



Black-capped Chronicle



Issue 1

Newsletter of the Maine Bird Atlas

Winter 2017-18

Are You Interested in Birds? If so, We Need Your Help.

Anyone with an interest in birds and, well, a pair of binoculars helps too, can contribute records to the Atlas. Whether you spend many hours surveying or report just a single nest you discovered in your backyard, your contribution will help to build the Maine Breeding Bird Atlas. There are 2 main ways you can contribute breeding bird records to the Atlas:

Incidental Observations: Records of breeding birds, anywhere in Maine, are welcome and an important source of information. Every sighting counts!

Adopt and Survey an Atlas Block: Take responsibility for surveying an Atlas Block. This need is particularly great in remote areas of Maine.

Visit our website (www.maine.gov/birdatlas) for more information about adopting an Atlas Block.

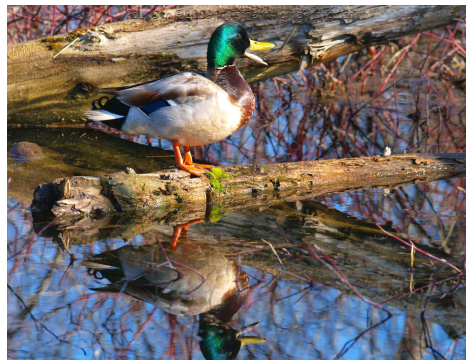
What is the Maine Bird Atlas?

Bird Atlases have been conducted worldwide with the aim of mapping the distribution, and often abundance, of species over a large geographic area and for a fixed amount of time. They follow a standardized methodology and are intended to be repeated at 20-year intervals. In North America, many states and provinces conducted “first generation” breeding bird atlases that collected comprehensive distribution information on breeding birds in their defined region. These atlases now serve as a baseline to which subsequent new atlas efforts can be compared.

Maine conducted its first breeding bird atlas between 1978 and 1983. This first Maine breeding bird atlas used 706 7.5 minute U.S. Geological Survey topo quads as survey Blocks. Over 200 volunteers documented 201 breeding species

in Maine and an additional 15 species of uncertain status were documented during the breeding season. With the conclusion of the first atlas 33 years ago and a lack of any state-wide assessment of wintering birds, our comprehensive understanding of bird diversity and distribution in Maine is sorely out-of-date.

Field work for the Maine Breeding Bird Atlas will be completed from 2018-2022 and will document the current distribution of breeding birds in Maine. In addition, abundance sampling through standardized point counts will be con-



Mallard on pond. Photo by Paul Cyr

ducted state-wide during the same atlas timeframe by hired birders that have been screened for identification skills. A similar effort to concurrently document the distribution of wintering birds in Maine is planned to begin in 2018-19.

In simple terms, this survey involves recording birds, for now we'll focus on breeding birds, observed within specific areas (Blocks) and determining whether each species is a confirmed, probable, or possible breeder based on direct observations. For this atlas effort, we have subdivided each 7.5 minute topo quad into six areas or Blocks, resulting in 4,202 sampling Blocks for the state. All records of breeding birds will be identified to the Block level.

So, how do we plan to survey breeding birds across the entire state of Maine and in all 4,202 Blocks? Well, we're glad you asked, because only with your help will this project be possible!

Options for Recording and Submitting Bird Sightings

Whether you are submitting a single bird observation from your backyard or surveying a Block, you will need to send your observations to the Maine Bird Atlas. You can record your observations in the field, either in your notebook, on one of our datasheets (available from the Atlas website), or directly from your phone or tablet through the eBird app.

However you record your observations, all observations for the Maine Bird Atlas should include, at a minimum,

- observer name(s)
- date
- time
- precisely determined location
- survey distance
- species
- count of individuals observed
- highest breeding code observed

Documenting your effort is a critical aspect of this field project, so please record all your time spent in the field documenting the birds, including travel to and from your block. Again, we will provide you with all of the necessary data forms to keep track of this.

Once recorded, there are several options for submitting data to the Maine Bird Atlas, although the preferred method for entering data is the Maine Bird Atlas eBird portal. Details on how to enter

data through eBird will be available in our volunteer handbook and online. Data entry through eBird is really quite simple and straightforward, so we encourage everyone to give it a try. However, if you don't have access to a computer or prefer not to use one, you can mail your field forms directly to us.

Detailed instructions for all of this, including the different types of breeding evidence codes, more detailed instructions for recording observations and submitting records through eBird are available on our website (www.maine.gov/birdatlas) and in the Volunteer Handbook.



Killdeer with young. Photo by Sharon Fiedler

How to Keep Informed

We are currently refining the Maine Bird Atlas webpage, the Maine Bird Atlas eBird portal, and we also have a number of other tools that we will be developing over the coming months. So what is the best way to keep informed about when these are released?

Newsletter: Send us your email address to get this newsletter sent straight to you. Links to all newsletters will also be posted on our webpage.

Maine Bird Atlas Webpage: We are in the final stages of refining the Maine Bird Atlas webpage (www.maine.gov/birdatlas). All new developments will be posted on this webpage.

Facebook: Join in conversations with others and get notifications of recent developments by signing up for the Maine Bird Atlas Facebook page.

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