

Appendix J: Completing the Atlas Checklist Data Form

Always write using a **pencil**. Pencil marks can be easily erased to update breeding codes or counts and do not run when wet. Also, once your data have been entered to the computer, they can be erased from your form and the form can be reused.

Atlas Checklists

For those participants with prior atlassing experience, this form completely replaces the Breeding Evidence Form and Daily Observation Form used in earlier Atlases.

The Atlas Checklist follows a simple protocol where **one checklist** is filled out **for each active birdwatching session following a single observation type** within an Atlas square. Create a new checklist if your observation type changes during your visit to an Atlas square.

Observation types

Single location – observations made from one place such as a count from a boat launch, or if your observations were made in a very small area such as a yard.

Travelling count – observations made while walking or otherwise travelling along a road, path, trail or through the bush such that you were not crisscrossing over your tracks. This is likely to be the most commonly used atlassing observation type.

Area Search - involves restricting your list to a particular area, such as a woodlot, wetland or field. You should mark the boundaries of the area you covered in pencil on your Atlas Square map because when you enter the data on-line, you will map the area on the data entry website.

Entire square – observations not tied to a specific location. This option is expected to be used primarily for importing institutional data sets, and not used often by atlasers. Observations entered at the square level cannot be linked to habitat, whereas the previous options tie observations to habitat, allowing for a better understanding of bird-habitat relationships. Choose this option if a landowner indicates that they do not want observations tied to their property.

Incidental - observations made while atlassing was not your primary objective are considered Incidental. For example, you might notice, while you are driving somewhere, a pair of Red-tailed Hawks sitting side by side in a tree in early spring. You can enter that single record (P for “Pair”) as an Incidental observation. Typically these are observations of notable or less common species, or of higher levels of breeding evidence.

Birds are tallied over the course of the session, noting the highest level of breeding evidence observed for each species. If you are recording migrants do not assign them a breeding

evidence code, simply leave the space blank. Since each session requires its own checklist, and you might do more than one checklist during a visit, you will need several copies of the form; these can be downloaded from the website and printed at home. Atlas Checklists are designed to be folded in half.

Do not report time spent in the square that is spent on activities other than atlassing, even though you may happen to record a few bird species at the same time. Instead, please create a separate list for disjunct atlassing sessions and keep note of incidental observations while not actively atlassing. For example, if you are atlassing for five hours in the morning, take an hour-long break for lunch, and then resume atlassing for another two hours afterwards you would use at least one Atlas Checklist for the five hours before lunch and another for the two hours after lunch. If you were casually noting a few species as you relaxed and ate lunch you could keep a list in a notebook or on a separate Atlas Checklist, being sure to check off the “Incidental Observations” box.

Be careful when atlassing near the edge of a square. Assign each bird to only one square even if they are near the edge of two squares and move between the squares. In such cases, you should assign them to the square where they were first detected. If you were to later find the nest in another square, you should report your record in that square instead.

Filling out the form

At the top of each Atlas Checklist, fill out the following fields: **atlasser’s name**, the **location** where the checklist took place (to aid in data entry), **Atlas square** number (found on the square map), the date (**day**, **month**, and **year**), the **start** and **end time** (24h), and the **duration** of the session (in minutes), and, for Travelling lists, the **distance travelled**. Indicate which **observation type** was used by checking off the appropriate box (single location, travelling count, area search, incidental, or entire square). If by chance the start time or duration is unknown check off the box for **incidental observations**. Indicate if you are submitting a **complete checklist** (i.e. if you are reporting all the birds you were able to identify); check no if you are reporting only a partial list of the species you identified. Indicate if you completed any **Atlas point counts** during the session.

In the species tables use the **count** column to keep track of the number of individuals of all species that you identify within the square. You may use the blank space in the **species** column to keep a running tally; the dot-dash method is particularly useful for keeping track of counting in small spaces (Figure J1). Use the breeding evidence (**B.E.**) column to record the highest breeding evidence code observed for each species during the session.



Figure J1. Illustration of the dot-dash counting method.

If you find any species not listed on the Breeding Evidence form, add them into the blank spaces in the species columns. Complete a Rare/Colonial Species Form for each species you write in.

See Figure J2 below for an example of a completed Atlas Checklist.

Species	Count	B.E.	Species	Count	B.E.
Prairie Warbler †					
Black-throated Green Warbler					
Canada Warbler ‡					
Summer Tanager †					
Scarlet Tanager					
Northern Cardinal	6	S			
Rose-breasted Grosbeak					
Indigo Bunting	1	H			
Dickcissel †					

Species	Count	B.E.	Species	Count	B.E.
Canada Goose	12	FY	Wild Turkey		
Mute Swan			Pied-billed Grebe		
Trumpeter Swan ‡			Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	3	NY
Wood Duck	14	FY	Mourning Dove	2	S
Blue-winged Teal §			Yellow-billed Cuckoo		
Northern Shoveler †			Black-billed Cuckoo		
Gadwall †			Common Nighthawk †		
American Wigeon ‡			Chuck-will's-widow †		
Mallard	7	P	Eastern Whip-poor-will §		
American Black Duck			Chimney Swift §		
Northern Pintail †			Ruby-throated Hummingbird		
Green-winged Teal			King Rail †		
Redhead †			Virginia Rail		
Hooded Merganser			Sora		
Red-breasted Merganser †			Common Gallinule §		
Ruddy Duck †			American Coot †		
Northern Bobwhite †			Sandhill Crane		
Ring-necked Pheasant			Piping Plover †		
Gray Partridge †			Killdeer §	1	DD
Ruffed Grouse			Upland Sandpiper †		

Atlas Checklist - Region 5

Atlas square: 1 7 T M H B 6

Atlaser's name: John Doe

Location: Fanshawe Park - Meadows Trail

Day: 10 Month: JUN Year: 2021

Start time (24h): 0600 End time (24h): 0715 Duration (min): 075

Procedure: Single location Travelling count Area search Entire square

Incidental observations: Check if start time or duration are unknown.

Complete checklist: No Yes

Atlas point counts: No Yes

Instructions: Complete one Atlas Checklist per active birdwatching session. Do not record time spent on other activities. If you are recording migrants do not assign them a breeding evidence code, simply leave the space blank (i.e. do not use X for migrants). B.E. = Breeding Evidence.

BREEDING EVIDENCE (B.E.) CODES

OBSERVED

X Observed but not in suitable nesting habitat

POSSIBLE BREEDING

H In suitable nesting habitat in breeding season

S Singing/calling/drumming associated with breeding in nesting habitat in breeding season

PROBABLE BREEDING

M Multiple (≥7) individuals singing/calling/drumming heard on the same date and in the same square

P Pair observed together in suitable nesting habitat

T Presumed territory = presence of an adult bird, at the same place, on ≥2 visits, one week or more apart

D Display involving male & female (display, courtship feeding, copulation) or antagonistic behaviour between ≥2 individuals (territorial disputes or chases)

V Visiting a probable nest site in suitable habitat

CONFIRMED BREEDING

A Agitated behaviour or alarm call of an adult

B Brood patch or cloacal protuberance on an adult

N Nest-building by wrens or woodpeckers

NB Nest building, including carrying nesting material (except wrens and woodpeckers)

DD Distraction display, attempt to draw attention away from nest/young by feigning injury or other distraction

NU Empty nest used during atlas survey period, or identifiable egg shells

FY Recently fledged or downy young incapable of sustained flight

AE Adult occupying, leaving or entering a probable nest site or behaviour suggesting an occupied nest

FS Adult carrying a fecal sac

CF Adult carrying food for young

NE Nest containing one or more eggs

NY Nest with one or more young (seen or heard)

† Provincially Rare: extra documentation required for ALL breeding records
 ‡ Regionally Rare: extra documentation required for ALL breeding records
 § Species of Interest: extra documentation required for CONFIRMED breeding records only

Figure J2. Example of a completed Atlas Checklist.

Online Data Entry

The online data entry portal can be accessed by clicking on “Submit data” under the “Submit” tab when you are logged in to the Atlas website, or by clicking on Data Entry under the Tools and Resources tab. See the video ([click here](#)) on how to enter checklist data on the website.

Checklist data

To submit an Atlas Checklist, first locate the Atlas square in which the observations were made. This can be accomplished by zooming-in on the map; by clicking “Find square” and entering the square number or the geographic coordinates of an observation; or by selecting a saved square from your personal list.

Once you have located the square, indicate on the map where you atlassed by selecting one of the **Observation types** (distance and area are calculated automatically). Fill in the remaining

fields and check the appropriate boxes. Select “continue” to proceed to the next page. If you selected yes for “Did you complete **atlas point counts** during this survey” you will have the ability to indicate where those point counts were conducted, either by selecting predefined road-side point counts or creating new off-road point count locations by clicking on the map or entering the UTM coordinates.

The species page shows a species list where you can enter count and breeding evidence information (for both Atlas Checklists and Point Count Forms). It also displays an automatic total of the counts (Atlas Checklist + Point Count Form) and the highest breeding evidence to date for that square. Warnings are displayed for species-breeding code combinations that are not accepted or require some caution. The species list can be sorted in a variety of ways, and a custom list can be created by first clicking “Only show species with data” and then selecting “add species”. Select “**Submit**” to review and submit the data.

Rare / colonial species data

Extra documentation is submitted using the “**Add details**” button associated with each species. From here you can enter a written description or specific coordinates, and in future will be able to upload media files (photos or recordings).

Point count data

Details TBA.