

The Pennfield and Blacks Harbour CBCs

From the correspondence below, the Pennfield CBC and the Blacks Harbour CBC should be considered as surveying the same count circle, albeit being a bit of a “wobbly circle” as Ralph puts it. The count operated as Pennfield from 1961 to 1989 except for 1963 and 1968 (27 years) and as Blacks Harbour from 1990 to the present (35 years to 2024 and including 2007 for which the data has been lost).

From: Ralph Eldridge <lightrae1@gmail.com>

Sent: July 3, 2025 1:12 PM

To: Ken MacIntosh <1kenmacintosh@gmail.com>

Cc: Donald MacPhail <dm@qcca.ca>; Katherine Lahaie <katherine.lahaie@outlook.com>

Subject: Re: Pennfield vs Blacks Harbour

Good day, All.

I believe that the CBC covering Pennfield/Blacks Harbour should be one continuous count, going back at least as far back as Lena Morehouse's involvement. She was doing a count when I was still a kid.

I think that there might have been some very early area/regional counting, prior to Lena starting.

For many years she was pretty much the only counter, with random, inconsistent input from people like my mother or a few other friends.

The count circle was centered on her house, about 1 km south of the Harbour Pub, on Route 176 (Black's Harbour Road).

Over the years, as lead players changed, there was a bit of gerrymandering to try capturing favored locales.

Brian Dalzell, for example, preferred a circle centre that encompassed much of his ferry trip from Grand Manan. But without that input, close to 1/2 of the count circle was lost. I preferred the original centre because it captured much of the Deer Island Ferry route, as well as good habitat in Pennfield/Utopia.

So, it's all one CBC, albeit with a wobbly count circle.

Regards,
Ralph.

On Thu, Jul 3, 2025 at 10:27 AM Ken MacIntosh <1kenmacintosh@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Donald,

At some point in the 1980's, Brian Dalzell took over as coordinator of the count, and he passed that responsibility on to me. I also recall hearing that the circle was shifted (by Brian, I believe) to include more coast line. When I was coordinator, the center of the count was officially the Black's Harbour P.O. I think Ralph would be the best person to confirm this. Tracy Dean might know, but I'm not sure if her involvement goes back earlier than mine. If you could track down Brian's brother (Hal?), he would know.

Ken

On Thu, Jul 3, 2025 at 10:04 AM Donald MacPhail <dm@qcca.ca> wrote:

Hi Ralph and Ken.

Katherine says I should test your memories on this one!

I'm working with a database person to get all of NB's CBC data into a searchable database, using a lot of David Christies' Excel files to upload the data. And I wonder whether the Pennfield count which operated for about 20 years up to 1989 should be considered as the same count as Blacks Harbour which has operated since 1990? In the attached report from 1990, David Christie says BH (formerly known as Pennfield) and says it was the 28th year of the count – implying continuity. He also has just one data file for the two areas and calls it Pennfield/Blacks Harbour,

Katharine is too young to know for sure but she thinks she heard that the count area was shifted a bit to include more coastal habitat. I've attached David's spreadsheet for Penn/BH as well and there doesn't seem to be much difference in the species observed pre and post 1990. Maybe the count circle just shifted a bit and over time...

Big picture this doesn't matter too much as it is all good data to have, but just trying to get this as correct as possible.

Thanks for any ideas you have.

DM

From: Katherine Lahaie <katherine.lahaie@outlook.com>

Sent: June 29, 2025 9:28 PM

To: Donald MacPhail <dm@qcca.ca>

Subject: Re: Pennfield vs Blacks Harbour?

Evening Don,

You just never stop! This is a great initiative and I'll see what I have for early emails from Brian Dalzell when I took over the route. Off the top of my head it's probably been 15 years, so around 2010?

I'm in Charlotte County and off to PEI tomorrow and didn't bring my computer so don't have the data on hand but will certainly have a look.

Outside of what you've already highlighted, this is the extent of my knowledge as well. I knew that Pennfield route turned into the Blacks Harbour count. Ralph was the one who told me this when we used to do the Deer Island count together. He would be the best one to give you a historic perspective. If I recall, having the count circle in Blacks allowed for a greater coverage for sea birds. Possibly even a portion of the ferry track allowing to pick up murre and a hopeful late puffin, or gulls.

Just goes to show how important it is to add comments to our count, people like you do a great job sharing the story!

When I'm back off vacation I'll flip what I have your way.

Cheers and Happy Canada Day!

Katherine

On Jun 29, 2025, at 11:49, Donald MacPhail <dm@qcca.ca> wrote:

Hi Katherine,

Hope you enjoyed our 4 days of summer!

I'm working with a guy who loves data and we are trying to put all of NB's CBC data onto a searchable database. I think it's doable thanks to some preliminary work that David Christie did around 2000.

I'm wondering if you know anything about or what you might think about the similarity between today's Blacks Harbour count and what was called the Pennfield count from 1961 to 1989. Mostly called Pennfield; sometimes called Beaver Harbour, sometimes called Pennfield-Letete.

When David pulled all of the pre-2001 data together, he merged the Pennfield data with the Blacks Harbour data and you can see from the attached that, in 1990, he stated that the BH count was formerly called Pennfield. Brian Dalzell, as compiler, and Ralph and Zena Eldridge were participants in both the last year of the Pennfield count and the first year of the BH count so likely they covered the same areas each of those years.

We could keep them separate in the database, but as David treated them as a continuous dataset and given that they are pretty close together and could all fit within the same count circle (Letete would be just beyond the limit of a count circle centred on Pennfield), I think they could all be put together. This would mean the area has had a CBC most years since 1961 – 61 years so far! (What was your first year on it?)

I wonder if Ralph would have any insight on it? Let me know when you get a chance.
Thanks

...and interesting snippet from the 1990 count writeup about Ralph's "eagle feeding program"!

DM

Pennfield, N.B. Dec. 30, 1961; 1.00 to 3.45 p.m. sunny; snow flurries; temp. 29°F; wind SW; 2 observers in one party. Total mileage 15 by car. Oldsquaw, 4; Common Eider, 15; Spruce Grouse, 1; Great Black-backed Gull, 8; Herring Gull, 109; Ring-billed Gull, 4; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Gray Jay, 3; Blue Jay, 3; Common Crow, 122; Black-capped Chickadee, 8; Boreal Chickadee, 2; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 7; House Sparrow, 2; Pine Siskin, 5; Slate-coloured Junco, 2; Tree Sparrow, 6. Total species 17, about 302 individuals. Mr. & Mrs. M.C. Morehouse.

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