



Pine Siskin Photo: Sarah Sharp

Dear Atlasser,

This edition of the newsletter includes:

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## **New Atlassing Article about Grasshopper Sparrow and Common Nighthawk**

We're excited for the latest addition to the [Atlassing Articles](#) section of the website. In the latest article, Kevin Hannah of the Canadian Wildlife Service explains that with new research, we are now able to elevate breeding evidence for Grasshopper Sparrow and Common Nighthawk based on different sounds we might hear. [Check out the article](#) to find out more!

## **Changes to square maps**

As per our established Atlas protocol, surveys on First Nation Reserve Lands may only be conducted with explicit permission from the First Nation. Until now, it's been somewhat difficult for Atlassers to know where those reserve land boundaries were in relation to Atlas squares. We're excited to share that we've updated the PDF square maps so that all First Nation Reserve Lands are now shown clearly on the maps you can download from the [square resources page](#) of the Atlas website! You can also explore the entire province and see where First Nation Reserve Lands fall in relation to square boundaries and point counts on the [First Nation Reserve Lands and Atlas map viewer](#).

## New “map-based” option for entering six interval point counts

The latest version of the NatureCounts App (v6.0 and above) now makes it easier than ever to collect six interval point counts (AKA “advanced point counts”). The map-based interface lets you see the surrounding area with the distance bands overlaid and then plot where each bird is detected. It then collates the information organized by time and distance band for you. Interested in checking it out? Watch the [“how-to” video](#) on the Atlas-3 YouTube channel.

## Changes for digital point counts

Have you completed [digital point counts](#) in the past or are you 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](#)). However, this year, we are also 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. The downloadable log sheet can be found on the [digital point count webpage](#).

## Some amazing Atlas milestones

With the help of all the Atlassers who have put so much effort into Atlas-3, we wanted to share some amazing milestones that we have hit (or will hit very soon!). Check these out:

- In 2023, we surpassed 1 million records. We're currently sitting at 1.5 million and with a big year we could hit 2 million this year!!
- Sometime in the next couple of weeks (maybe by the time you're reading this!) we'll surpass 100,000 hours of data collection. WOW!
- In the first day or two of point count season this month, we'll break the 40,000 point count threshold!
- Over 1,500 Atlassers have submitted data so far (and counting)!

All of that amazing data means the Atlas is able to better inform bird conservation for the next 20 years and beyond. Great work everyone!

## Sad news: The passing of Bruce Falls

The Canadian atlassing community lost one of its founders and stalwarts with the passing of Dr. J. Bruce Falls at age 100. Bruce was the Chair of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas Management Committee from 1983 through 1987, and led the publication of the first Atlas book. That committee, under Bruce's leadership, played a huge role in fundraising, designing, and overseeing the project – which was the first of its kind in Canada, and developed the template for future atlases across the country. Without that solid foundation and initial success, atlassing may not have developed in Ontario and across Canada as it has. He will be greatly missed.

For a more complete description of Bruce's outstanding career and accomplishments in Canadian Ornithology and conservation, see: <https://necrocanada.com/obituaries-2023/canada-ontario-toronto-dr-j-bruce-falls-oc>.

## Monthly challenges are back

Interested in a chance for some great prizes? Monthly challenges are back! We've got Vortex binoculars and a host of Atlas swag to give away each month this summer. The May challenge involved entering checklists with the NatureCounts App and the June and July challenges will involve upgrading breeding evidence (including new breeding evidence) in a square.

Check the Atlas-3 [challenges page](#) to stay up to date to maximize your chance of winning a prize this year.

## Conducting point counts with the NatureCounts app?

Over the off-season we have updated the square summary sheets and coverage maps to break point count totals into on-road and off-road to help with planning. As a result, we became aware that a small number of point counts did not have the “on-road/off-road” designation filled in. After investigation we found the root cause of the issue was a small loophole with the app that allows users to bypass this question.

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. 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.

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

As we enter year 4 of the project, it is 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.



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, although camping fees may be waived in Ontario Parks properties by working 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 information about how to sign up!

## Atlas-3 featured in spring 2024 issue of ON Nature Magazine

The spring 2024 issue of ON Nature Magazine featured an article by former Atlas coordinator Mike Cadman - read it [here](#).

## Atlas-3 quick start

We've prepared some new resources for getting started with Atlas-3. Maybe 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 and fun it is to get Atlassing.

New to the Atlas or just looking for a refresher? Check out the Quick-Start page: [www.birdsontario.org/quick-start](http://www.birdsontario.org/quick-start) 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 our project merch at 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: [birdsontario.org/discussion](https://birdsontario.org/discussion).

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 sincerely appreciates the volunteer support for the project. If you would like to consider helping even more, please make a donation or recruit others to make 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, along with an extra warm feeling inside, knowing you're supporting the project even more. For those that are able to, we thank you 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

US Fish & Wildlife Service

### 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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