

## Appendix K: Documenting Significant Species

### What is a significant species?

Significant species are identified centrally by the atlas and we apply this designation at the provincial or regional level. There are three types of significant species:

† **Provincially Rare:** documentation required for **ALL** breeding records.

‡ **Regionally Rare:** documentation required for **ALL** breeding records.

§ **Species of Interest:** documentation required for **CONFIRMED** breeding records only. Includes colonial species, widespread species at risk, and other priority species.

Note: these symbols will appear next to the species' names on the app/website and data forms.

### Why are they important?

Significant species are generally higher priorities for conservation action and may be colonial, rarer than other species, or have legal status under the federal *Species at Risk Act* or the provincial *Endangered Species Act*, so it is extra important to ensure the data collected for these species are of the highest standard. In many cases, the data collected as part of the atlas will play a central role in direct conservation actions for these species. As a result, significant species require extra documentation if observed. Extra documentation refers to a written description and details of the observation, along with exact coordinates but can also include photos or sound recordings and, in the case of colonial species, details about the size, and status of the colony.

### Other reasons records might get flagged

An atlas record may also be flagged for extra details for several other reasons. However, you can always tell if it is a significant species because it will have one of the three symbols (above) beside the species name either on your data form or in the NatureCounts app or website.

Other reasons for a record being flagged include:

- **Record triggers an eBird flag.** All data entered through NatureCounts also pass through eBird quality control filters and can get flagged for the following reasons:
  - **Rarity** – a species that is rare or unusual in that Ontario county (or equivalent).
  - **Out of season** – a species is reported outside its normal date range.
  - **High count** – species count exceeds the maximum one might expect to find on that particular date in that Ontario county (or equivalent).
- **Record uses an unusual breeding code.** For each species, based on their biology, there are certain breeding codes which are unusual and if used, will trigger a flag for more details. See [Appendix G](#) for more details on acceptable breeding codes.

## How to document them?

As much detail as possible should be included for each significant species record within reason; the more unusual a record is, the greater the documentation should be. At the end of this appendix is a printer-friendly page containing instructions and room for three significant species reports; use this as a guide for what to include when entering data through the app or website. When using the app or website, much of this is collected automatically and the extra details are entered by clicking the “Add details” (website) or the species name (app).

### Key elements should include:

- **Date of observation.** It can also be useful to include an exact time and duration of the observation.
- **Number of individuals.** Also include what the count represents. For example, if it is a count of nests, indicate this. For large counts, a note should also be included to explain how the count was made (e.g. “counted estimated groups of ten”).
- **A description of the bird.** Include field marks you observed, similar species you considered and how familiar you are with the claimed species. Include photo(s) and/or audio recordings whenever possible (see “Media files”, below).
- **A description of the habitat.** As best as possible is useful. A photo of the habitat is extremely helpful in this regard.
- **Names of other observers.**
- **Breeding behavior observed.** Extra notes to describe the behavior observed is helpful.
- **Location information:** there is a space on the form for coordinates, and when doing online/app data entry you will be prompted to plot the exact location. It will be assumed that the coordinates/plotted location represents the bird’s location; if this is not the case, please indicate what it represents (e.g. “coordinates represent the observer’s position, the bird was 100 m NNE”).
- **Media files.** On the website there is also a spot in the “Add details” window to upload media files to aid with documentation. This feature will eventually also be added to the app. When filling out the form, please include a note whether photos/audio were obtained and upload those when you enter the data.
- **Any other information you think is relevant.**

Please consider passing on news of new locations, particularly of provincially (†) and regionally rare (‡) species to the appropriate regional coordinator as soon as possible. In many cases they can help with follow-up surveys to confirm the record.

# Sample Significant Species form

## Significant Species form

**Instructions:** Species designated as Provincially Rare, Regionally Rare, or as Species of Interest require extra documentation to confirm the identification and/or provide details about the breeding site/colony. Helpful details include a description of the species, habitat, observation conditions, familiarity with the species, other observers, notes on how the count was made and what it represents, or any other information you think is relevant.



- † **Provincially Rare:** documentation required for ALL breeding records.
- ‡ **Regionally Rare:** documentation required for ALL breeding records.
- § **Species of Interest:** documentation required for CONFIRMED breeding records only. Includes colonial species, widespread species at risk, and other priority species.

Atlasser's name

Species	Count	Breeding Evidence	Atlas square	Day	Month	Year
<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 80%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 80%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="2"/> <input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="0"/> <input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="2"/>
Details:						
Coordinates (NAD83)						
<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="N"/>						
<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="W"/>						
Coordinate source:						
<input type="radio"/> GPS <input type="radio"/> Map						
Media:						
<input type="radio"/> Photo <input type="radio"/> Audio						

Species	Count	Breeding Evidence	Atlas square	Day	Month	Year
<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 80%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 80%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="2"/> <input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="0"/> <input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="2"/>
Details:						
Coordinates (NAD83)						
<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="N"/>						
<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="W"/>						
Coordinate source:						
<input type="radio"/> GPS <input type="radio"/> Map						
Media:						
<input type="radio"/> Photo <input type="radio"/> Audio						

Species	Count	Breeding Evidence	Atlas square	Day	Month	Year
<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 80%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 80%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="2"/> <input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="0"/> <input style="width: 20%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="2"/>
Details:						
Coordinates (NAD83)						
<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="N"/>						
<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text" value="W"/>						
Coordinate source:						
<input type="radio"/> GPS <input type="radio"/> Map						
Media:						
<input type="radio"/> Photo <input type="radio"/> Audio						

# Sample Significant Species form

**Instructions:** Species designated as Provincially Rare, Regionally Rare, or as Species of Interest require extra documentation to confirm the identification and/or provide details about the breeding site/colony. Helpful details include a description of the species, habitat, observation conditions, familiarity with the species, other observers, notes on how the count was made and what it represents, or any other information you think is relevant.



- † **Provincially Rare:** documentation required for **ALL** breeding records.
- ‡ **Regionally Rare:** documentation required for **ALL** breeding records.
- § **Species of Interest:** documentation required for **CONFIRMED** breeding records only. Includes colonial species, widespread species at risk, and other priority species.

Atlaser's name

Johnny Cash

Species <input type="text" value="Tufted Titmouse"/>	Count <input type="text" value="1"/>	Breeding Evidence <input type="text" value="H"/>	Atlas square <input type="text" value="18TVQ12"/>	Day <input type="text" value="10"/>	Month <input type="text" value="JUN"/>	Year <input type="text" value="2023"/>
Details:						
Coordinates (NAD83) N <input type="text" value="4512345"/> W <input type="text" value="7612345"/>						
Coordinate source: <input type="radio"/> GPS <input checked="" type="radio"/> Map						
Media: <input type="radio"/> Photo <input type="radio"/> Audio						
I took Elvis Presley out to show him the ropes of atlassing and to my surprise there was a Tufted Titmouse calling back behind the Presley ranch! After some searching, we were able to locate it, within the canopy of a mature oak. I'm very familiar with this species from my time in Tennessee but we were able to observe a small, grey bird with distinct crest, pale underparts, orangish wash to flanks and the large black eye and bill. We estimated the coordinates using our printed atlas square map. Sure hope it sticks around and finds a friend!						

Species <input type="text" value="Tufted Titmouse"/>	Count <input type="text" value="1"/>	Breeding Evidence <input type="text" value="H"/>	Atlas square <input type="text" value="18TVQ12"/>	Day <input type="text" value="10"/>	Month <input type="text" value="JUN"/>	Year <input type="text" value="2023"/>
Details:						
Coordinates (NAD83) N <input type="text" value="4512345"/> W <input type="text" value="7612345"/>						
Coordinate source: <input type="radio"/> GPS <input checked="" type="radio"/> Map						
Media: <input type="radio"/> Photo <input type="radio"/> Audio						
I took Elvis Presley out to show him the ropes of atlassing and to my surprise there was a Tufted Titmouse calling back behind the Presley ranch! After some searching, we were able to locate it, within the canopy of a mature oak. I'm very familiar with this species from my time in Tennessee but we were able to observe a small, grey bird with distinct crest, pale underparts, orangish wash to flanks and the large black eye and bill. We estimated the coordinates using our printed atlas square map. Sure hope it sticks around and finds a friend!						

Species <input type="text" value="Prothonotary Warbler"/>	Count <input type="text" value="2"/>	Breeding Evidence <input type="text" value="P"/>	Atlas square <input type="text" value="17TNJ22"/>	Day <input type="text" value="22"/>	Month <input type="text" value="JUN"/>	Year <input type="text" value="2022"/>
Details:						
Coordinates (NAD83) N <input type="text" value="4512345"/> W <input type="text" value="7612345"/>						
Coordinate source: <input checked="" type="radio"/> GPS <input type="radio"/> Map						
Media: <input type="radio"/> Photo <input checked="" type="radio"/> Audio						
Roy Orbison and I were walking down the Blue Jay trail at Oak Orchards park when I heard a singing male Prothonotary Warbler from the pond. After 15 min we found the male singing and soon found a female that was sticking close to it. The male was identified by the loud "SWEET SWEET SWEET" (audio recorded) and the bright orangey-yellow head, black eye, bluish wings and lack of wing bars. The pair frequented the edge of a wooded pond in a silver maple swamp. Note: the coordinates are our position, approx. 50 m west of the birds.						