



Black-capped Chickadee Photo: Mark Peck

Dear Atlasser,

This edition of the Atlas-3 newsletter will cover:

- Free access and camping in Provincial Parks
- Block Parties and Square Bashes
- Owl Surveying (which begins for some species March 1)
- Sappy Hour - Owling and early season atlassing
- Summer job opportunities with the Atlas
- Year-1 highlights submitted by Atlassers

Free Access and Camping for Atlassers

We encourage you to go atlassing in Provincial Parks. Parks can be home to species uncommon in the rest of the landscape, and data provided from parks will contribute not only to the Atlas but to an understanding of how well Parks protect our birds. Parks may also have trail systems well suited to doing off-road point counts and atlassing.

Thanks to Ontario Parks, atlassers may be able to access and/or camp free of charge while collecting atlas data in many provincial parks. It must be noted, however, that complimentary access and/or camping at operating parks is at the discretion of the Park Superintendent. Complimentary access, camping, campsite availability and quality are not guaranteed.

If you are interested in camping, it is best to act asap. The parks book campsites 5 months ahead, so will soon be filling up for atlassing season, and you are most likely to be successful if you can get your arrangements in place before the campsites are full. Please note that Algonquin and Killarney Provincial Parks are being handled separately, see details below.

Please do not contact the park about this yourself. You should contact the [Atlas Regional Coordinator](#) for the

COVID-19: *The Atlas team reminds all atlassers 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.*

region containing the Park and let them know which park you are interested in and provide dates that you would like to be camping and atlassing. Eligible dates for free camping are in the period May 24 through July 10. Usually no more than 5 days of free camping will be provided. You should also indicate which square(s) in and around the park you would like to cover and whether or not you will be doing point counts, either in-person or digital* using Zoom H2n units – priority will go to atlassers doing point counts. The RC will check with the park and let you know if and when free camping can be provided.

If you want to go atlassing in a Provincial Park, but do not require camping, you may be eligible for free access for atlassing purposes, but don't need to act as early. Let the RC know at least 2 weeks ahead of your first planned visit, and the RC will approach the park on your behalf to request free entrance to the park for atlassing purposes. If permission is granted, you will be provided with a letter that you can present at the park gate. The eligible period for complimentary access for atlassing is January 1 through July 29.

For Algonquin and Killarney Provincial Parks

We're keen to recruit experienced campers to do atlassing in backcountry squares in these parks that so far have few hours logged during the core period (i.e., <10 hours). If you have a backcountry trip in mind where you can complete at least 20 hours of atlassing in squares that still need hours or you can complete at least 25 in-person or digital point counts* in squares that still need them, then we would very much like to hear from you.

If your proposed canoeing or backpacking atlas trip is approved by the Regional Coordinators and Park staff, then **your backcountry camping permits will be provided free of charge**. Please submit a proposed trip plan for review and potential approval using the application form on the Atlas web site at: <https://www.birdsontario.org/camping-application>. Please be prepared to provide the number of hours and the number of in-person or digital point counts*, if any, you expect to complete in each square you plan to visit during the core period.

**Digital point counts are suited to birders who don't know birds well by song. They involve standing at a prescribed location and using a Zoom H2n recording device supplied by the atlas to record birds for 5 minutes. Recordings are later downloaded to the computer and "interpreted" by expert birders. A video explaining how to use the recorders can be found on the [Atlas YouTube channel](#).*

It is important that these privileges only be used for the stated purpose of collecting Atlas data. Abuse of the system could result in removing this privilege for all atlassers.

“Block Party” in the near North

Much atlassing remains to be done in the road-accessible parts of the north, from Temagami to the Manitoba border. We encourage everyone to consider helping out in this region – COVID-permitting, of course – and enjoy the different suite of birds that make this area home. Although work anywhere in the area is of great value, the Coverage Map on the Atlas-3 website shows our priority squares. Please check with the appropriate Regional Coordinator (RC) listed on the website if you plan on doing any atlassing in this area.

One new Atlas activity, open to all, will take place at the northeastern limit of the province's road system. Angie Williams is organizing a special event — our first-ever “Block Party” — to help cover the priority squares along Highway 652 in Block 17UNR, northeast of Cochrane. Angie will organize a base camp in mid-to-late June for any other birders who want to come up and join her and her husband, Ken Williams.

Angie and Ken can also help with equipment for camping or getting around the area if that kind of support is needed. It's an exciting opportunity to experience the boreal forest up-close and see and hear some very cool northern species in their breeding habitat. Among possibilities are Black-backed Woodpecker, Fox Sparrow and Northern Hawk Owl. For more information, contact Angie by email (aw8675334@gmail.com)

Square bashes

We are delighted to announce our first “Square Bashes” for Atlas-3 (COVID safety precautions and restrictions permitting). Both are planned for beautiful provincial parks on the Canadian Shield in June. Both parks are rich with warblers, thrushes and other central Ontario species. At each location, five campsites (maximum six people per site) have been set aside for atlassers, with no camping charge. At least some sites will offer electrical

hookups.

The first event will be at Grundy Provincial Park, north of Parry Sound, from Friday, June 10, to Wednesday, June 15. The second is at Mikisew Provincial Park, near South River, from Friday, June 17, to Wednesday, June 22. You could come for the entire five days in each case or just part of that time. Our goal is to provide adequate coverage for as many squares as possible in and around each park.

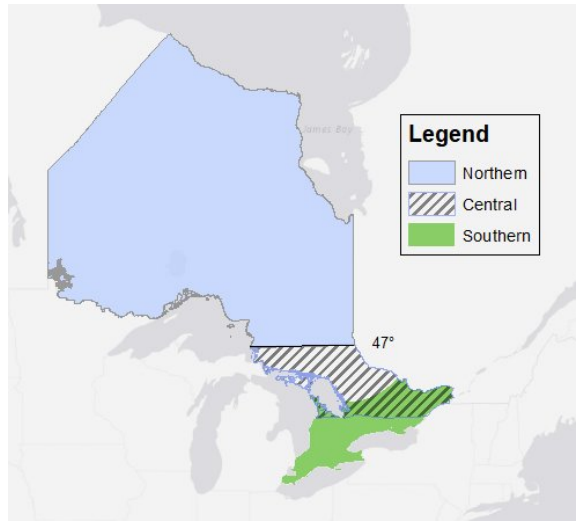
If you are interested in participating in these events, email Kaelyn Bumelis (atlas@birdsonario.org), telling her which location and dates work for you, how many people are in your party, and whether or not you can do traditional point counts. Please do not contact the parks as we are making the arrangements through the Atlas-3 office.

Standard Owl Survey season begins March 1

Standardized Owl surveys are a great way for us to learn about the distribution and abundance of owls and how they've changed since previous atlases. They are also a lot of fun and well suited to both experienced and inexperienced birders. There's something about the sound of an owl calling from the darkness, or a Northern Hawk Owl perched atop a spindly spruce.

Here is the what, when and where:

Survey	Date	Location	Playback?
Eastern Screech-Owl	March 1 - April 30	"Southern" section in Figure 1.	Yes
Northern Hawk Owl	March 1 - May 31	"Northern" section in Figure 1.	Yes
Barred and Northern Saw-whet Owl	April 1-April 30	"Central" section in Figure 1.	Yes
Great Gray and Boreal Owl	April 1 - April 30	"Northern" section in Figure 1.	Yes
Long-eared Owl	July 1- August 14	In any section	No



The map shows the province of Ontario divided into three survey regions. The Northern region is shaded light blue and covers the majority of the province. The Central region is shaded with diagonal hatching and is located in the south-central part of the province. The Southern region is shaded green and is located in the southernmost part of the province. A horizontal line representing the 47-degree latitude line is drawn across the map, passing through the boundary between the Central and Southern regions. A legend in the top right corner identifies the colors and patterns for each region.

Figure 1. Dates and locations of Standardized Owl surveys.

For more information, see the [Special Surveys](#) section on the Atlas website.

Sappy Hour 7pm February 23

The next Sappy Hour is devoted to the standard surveys of the Eastern Screech-Owl and Northern Hawk Owl and to early season atlasing. Migrant birds are trickling back into the province and some residents are starting their breeding behaviours. We'll discuss what breeding evidence you should be recording over the next month.

The event will take place on Zoom webinar (register using the link - [here](#)) and will also be streamed to Facebook Live (www.facebook.com/ONBreedingBirdAtlas/live). The event will be recorded for those who cannot attend either on Facebook or Zoom and will be available on our [YouTube channel](#).

Summer job opportunities with the Atlas

The Atlas is hiring experienced field staff to conduct bird surveys in Central and Northern Ontario beginning in May 2022. For more information [click here](#).

Atlassing highlights



My winter days were spent snowshoeing my Larose Forest Atlas Square (Region 24) in blissful solitude surrounded by both species of crossbills, and other finches, in good numbers. I was even able to document courtship for Red Crossbills! Unfortunately, I had to move from the province in the fall, but I will never forget my time with those birds. In a fitting farewell, the last bird I Atlassed before I left was a single Red Crossbill flyover, heading in the direction of that same forest tract. I'll miss Atlassing, and that forest, dearly! Thank you for the memories.

- Bree Tucker





My most memorable Atlas moment was not a single point in time. It was all those moments while out on small waterways in a small rowboat. Pied-billed Grebes, while often heard, seeing them is difficult at the best of times. And while numerous, Red-winged Blackbirds generally keep their young well hidden until they have lost their down and fledged. So seeing these up close and personal made for a very special summer.

- Janet McCullough

Until next time!

- The Atlas-3 Team

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Parks Canada	Wild Birds Unlimited	



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