



Common Gallinule Photo: Merri-Lee Metzger

Dear Atlasser,

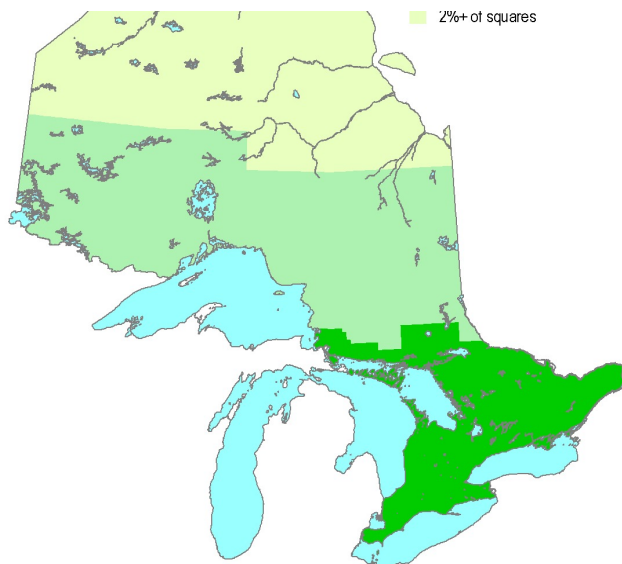
This edition of the newsletter includes:

- Using the coverage map to maximize our coverage goals
- Atlassing articles
- Changes for digital point counts
- Conducting point counts with the NatureCounts app?
- Next Sappy Hour
- Merlin sound ID
- 2024 kick-off weekend – that's a wrap!
- Regional events
- Monthly challenges are back!
- Your data are already showing big changes to Ontario birds
- Calling all canoe trippers! Pre-planned canoe trips for 2024 now posted
- Promo for 2024 Square Bashes
- Atlas-3 quick start guide
- Get your Atlas-3 swag
- Photos needed
- Join the Atlas community on Discord
- Content wanted
- Support the Atlas!

## Using the coverage map to maximize our coverage goals



As we move into the "cleanup" phase of Atlas-3 it's increasingly important to target our effort where it is most needed. As a reminder, "complete coverage" of a square means 25 point counts (with at least five off-road) and 20 hours during the peak season (May 24–July 10 in the south, June 1–July 10 in the north). The Atlas' goal is to cover 100% of squares in southern Ontario, 5% of squares in the roaded north and 2% of squares in the roadless north (see map).



We have a new video up on our YouTube channel where Scott Da Rocha walks you through how to check coverage on the Atlas [interactive coverage map](#) and how to best plan for the seasons ahead. [Please check it out!](#)

## New Atlassing articles online

We're excited to announce two new guidance documents are up on the [Atlassing Articles](#) section of the website. These are designed to help clarify tricky species:

[Chimney Swift](#): packed with tips for finding and interpreting breeding evidence you might observe.

[American Coot/Common Gallinule](#): This "species pair" can be hard to distinguish by ear. The article provides tips and advice for distinguishing the two by sound and how to record unknown individuals.

## Changes for digital point counts

Have you completed digital [point counts](#) in the past or considering doing some this year? There are a few small but important changes you need to be aware of. The process for collecting the digital point counts ([watch a video](#)) has not changed, and neither has the upload of the files ([watch a video](#)). This year, we are asking everyone to [download and fill out a log](#) of the recordings they made and email it to the Atlas office once the audio files are uploaded. This will help us ensure that digital point counts are processed quickly and correctly for interpretation.

## Conducting point counts with the NatureCounts app?

Over the offseason we became aware that a small amount of point count data did not have the "on-road/ off-road" designation filled in. After investigating we found the root cause of the issue – a small loophole with the NatureCounts app that allows users to bypass the question "Was the station completed along the roadside".

If you conduct point counts using the NatureCounts app, please ensure you fill out that question **before saving it to your drafts**. This will ensure you remember to fill this question out before submission. The Atlas office is working on updating the impacted point count checklists. Thank you for your help – we hope to have this loophole fixed in time for the 2025 season but the discovery of the issue was made too late to have it fixed in time for 2024 field activities.

## Next Sappy Hour

Mark your calendars! Our next Sappy Hour will be Wednesday, May 22 and will focus on all things Point Counts – both "in person" and "digital" point counts. There's also a new feature on the NatureCounts app for people interested in doing "map-based" point counts that we'll cover. We encourage everyone who is interested in helping with point counts to attend.

May 22 at 7 pm ET [register here](#)

Missed a Sappy Hour? All of our Sappy Hours are available on our [Sappy Hour Playlist](#).

## Merlin sound ID

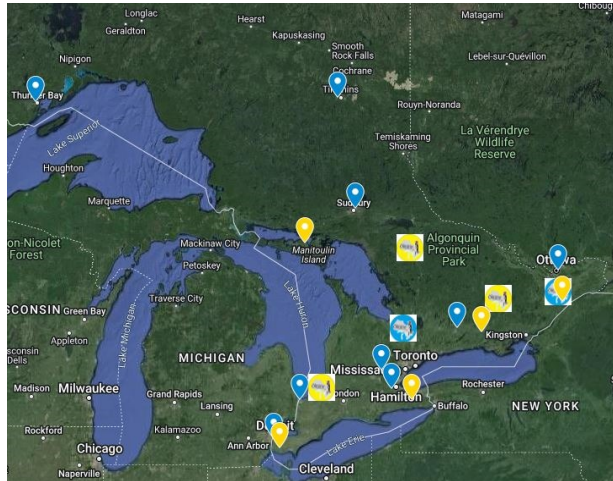
We frequently get asked about using [Merlin Sound ID](#) to help with Atlassing. Merlin Sound ID is an amazing tool to help you learn and find birds, but it's just that – a tool! You should only ever report birds to the Atlas that you can independently verify. If you're using Merlin Sound ID to help you while Atlassing, please ensure you've read the [eBird Merlin Sound ID best practices article](#). Everything covered applies to the Atlas.

## 2024 kick-off weekend – that's a wrap!

Atlas HQ hosted two kick-off events the weekend of April 20/21 – one in Barrie and one in Kemptville. We loved getting to talk to Atlassers from the nearby areas. Thank you to everyone who was able to join us!

## Regional events

Atlas Regional Coordinators across the province got in on the excitement of kicking-off the 2024 field season with regional events held at many locations. Some are yet to happen including events in Windsor, Sarnia, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Timmins. Check out the details at the [2024 kick-off webpage](#).



## Monthly challenges are back!

That's right – and we've got great prizes again this year! The May challenge will focus on getting people to use the NatureCounts app, which is better than ever.

Submit at least ten complete, effort-based checklists of five minutes duration or longer and with at least one "coded" species using the NatureCounts app between May 1 and 31 to be entered for a chance to win a pair of Vortex Diamondback binoculars! Watch the [Atlas challenges page](#) for more details and future challenges. Good luck!

## Your data are already showing big changes to Ontario birds

The Black Tern and the Dickcissel are showing dramatically different changes in numbers and/or distribution in Ontario since Atlas-1 and -2. You can examine those differences for yourself using the [Species Maps function](#) on the NatureCounts website, or you can read more about them in former Atlas Coordinator Mike Cadman's article in the upcoming June 2024 issue of [OFO News](#). The maps and article clearly show how your Atlas data are helping to track the changing patterns of bird occurrence and status across the province.







Photo: Black Tern by Mark Peck

## Calling all Canoe Trippers! 2024 pre-planned canoe trips now posted

As we enter year four, it becomes increasingly important to prioritize some of the harder-to-reach parts of Central Ontario in order to meet our goal of 100% coverage in the “Southern” zone by the end of Atlas-3.

Atlas staff have identified a number of critical gap areas remaining in the southern Shield (regions 16-32) that need your help. We have compiled a list of efficient, fun, and affordable canoe and backpacking trips that make access to these gaps possible. We have designed itineraries for each trip that prioritize completing the requirements of uncovered squares while ensuring participants have a great time.



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Trips range from three to 11 days and have each been assigned an estimated difficulty rating based on a variety of factors such as physical demands, canoeing skill level, birding skill level, and atlassing workload.

Volunteers will need to cover the cost of these trips, with the exception of trips involving camping in provincial parks, in which case participants can work with the appropriate Regional Coordinator to apply for camping fee waivers. Any other camping will occur on public land in areas free of charge. Therefore, the costs absorbed by volunteers will consist primarily of gas, food, and canoe rentals (if required).

Think you'd be up for one of these fun and rewarding eco-vacations? Click [here](#) for the list of trips and for more information on how to sign up!

## 2024 Square Bashes - Registration is now live!

Registration is now open for our 2024 Square Bashes! Square Bashes are multi-day events that bring atlasers together to camp in and atlas near Provincial Parks, with the goal of covering key gaps in coverage. Thank you to Ontario Parks for generously providing free camping to Square Bash participants. We have three great events lined up this year which will be fun for atlasers of all levels of experience!

Registration is required for all Square Bashes. You can register through the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) field trip webforms linked below. Please feel free to register for the entire duration of the event, or for only a part of that time. Our goal is to provide adequate coverage for as many squares as we can in and around the parks, while having as much fun as possible!

We have three Square Bashes planned for this year:

- **[Pinery Provincial Park](#): Friday, May 24 - Wednesday, May 29.** Pinery Provincial Park is situated on the shore of beautiful Lake Huron, and contains regionally-rare ecosystems such as Great Lakes coastal sand dunes and an oak savanna. The park and surrounding area are host to over 300 bird species, with possibilities including Tufted Titmouse, Red-headed Woodpeckers and maybe even a Dickcissel! This event is especially convenient for London atlasers. [Register for the Pinery Square Bash [here](#)]
- **[Bon Echo Provincial Park](#): Friday, May 31 - Wednesday, June 5.** This area features beautiful lakes with stunning cliffs, often used as nesting sites by Peregrine Falcons and other birds of prey. The surrounding forests are home to a rich diversity of breeding songbirds, including the provincially threatened Cerulean Warbler. This event is a convenient trip for Ottawa, Peterborough and Kingston atlasers. [Register for the Bon Echo Square Bash [here](#)]. **Please note** this square bash is almost full, we would love your help but if you can help with another square bash your contributions will be even more valuable.
- **[Mikisew Provincial Park](#): Friday, June 7 - Wednesday, June 12.** This area is home to beautiful hardwood forests and wetlands, and Bald Eagles and Ospreys can often be seen on Eagle Lake. A rich diversity of

warblers and other forest songbirds also nest in the area. Located just off Highway 11, this event is convenient for local atlassers as well as those who want to take a trip further north. [Register for the Mikisew Square Bash [here](#)]

**Please do not contact the parks about these events as we are making the arrangements through the Atlas-3 office.**

Several regional square bashes have also been planned by Regional Coordinators. Check the details at the [square bash webpage](#).

## Atlas-3 quick start

We've prepared some new resources for getting started with Atlas-3. Maybe it's for yourself and you haven't taken the plunge yet or maybe you know a birder who just needs a nudge to see how easy it is to participate. Whatever the reason, we want to show everyone just how easy it is to get Atlassing.

New to the Atlas or just looking for a refresher? Check out the [Quick-Start page](#) or head over to our "[Getting Started with Atlas-3](#)" video playlist that covers all of the basics in six short videos.

## Get your Atlas-3 swag

Looking for some Atlas-3 gear? Check out the store [here](#).

## Photos needed

Help us build our photo library for final publication. Please consider submitting your media to us through our [media submission form](#).

## Join the Atlas community on Discord

Got a question about a specific Atlas topic or just want to connect and share stories with other Atlassers? Join the Atlas Discord, a communication server with different channels, each specific to an Atlas topic! For detailed instructions on how to join, check out the [Discussion Board page](#).

Invite link: <https://discord.gg/JCfgr3egG>.

## Content wanted!

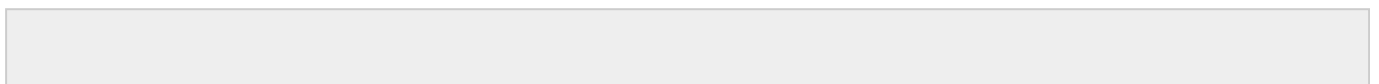
Do you have a cool Atlassing story, adventure, or observation to share? Please [send them](#) to us for either a blog post or short newsletter item.

## Support the Atlas!

The Atlas team appreciates the volunteer support of the project. If you would like to help even more, please consider making a donation in support of the project, too. You can now donate directly to Atlas-3 by following [this secure link](#) – or click on the donate button at the bottom of this e-newsletter. You will receive a charitable receipt for income tax purposes from Birds Canada and an extra warm feeling inside, knowing you're supporting the project with a donation and your volunteer efforts. Thanks so much for considering this!

Happy Atlassing

- The Atlas-3 Team



**The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas-3 thanks the following for their financial support:**

Environment and Climate Change  
Canada

TD Friends of the Environment  
Foundation

Vortex

The McLean Foundation

Natural Resource Solutions Inc.,

Hodgson Family Foundation

Baillie Fund

Wildlife Habitat Canada

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources  
and Forestry

RBC Foundation

Employment and Social Development  
Canada (Canada Summer Jobs)

Newmont

Parks Canada Agency

**The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas-3 thanks the following for their in-kind support:**

Boreal Avian Modelling Project

Natural Resources Canada

Ontario Parks

Royal Ontario Museum

University of Alberta

Wild Birds Unlimited

WildTrax

Sustainable Forestry Initiative

Plenty Canada

**COVID-19:** The Atlas team reminds all atlasers to be aware of the latest COVID-19 conditions in Ontario. Please follow all public health guidelines and restrictions, and check for updates frequently. Information on the latest conditions and public health guidance can be found on the Government of Ontario [website](#). Follow the links to the most current situation in the province.



This email was sent by [Birds Canada](#) on behalf of the [Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas](#) partners (Birds Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry, and Ontario Nature).

Charitable Registration No. 11902-4313-RR0001

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