specific bird guide, and this book is noticeably lighter than its competitor on my shelf, *Birds of Eastern Canada, Second Edition* (DK, 2019). This makes it a less begrudging inclusion in a backpack already packed full of water, snacks, and warm layers (a necessary addition for any Nova Scotian sojourn, as Domm notes in the introduction). Following a brief introduction and guide overview, Domm provides a map and short description of 46 Nova Scotia birding hot spots. Starting with seashore and water birds, each of the subsequent pages is devoted to one species.

The main section of each species page contains the common name, Latin name, illustration(s), physical description (including sex and seasonal differences), voice, diet, an illustration of the flight pattern with corresponding text, and lookalikes—one to two species that may be confused for one another. I appreciate that the flight pattern consists of illustrations instead of a line diagram, as I find the illustrations more intuitive, especially for birds that glide. Some species have an additional Did You Know? section,



which provides interesting facts. This would have been a good place to include the Mi'kmaq names that are species-specific, for example Blue Jay, American Crow, and Blue-winged Teal.

The outer edge of each page features a panel that depicts the size of the species compared to the book, an illustration of the bird in flight, a wheel of the year showing which months are best for seeing the species, and descriptions of its feeding behaviour and habitat. These last two sections merit special mention. Feeding behaviour is only included for water birds; icons depicting the species' primary feeding technique(s) are included for each bird. This is extremely helpful for beginner birders, for whom it's useful to know, for example, that while Common Eider tip upside down in the water to feed, Bufflehead dive from the surface of the water. Nine habitats are represented by small diagrams: cliff/embankment, dead tree, meadow, shrub, marsh, wetland, soaring overhead (used for birds of prey that would typically be seen overhead), needle tree, and leafy tree. On each page, a small bird icon indicates the location(s) where a species is likely to be found; it is a simple yet effective way to communicate this information, in contrast to burying it in the text as other guides do. The guide finishes with an illustrated Quick Reference Index (pp. 219–221) and an Index of Bird Names.

The guide contains information for 200 bird species. For practicality's sake, one cannot expect all bird species to be included, but I was disappointed to note the absence of Ruddy Duck, all egrets, and all herons except Great Blue Heron. However, Domm has created illustrations for many species that lack their own entry proper. For example, the Great Blue

Heron entry (p. 67) includes a small (~2 cm tall) image of both Sandhill Crane and Green Heron under the lookalikes section, but neither of these species is profiled in the book. Other birds that appear solely in the lookalikes section of other species include Horned Grebe, Redhead Duck, Gadwall, Black-crowned Night-heron, and Pine Warbler.

Some species include illustrations for male/female, winter/summer, and breeding/non-breeding identification, but for others it would have been helpful to include fall (in the case of warblers) or winter plumage illustrations to support the text. For example, Red-throated Loon has both summer and winter plumage shown in this guide, but Common Loon is depicted only in summer plumage (p. 40). For novice birders, the winter plumage of Red-throated Loon on the verso (p. 41), which looks very similar to Common Loon in winter plumage, may lead to confusion.

This guide's art is predictably excellent. While some readers might miss having callout annotations that highlight key identifying features, the description text is well written and clear. The guide lacks a 'parts of a bird' diagram, and a future edition, if it sought to be more beginner friendly, would benefit from a short glossary to define terms such as 'barring'. That being said, my main complaint is that I want more of this book—more species, more plumage variation—but this guide is not designed to be comprehensive. I would recommend *Nova Scotia Birds* to both tourists and residents alike; it contains many of the most common birds in the province as well as notable species that will be of interest to visitors, such as Harlequin Duck. This edition, with its all-new art, is a great little guide, and I continue to want Jeff's art on all my walls.

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