



Purple Finch Photo: Mark Peck

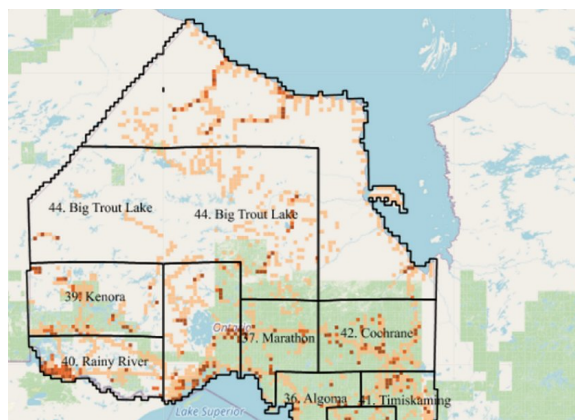
Dear Atlasser,

This edition of the newsletter includes:

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- Summary of 2023 Northern Trips
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Coverage to Date

Efforts to target gap areas in 2023 have clearly paid off. Many regions of Southern Ontario now show as predominantly full or nearly complete (brown and orange) on the [coverage map](#) (Figure 1). The remote north is now much better covered thanks to eight crews of volunteers supported by Birds Canada and hundreds of Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) deployed by Environment and Climate



Change Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service - Ontario Region with support from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

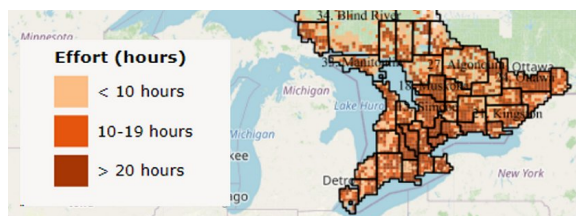


Figure 1. Number of peak hours across Ontario as of December 2023.

Data from 2023 continue to pour in, so coverage is likely a bit more extensive than it appears. Still, many substantial gaps remain, particularly in central Ontario and rural areas of the South. Compared to years 1–3 of Atlas-2, we are slightly behind schedule. The final two years of the Atlas will need to be all-hands-on-deck to ensure our coverage goals are met!

Table 1. Years 1–3 stats from Atlas-2 vs. Atlas-3:

	Species	Squares	Records	Point Counts	Hours
Atlas-2 2001-03	290	4,367	336,394	37,032	81,735
Atlas-3 2021-23	284	3,667	1,499,242	45,321	93,941 (56,561 peak)

Species: The number of species reported is slightly lower than at this stage last Atlas, but only by a slim margin. This could be explained as a natural result of a slower start in the first two years of the project, especially in the far north, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In any case, will likely surpass Atlas-2's total by the end of this Atlas.

Squares: Similar to the number of species reported, we have also visited fewer squares. Luckily, we are still on track to meet our project goals for coverage, but we will just need to focus our efforts on some target squares to fill in those identified gaps. Keep an eye out for some new initiatives early in 2024 that aim to get Atlassers out into more squares.

Records: Thanks to the switch to effort-based checklists when collecting Atlas data, we are collecting more information than any previous Atlas and are now well over one million records! This wealth of data will make for some of the most accurate estimates for species abundance and distribution ever developed for Ontario's birds, and will prove extremely valuable in developing conservation strategies, population status assessments, and so much more!

Point Counts: A big shout-out to anyone who completed a point count (digital or otherwise) in the last three years. Every point counts, so to speak, and your efforts have clearly paid off as we are now well beyond our numbers for this point in Atlas-2. If you still have points you plan to complete in years 4 and 5, please make sure you are communicating those with your [Regional Coordinator](#) to avoid overlap with paid crews and other volunteers.

Hours: Volunteer hours have far surpassed the hours committed at this point in Atlas-2. Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) are contributing to this number, but the majority of these hours are credited to dedicated volunteers like you. Keep up the great work!

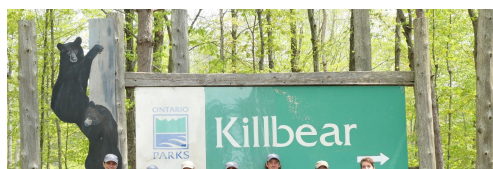
Special Surveys: A new goal of Atlas-3 is to expand our coverage for harder-to-detect species through the use of special surveys. We are pleased to see a growing number of marshbird, owl and nightjar surveys being completed across the province and would like to remind volunteers that there are many opportunities in years 4 and 5 to do more of these fun and easy surveys. Please contact your Regional Coordinator to find out how you can get involved.

2024 Northern Trips

Interested in some adventure? The Atlas is excited to announce the 2024 call for northern canoe trippers! An exciting list of options for Atlas-supported fly-in canoe trips are now on the board awaiting applications. Please visit the [Atlas-3 Northern Trips](#) page for more information and to submit your applications. Please feel free to share the opportunity with other Atlassers and canoeists you may know.

2023 Field Crews

The Atlas was able to employ ten seasonal staff this summer to fill in coverage gaps in central and northern Ontario. Three crews were tasked with the ambitious goal of completing the required point counts and hours in as



many squares as possible (usually ~ 1 square per day) during the peak breeding window. The crews were stationed in Algonquin Park, Regions 28-32, and northwestern Ontario. Check out their stories on [our blog!](#)



The season kicked off with a training week at Killbear Provincial Park where we were lucky enough to see a Red-headed Woodpecker and help park staff find Eastern Massasauga (rattlesnake). From left to right (top row): Kaelyn Bumelis, Claire Atherton, Dana Latour, Mark Duchene, Arnaud Valade, Mike Burrell, Karl Heide, (bottom row): Erik Van Den Kieboom, Marie-Ève Gagné, Abbey Lewis, Evan Sinclair, Scott Da Rocha. Photo credit: Karl Heide.

Summary of 2023 Northern Trips

The remote north gained lots of attention in 2023 in the form of eight volunteer-led trips financially-supported by Birds Canada to the Hudson Bay Lowlands (see Figure 2). Below is a brief summary of each crew's accomplishments, with more details to come on point counts and hours.

Table 2. 2023 Atlas-supported, volunteer-led Northern River trips

Trip Name	Trip Participants	Trip Description	Squares
Upper Albany	Mark Engel	A wet and wild paddle down the Albany River starting at Fort Hope, ending at Washi Lake. Highlights: Gray Catbird and Canada Jays amidst favorable weather hindered only by intermittent forest fire smoke.	16UDC30
	Kevin Lamb		16UDB58
	Rob Crawford		16UDB98
	Christian Renault		16UDB99
Upper Moose	Catherine Killen	The train dropped off this keen group of volunteers and their canoes at Moose River Crossing, from which they paddled 75 km downstream to Moosonee, documenting 117 species along the way.	17UMS83
	Alex Stone		17UMS94
	Barb O'Neill		17UNS17
	Angela Brooks		
	Amy Brunning		
	Sheila Craig		
Lower Moose	Pamela Martin	Hampered somewhat by the silting of a channel accessing one of their priority squares, this crew still managed to complete 53 point counts over a 7-day period around the mouth of the Moose River, observing Yellow Rail and Marbled Godwit in their coastal breeding habitats.	17UNS38
	Chris Risley		17UNS48
	Erica Nol		
	Ben Taylor		
Upper Winisk	Patrick Kramer	Smack dab in the middle of the remote north, the area covered by this group is one of the hardest to access in the province. Big thanks to these four, who took on the rapids of the Winisk and were rewarded by breeding records of Least Sandpiper and Northern Shrike!	16UDE90
	Ramsey Hart		16UDE98
	Tove Christensen		16UEE24
	Frank de Jong		16UEE08
Lower Winisk	Gray Carlin	This team had the experience of a lifetime, highlighted by encounters with a Polar Bear and Caribou, and a Boreal Chickadee nesting on a metal structure in Peawanuck. Between the riparian and coastal portions of their journey, they documented 104 bird species and confirmed breeding for 32 of these.	16UEF06
	Karen Vanderlee		16UEF36
	Justin Kreller		16UEF66
	Bill Thompson		16UFG12

			16UFG22
Shamattawa	Emily Rondel Mark Peck William Konze Karl Konze	Putting in about 40 km upstream of Peawanuck, this group paddled down the Shamattawa River, then spent a week atlassing the Hudson Bay coast. They found nests of Golden Eagle, Common Nighthawk, Palm Warbler, Northern Pintail and White-crowned Sparrow, among others.	16UFF07 16UFF08 16UFF09 16UEG93 16UEG94
Lower Sachigo	Mhairi McFarlane Brent Sinclair Marcus Buck Sheldon McGregor	This intrepid crew began their journey on the upper Sachigo River, which they followed to the mighty Severn, a paddler's dream. The trip was rounded off by a few days of atlassing on the coast at Fort Severn. Highlights included confirmed breeding of Palm Warbler and a variety of shorebirds, and multiple detections of Connecticut Warblers and Yellow Rails.	16UCF39 16UCF59 16UCG70 16UCG91 16UDG36 16UDH50 16UDH61
Fawn/ Severn	Ian Cook Alex Mills Mike Ferguson Stéphane Menu	Taking on the adventurous and lengthy paddle from the upper Fawn River to the Hudson Bay coast at Fort Severn, this team found a Lincoln's Sparrow nest along the way and was serenaded at one riverside campsite by both Long-eared and Boreal owls.	16UDF24 16UDF46 16UDG12 16UDH50 16UDH61

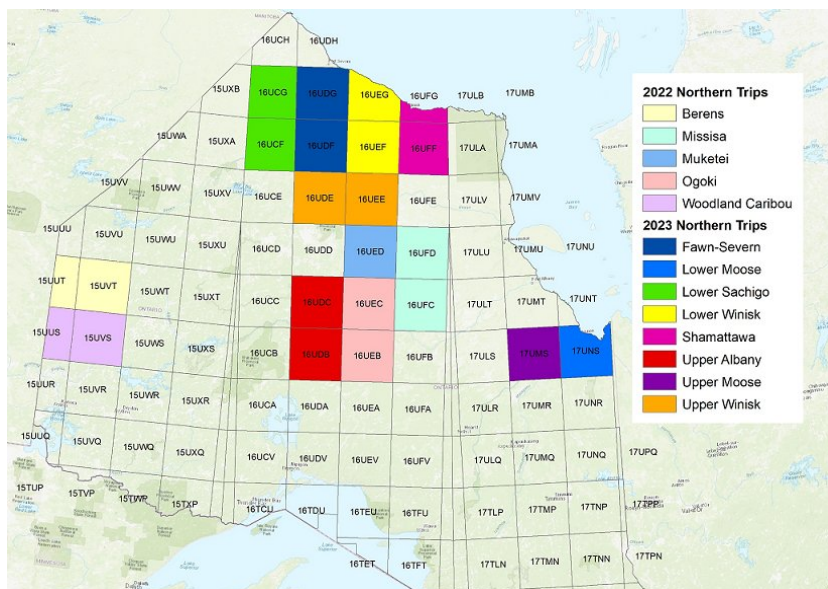


Figure 2. Far-north trips completed in 2023 (bold colours) compared against trips completed in 2022 (pastel colours).

French River Square Bash June 8th to 15th, 2023

by Mike Cadman

This was the first canoe-based square bash of Atlas-3, in one of the loveliest places to paddle in the province. Ten intrepid souls took part, providing data for 4 squares, as shown in the table below. The weather was quite varied, and we unfortunately lost two days to heavy rain and wind. Nevertheless, we had a wonderful time, got lots of valuable records, and gained great appreciation for the extra challenges of atlassing away from roads.

Table 3. French River square bash results

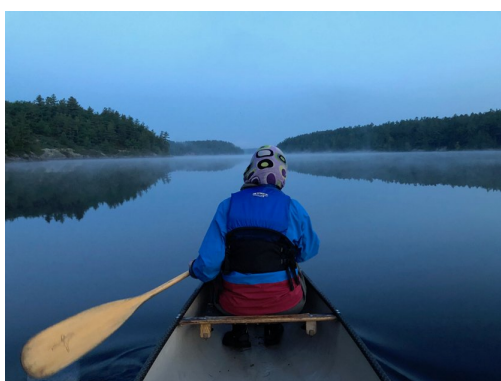
Square	17TNL19	17TNL09	17TNL08	17TNL18
# Records	1,100	694	261	275
# Species	85	79	63	59
Hours (peak)	56	50	31	19
# Point Counts	21	9	5	0

Among my personal atlassing highlights were an agitated Black-backed Woodpecker, a Red Crossbill calling away in a tall white pine, loads of warblers, finding a Purple Finch nest near the top of a 6m spruce tree, and a lovely domed Ovenbird nest with 5 eggs. A vivid memory is of lying in my tent on our first night being impressed by how many times Eastern Whip-poor-wills can repeat their evocative song without stopping. Note to self: bring earplugs next trip – atlassing starts early!

Thanks to my trip-mates who made this such a delightful and useful trip and especially to Anna Sheppard and Alison Lake for keeping us organized!



Left to Right: Mike Cadman, Anna Sheppard, Alison Lake, Jason Miller, Ian Attridge, Sue Sauve, Cheryl Schramm, and Derek Armstrong on French River campsite 685. Soggy but undaunted! Will Kershaw and Janet Martindale also attended this square bash, arriving after this picture was taken. Photo credit: Anna Sheppard.



Cheryl Schramm heads out at dawn for a day's atlassing. Photo credit: Mike Cadman

It's CBC season – why not do some Atlassing?

The Christmas Bird Count season begins December 14. While you can be forgiven for not having the Atlas front and centre, it's actually the perfect time of year to Atlas for a couple of owl species in southern Ontario. If you find yourself owling this CBC season, don't forget – you can Atlas that! If you needed an extra reason to get up early or stay out late on your CBC, maybe this is it! To find a Christmas Bird Count, visit the Birds Canada [Christmas Bird Count page](#).

Atlas-3 quick start

We have prepared some great new resources for getting started with Atlas-3. Maybe you haven't taken the plunge yet into Atlassing or you know a birder who needs a little nudge to see how easy it is to participate. Whatever the reason, we want to show birders of all skill levels just how easy it is to get Atlassing.

Check out our new quick-start page: www.birdsontario.org/quick-start.

We also have a fantastic new "[Getting Started with Atlas-3](#)" video playlist that covers all of the basics in six short videos:

- [Introduction](#)
- [Quick-Start Guide](#)
- [Breeding Evidence Codes](#)
- [Special Surveys](#)
- [Significant Species](#)
- [Submitting checklist Data Using the NatureCounts App](#)



NatureCounts App – new and improved!

If you haven't checked out the NatureCounts App for a while (or never have!) then you'll be delighted to hear that over the past two years, it has undergone extensive testing and upgrades. We couldn't be more excited about its improved utility!

Version 4.3.4 was released in April, so make sure you have the updated version. Some of the amazing new features include:

- Safe dates built right into the app
- Warning pops up when you leave a square
- Built-in timer
- Ability to download draft checklists
- Quick entry (type a number then the species name or four letter code to quickly add that number to the species' total)
- Better syncing with eBird locations
- Ability to trim your track before submission

Please leave a rating and/or review wherever you get your apps, and don't forget to [leave us feedback](#) if you have ideas for improvements or notice something that seems "off".

Atlas Swag

You can now purchase almost anything (T-shirts, caps, mugs, tote bags, stickers, etc.) with the Atlas logo on it from the online [Atlas store](#). Looking forward to seeing you stylishly sporting your Atlas gear!



Photos needed

Even though we still have two field seasons to go, we are already starting to think about the publication of the results. We will need a lot of beautiful photos!

When you are out Atlassing this summer, please carry a camera and document what you find. We will be asking for photos showing breeding evidence, birds, habitats, and Atlassers in action. Please submit your photos 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: birdsontario.org/discussion

Invite link:
<https://discord.gg/JCgfr3egG>



Content wanted!

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

Support the Atlas!

Volunteer support is critical to the success of the Atlas, and we are deeply grateful for all the contributions that our incredible volunteers make. If you would like to or are able to help even more, please consider making a donation in support of the project. 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 Owlidays

- 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

Royal Ontario Museum

WildTrax

Natural Resources Canada

University of Alberta

Sustainable Forestry Initiative

Ontario Parks

Wild Birds Unlimited

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).

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