

# Red Crossbill

*Loxia curvirostra percna* (Newfoundland Population)

<b>STATUS</b>	Not Listed		Endangered		
Threatened		Not Listed		Not Listed	



Female



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Juvenile

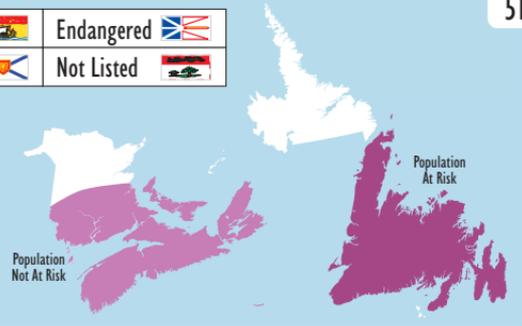
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## Species Description

The Red Crossbill *percna* subspecies is a small sparrow-sized (14-17 cm) songbird with a crossed bill. Male plumage is mostly dull red with brownish shading, while the female is grayish olive with a yellow rump; both males and females have blackish brown wings and a deeply-notched blackish brown tail. Compared to other subspecies, the *percna* subspecies is larger and darker, has a thicker bill, and distinctive vocalizations.

Estimated population of 500-1500 individuals; year-round residents of Newfoundland.



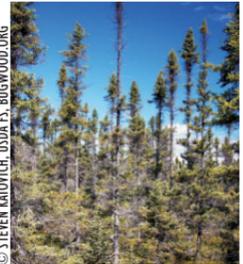
## Habitat

The *percna* subspecies of Red Crossbill is a year-long resident of areas where coniferous forests are abundant and geographically widespread. It specializes in obtaining seeds from spruce, fir, and pine cones using its peculiar crossed bill, and is therefore dependent on mature forests with plentiful cone crops. Black Spruce and Balsam Fir are particularly important for foraging, roosting, and nesting.



© ALAN BELLIVEAU

Vast, conifer-dominated boreal forest



© STEVEN LATOVICH, USDA FS, BUGWOOD.ORG

Black Spruce forest

The *percna* subspecies of the Red Crossbill is thought to breed only on the Island of Newfoundland; more study is needed to determine if it occurs in other Atlantic provinces.

## Interesting Points

- The Red Crossbill's unusual bill shape enables it to open tightly-closed seed cones.
- Red Crossbills are highly nomadic, meaning that they often travel continuously and across large distances in search of food.
- Known by some as the Newfoundland Red Crossbill or the Spruce Mope, which refers to their tendency to frequent spruce trees.
- Red Crossbills can breed any time there is a healthy cone crop, even in winter.



Black Spruce seed cones

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## Similar Species

### Other Red Crossbill subspecies:

May occur in insular Newfoundland in low frequencies. Very similar in appearance and behaviour. Most conclusively identified by expert spectrographic analysis of their vocalizations, especially those known as "flight" and "excitement" calls.

### White-winged Crossbill:

Black wings with white wing bars; male more pink than brown.



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### Pine Siskin:

Straighter, narrower bill; yellow on top of wing bars.



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## Threats to Survival

- Habitat loss due to forestry activities, human-caused forest fires, and also from natural causes such as insect infestations and natural forest fires.
- Red Squirrels, small conifer seed-eating mammals that have recently been introduced to Newfoundland, may outcompete other species like Red Crossbills.
- Low genetic variability due to the small size and compromised nature of the population.



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Clearcut in the boreal forest



© MEGAN CROWLEY

Birders in a pine- and spruce-dominated forest

## How You Can Help

Learn to recognize this species by joining your local naturalist club, and report your sightings. You can also report your sightings on eBird, an easy-to-use online birding community resource. If you manage forests, consider the habitat requirements of rare species like the Red Crossbill *perca* subspecies.

### Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

**Contact:** NL DEC Wildlife Division (709) 637-2026

**Info:** [www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/endangeredspecies/](http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/endangeredspecies/)

**Sighting Reports:** [eBird.org](http://eBird.org)