

Appendix B: How new birders can contribute to Atlas-3

There is a role in Atlas-3 for all levels of birders. New birders can participate through:

General Atlassing

If you are a new birder, you can submit records of breeding evidence for species that you can confidently identify. You may need to start slowly at first, to ensure the accuracy of the records you submit. As your skills develop, you'll be able to contribute more records. In Atlas-2, some new birders were able to build their skills up enough over the five years of the project to do point counts (see below) by the end of the atlassing period. To develop your skills, we recommend working with more experienced birders as much as possible. Ask your Regional Coordinator (RC) about opportunities for mentoring by experienced birders/atlassers in your region. You can also work on your knowledge and skills using the resources ([click here](#)) – we especially recommend [Dendroica](#) as a way to learn to identify birds by song.

Owl and Nightjar Surveys

Owl surveys (Coming Soon) are very well suited to newer birders because they involve only a small number of bird species, and they utilize playback of the species involved, so you can quickly become very familiar with the calls of the target species. The surveys consist of visiting 10 road-side stations in a 10-km square and following a standard protocol involving alternating periods of silent listening and of various owl call playback. Surveys are run in March-April, after sunset. The owl survey protocols (Coming Soon) provide details about survey methods and recommended playback equipment. Regional Coordinators can provide playback equipment.

Nightjar surveys are similar to owl surveys, but they are run between June 15 and July 15, do not include playback, and involve only two species (Common Nighthawk and Eastern Whip-poor-will) both of which have very distinctive calls.

Recorded Point Counts

This involves visiting 20 pre-selected, road-side point count stations in a square and 5 off-road locations. However, instead of identifying all the birds you see and hear, you record a 5 minute audio file at each point with a hand-held recording device provided by the Atlas. There may be an option to report the birds you see during the point count interval. The recordings are later downloaded to your computer and experts listen to the recordings to determine what bird species were present. Our goal is to get Recorded Point Counts done in all southern Ontario squares where Standard Point Counts are not done, and as many squares as possible in the north. Talk to your RC about how to get involved with this. More information will be provided on the website as it becomes available. Point counts are conducted between dawn and 5 hours after dawn, between May 24 and July 10. We will provide complete instructions before then.

Non-birding Roles

There are other non-birding roles that could be of great help to the Atlas. If you are interested in volunteering in a non-birding role, ask your Regional Coordinator if there are any opportunities to help with such things as data entry, running social media, arranging special events, atlas promotion, or translation. Or contact the Atlas Office (atlas@birdsontario.org).

Atlassing schedule

The Table below summarizes the schedule for atlas survey work.

Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas - Survey Schedule.

Survey Type	Time of year and Time of Day ¹												Notes
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
General atlassing	*	*	*	**				*					Can atlas any time of day but morning is best
Northern Hawk Owl Survey													Broadcast equipment needed
Eastern Screech-Owl Survey													Broadcast equipment needed
Barred and Northern Saw-whet Owl Survey													Broadcast equipment needed
Great Gray and Boreal Owl Survey													Broadcast equipment needed
Long-eared Owl Survey													Broadcast equipment needed
Marsh Bird Survey													Broadcast equipment needed
Point Counts South													May 24 – July 10
Point Counts North													June 1 – July 10
Nightjar Survey													June 15 – July 10

Anytime during the day ; In the morning after sunrise or just before sunset ;

near/after sunset ; night time

¹This schematic has been simplified for your convenience, please review survey protocols for exact survey period, survey time and weather conditions.