

SPECIES AT RISK MANAGEMENT: BICKNELL'S THRUSH

SPECIES INFORMATION

The breeding range of the Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*) consists of high-elevation regenerating coniferous forests of undisturbed dense habitat or high-density mid-succession balsam fir stands in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and the northeastern United States.

Bicknell's Thrush will often have a clustered distribution in their breeding range, as females defend a small home range and males occupy larger home ranges which may overlap extensively with females and other males.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT ZONE

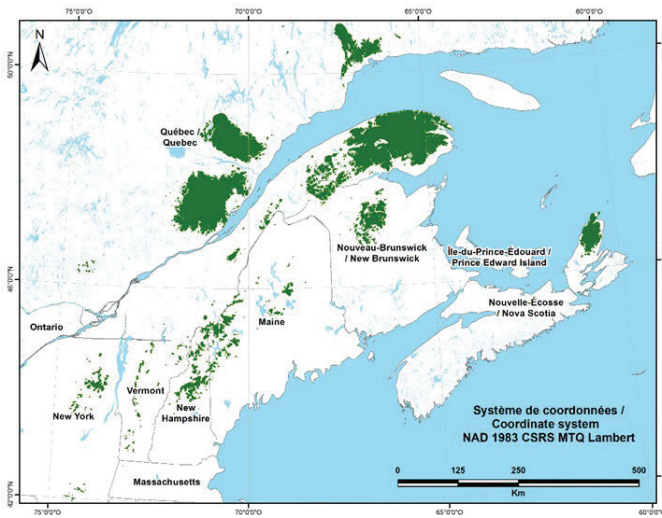


Figure 1. Bicknell's Thrush breeding range in Canada and the United States, in green (adapted based on Lambert et al. 2005, Hart et al. in preparation, and unpublished data from Environment and Climate Change Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service).



CURRENT STATUS

The Bicknell's Thrush was listed as a threatened species in Schedule 1 of the Federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) in 2012, and it was listed as endangered in Nova Scotia under the Endangered Species at Risk Act in 2013. Over the last three generations, it has been experiencing significant declines in population and area of occupancy (total area of habitat occupied by all existing populations). Reasons for the decline in Bicknell's Thrush area of occupancy include pressures on the species from loss of suitable habitat in its wintering grounds, pre-commercial thinning (PCT) of regenerating forests in summer breeding grounds, habitat loss, landscape fragmentation, reduction of natural fir regeneration, and loss of habitat due to changes in forest compositions caused by climate change.



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WHAT IS PORT HAWKESBURY PAPER DOING?

With the majority of Nova Scotia's Bicknell's Thrush habitat being in the Cape Breton Highlands, and within Port Hawkesbury Paper's Crown-managed forest, PHP is in a great position to help conserve and manage Bicknell's Thrush critical habitat.

Autonomous Recording Units

Along with Parks Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service branch, Birds Canada, and the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Renewables (NRR), Port Hawkesbury Paper is part of an effort to monitor Bicknell's Thrush in the Cape Breton Highlands.



Autonomous recording units (ARUs) have been placed in Bicknell's Thrush core habitat, allowing us to have "ears" to survey multiple areas simultaneously. This allows for a better understanding of

Bicknell's Thrush species' distribution and habitat use within the core habitat area.

In 2021, ARU monitoring detected Bicknell's Thrush at 7 locations, which far exceeded the numbers found previously using traditional field surveys. This higher occurrence resulted from the ARUs being present for the full season, as opposed to a surveyor who is only on site for a brief period. ARUs have been placed in the Cape Breton Highlands again this summer.

Following NS guidelines for harvest, silviculture, and road maintenance

Critical habitat of the Bicknell's Thrush is currently defined as areas of suitable habitat and areas with the potential to become suitable habitat that are contained within a five-kilometer radius polygon derived from locations representing a possible, probable, or confirmed breeding record obtained between June 1 and August 15, from 1995 to 2014.

Within Bicknell's Thrush critical habitat, PHP will be following guidance from the Government of Nova Scotia to help protect its habitat, including:



Pre-Commercial Thinning:

- Pre-commercial thinning timing and area restrictions.
- Retention of patches of untreated young forest with attributes suitable to the Bicknell's Thrush.

Harvesting:

- No net loss of suitable habitat within Bicknell's Thrush Critical Habitat polygons.
- Implement setback zones between preferred Bicknell's Thrush habitat and recent Bicknell's Thrush occurrences and harvest activity.

Road Maintenance:

- Maintenance of roads within Bicknell's Thrush critical habitat will undergo timing restrictions and plans for low disturbance.
- No construction of new roads within identified Bicknell's Thrush critical habitat.

Long-Term Planning:

- The forested landscape and Bicknell's Thrush habitat will be modeled over time.
- Forest management practices and decisions will include Bicknell's Thrush.