

## Appendix H: Safe dates/breeding dates

While June certainly represents the peak month of breeding season for many Ontario birds, each species has a slightly different window during which breeding evidence may be displayed/observed. To complicate things, the timing can vary markedly between different parts of the province and migrants can still be moving through an area while local breeders have begun nesting.

To help atlasers and Regional Coordinators navigate this complexity, the atlas has produced a series of seasonal charts depicting when a species may be breeding, when it may be migrating, and when it is safe to assume an observation of a species **in breeding habitat** is indeed a breeding individual.

The breeding charts are to be used as a guide only. Birds can certainly show breeding evidence outside of the listed dates and can be recorded outside of the safe dates too; in those cases extra documentation should be included to justify the use of the breeding code and how it was determined that the bird was breeding and not a migrant. The charts are divided by ecoregion, as shown on the map in figure 1.

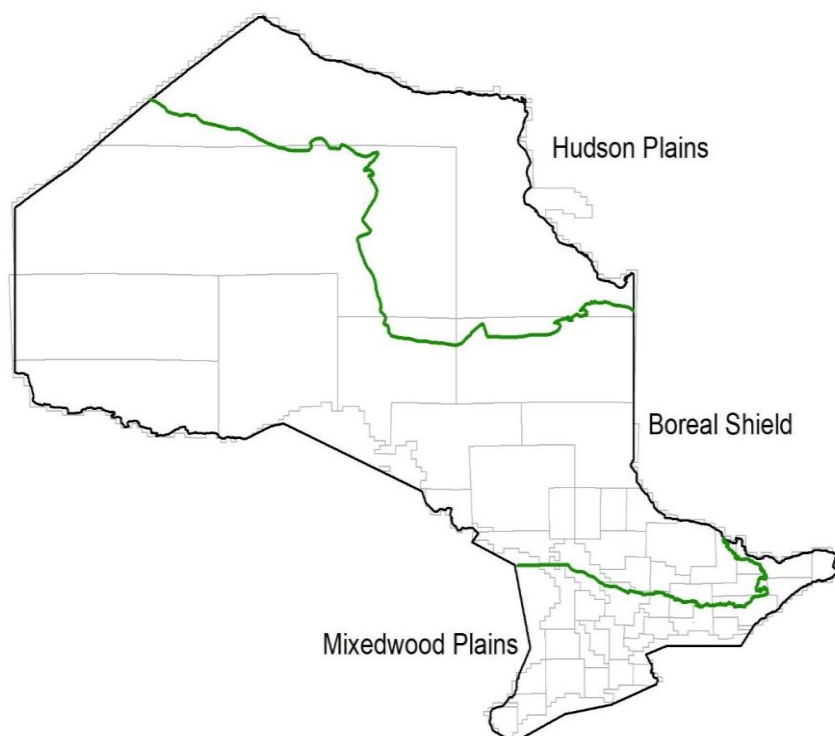






Figure 1H: Map showing the three major ecoregions (mixedwood plains, boreal shield, and Hudson plains) overlaid on the atlas regions.

## Reading the charts

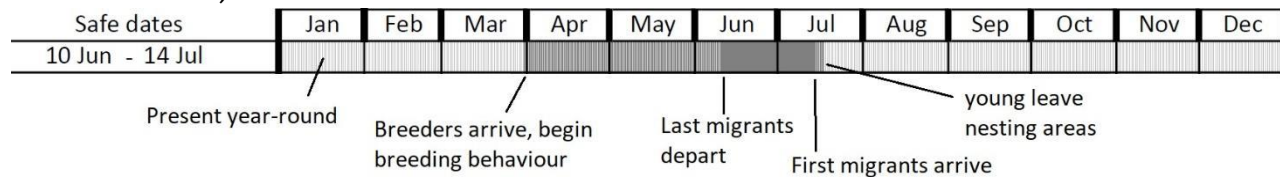
On each chart, there is a line for each species broken into the calendar year. The safe dates are listed to the left of the calendar. Shading depicts the potential for breeding evidence (or not) as follows:

Shading	Status	Description
	Absent	Species is generally absent.
	Migrant/non-breeding	Species is present as migrant/non-breeder only.
	Breeding or migrant/non-breeding	Species may show breeding evidence but may also be present as a migrant/non-breeder.
	SAFE DATE: breeding	Generally safe* to assume any bird observed in suitable breeding habitat is breeding.

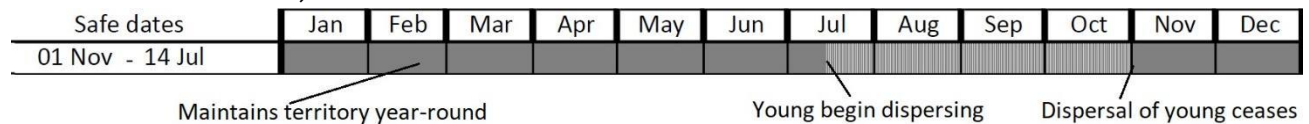
\*Caution should be applied, especially for waterbirds and some raptors which may have non-breeders present all year, and for species which can travel long distances from breeding sites.

## Example charts

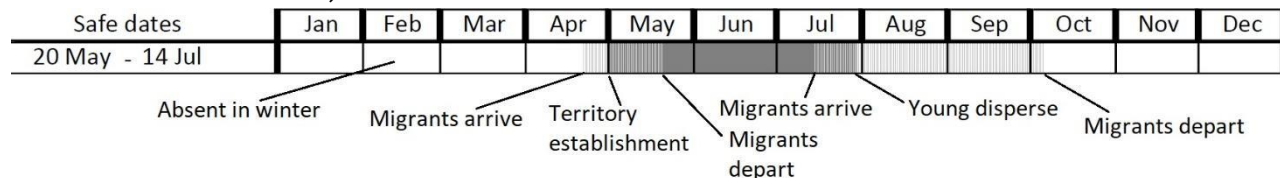
### Canada Goose, Mixedwood Plains:



### Eastern Screech-owl, Mixedwood Plains:



### Northern Waterthrush, Mixedwood Plains:



## Important notes

- The charts are meant to be a guide only.
- The ecoregions are very large; expect things slightly earlier at the south and slightly later at the north part of each.
- Please include notes along with your record whenever you are reporting breeding evidence outside of a species' "safe dates".

- Special attention should be given to waterbirds and some raptors which may have non-breeders present all year, and for species which can travel long distances from breeding sites.

### **Safe dates/breeding dates charts:**

- [Mixedwood Plains](#)
- [Boreal Shield](#)
- [Hudson Plains](#)

### **Other resources**

The two-volume set *Breeding Birds of Ontario* by George Peck and Ross James contains summary information on nest and eggs dates and other aspects of nesting ecology of Ontario breeding birds gathered from the Ontario Nest Records Scheme. Digital versions can be downloaded:

- Volume 1: Nonpasserines ([click here](#))
- Volume 2: Passerines ([click here](#))