

Pro Tips

Some things to keep in mind while Atlasing...

Checklists	Keep 'em Complete! Report all species you were able to identify by sight or sound. Start a new checklist after traveling 1 mi., after 1 hr., and/or entering into a different habitat.
Location	Place your checklist at the exact spot where you conduct a stationary survey, or if traveling, in the middle of your track.
Distance	Report the unique distance you walked, i.e. do not include any repeat portions of trail in your total distance estimate.
Nests	Minimize disturbance! Avoid leaving a trail to a nest that may attract predators.
Comments	Add notes to your checklists and species to help data reviewers interpret sightings and behaviors encountered. Visit: priority-species.ncbirdatlas.org
Rare Species	1. Ideally, start new stationary checklist at the site of encounter. 2. Add comment about identification, coordinates, and/or take photos & vocal recordings.
Tricky Codes	If uncertain, code it but leave a comment with the species and contact us for help! Learn at: breeding-behaviors.ncbirdatlas.org
H	Best for species that do not sing, females, and independent young. Ask yourself, will this species breed at this location and this time of year?
S	Singing bird present in suitable nesting habitat during breeding season. Can use for some other vocalizations, e.g. rails, owl calls, woodpecker drumming, woodcock peenting.
FL	Dependent, poor flyer, down, and/or yellow gape.
FY	Young that have left the nest but still being fed by an adult. Avoid using for species that disperse great distances, e.g. terns, hawks.
NY	Young in a nest (inc. nestlings in count).

Atlasing Basics

Follow these six rules to help us achieve our goals!



Download the free eBird app for quick and accurate data collection in the field. Create an account at: www.ncbirdatlas.org



Switch to our data portal and make it easier for us to organize Atlas data. It also helps fund our project! To change your portal visit: change-portal.ncbirdatlas.org



Focus effort in 3x3 sq. mi. "priority" blocks to spread coverage equally across the state. Locate, explore and adopt blocks at: blocksignup.ncbirdatlas.org. Note: you can still Atlas anywhere in NC!



Checklists under 1 hr. keep you focused and prevent individual birds from being counted more than once.

Use a precise location of where you Atlased, and if traveling, keep it <1 mile.



This helps us associate the birds you observed with habitats and other environmental conditions. Please avoid using hotspots as these may not always represent where you Atlased.



Use breeding codes! Watching bird behavior is fun and rewarding. Slowing down to observe and document breeding behavior provides a much richer data set for conservation and management of populations.

FIELD GUIDE TO ATLASING



NC Bird Atlas



People Count
Birds Count

NCBIRDATLAS.ORG

Completing a Block

It's easier than you think!

We need a minimum amount of effort in each priority block to accurately compare species diversity, abundance and breeding status across North Carolina. This amount will vary, but in most situations our guidelines are attainable. If complete, help with other priority blocks!

Remember, everyone is a birder, so contribute what, when and where you can!

Species	Varies considerably but aim for ≥55 coded species.
Effort	Breeding season = 20 hrs. (Mar~Aug) Winter season = 5 hrs. (Nov-Feb)
Visits	At least 5 (see Block Schedule)
Breeding Status	Max 25% Possible Min. 25% Confirmed Avg. 50% Probable (or more confirmed!) = 100% of <i>coded</i> species
Nocturnal	Preferred. Ideally, at least 2 trips to document owls and nightjars. Be safe: you are more important than a bird survey.
Habitats	Block coverage should be dispersed to cover all of the major habitat types that are available to survey. Don't trespass, but we encourage you to contact landowners for permission.



Contact Us

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Breeding Codes

Confidently use codes by following this guidance.

Most codes describe a behavior that is often easily recognizable, but their main purpose is to help determine a species' **breeding** status, which can be less obvious.

1. Take time to **learn** the meaning of each code. Details and quizzes at: breeding-behaviors.ncbirdatlas.org
2. Record **appropriate** (see #1) codes whenever and wherever observed.
 - If unsure, code it using your best judgement, but also
 - Leave a comment for the species and contact us for help!

F Flyover	H In Appropriate Habitat	S Singing Male	S7 Singing Male Heard 7+ Days Apart	M Multiple (7+) Singing Males
P Pair In Suitable Habitat	T Territory Defense	C Courtship Display/ Copulation	N Visiting Probable Nest Site	A Agitated Behavior
B Nest Building (Woodpecker & Wrens)	PE Physiological Evidence (use with caution)	CN Carrying Nest Material	NB Nest Building	DD Distraction Display
UN Used Nest (use with caution)	ON Occupied Nest	FL Recently Fledged Young	CF Carrying Food	FY Feeding Young
FS Carrying Fecal Sac	NE Nest with Eggs	NY Nest with Young		

- Possible
- Probable
- Confirmed

Block Schedule

You can complete a block in one year!

But don't feel rushed either! You can also spread effort out over multiple years.

Nov-Dec	During early winter Atasing, focus on waterfowl, Rusty Blackbirds, Loggerhead Shrike, and sparrows. Also be on the lookout for courtship and nest building by Bald Eagles.
Jan-Feb	For late winter Atasing, continue focusing on waterfowl, sparrows, etc., as well as American Woodcock. Several raptor species, including owls, are now breeding.
Mar-Apr	Breeding begins for many resident birds and early nesters. Spend time searching for species such as Northern Cardinal, Loggerhead Shrike, Wayne's Black-throated Green Warbler, and Ruffed Grouse.
May-Jun	By mid-May, most birds have already set up territories and are singing to defend them. Trips to your block beginning early in the morning will be the best way to detect these birds. Record precise locations for each singing species so that you can return a week+ later and upgrade their breeding status using the S7 code. This is also the best time to witness nest building and recently fledged young.
Jul-Aug	By late summer many species have stopped or slowed singing, but nesting may still be ongoing. Some species will be raising a second brood or re-nesting after a failed first clutch.
Sep-Oct	Fall brings very late nesters and migration. Keep Atasing, but scout new priority blocks.