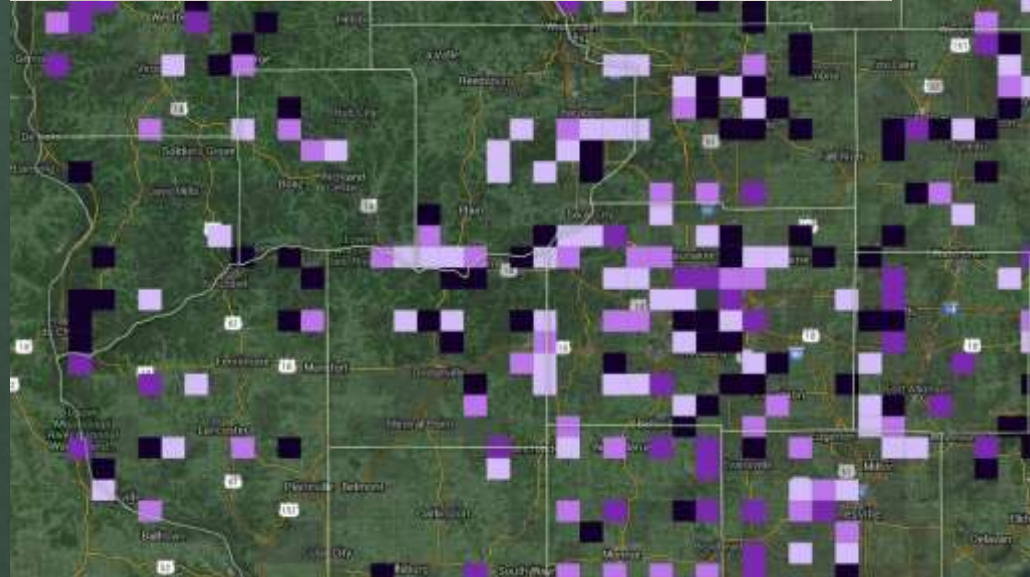


Breeding Codes- making those tricky judgement calls

Tom Prestby (WBBA II) and Nicholas Anich (Wisconsin DNR & WBBA II)

A possible code is much better than nothing!

- ◆ Don't assume that birds are already coded
- ◆ Even an H or S code in breeding season is much more meaningful than no code
- ◆ Important to code incidental breeding observations
- ◆ Data in non-priority blocks is still important!



When does something deserve a possible code?

- ◆ Consult the Breeding Guideline Bar Chart
- ◆ Are you in the breeding range for the species?
- ◆ Is it likely done migrating?
- ◆ Is habitat appropriate?
- ◆ Be patient if you can, especially at migrant traps
- ◆ **Basically... will it breed here?**

Species	January				February				March				April				May			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
American Woodcock										M	M	E	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Wilson's Phalarope*																M	M	M	M	E
Bonaparte's Gull													M	M	M	M	M	M	M	E
Little Gull															M	M	M	M	M	E
Ring-billed Gull	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	E	E	E	B	B	
Herring Gull	N	N	N	N	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	E	E	B	B	B	
Great Black-backed Gull*	N	N	N	N	N	N	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	E	E	B	B	B	
Caspian Tern*														M	M	M	M	M	M	
Black Tern*																M	M	E	E	
Common Tern*														M	M	M	M	E	E	
Forster's Tern*													M	M	M	M	E	E	E	
Rock Pigeon	N	N	N	N	N	N	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Eurasian Collared-Dove	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	E	E	E	E	E	B	B	B	B	
Mourning Dove	N	N	N	N	N	N	M	M	M	E	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo																	M	E	E	
Black-billed Cuckoo																M	M	M	E	
Barn Owl	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	E	B	B	B	B	
Eastern Screech-Owl	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	E	E	E	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Great Horned Owl	N	N	E	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Northern Hawk Owl	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	E	E	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Barred Owl	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	E	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Great Gray Owl	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	E	E	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Long-eared Owl*	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	E	E	E	E	B	B	B	B	B	
Short-eared Owl*	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	E	B	B	B	B	

Birds to be wary of for coding

- ◇ Hunting & Loafing far from where they breed
 - ◇ Herons & Egrets
 - ◇ Cormorants and Pelicans
 - ◇ Gulls & Terns
 - ◇ Eagles & Vultures
- ◇ Courtship during migration
 - ◇ Ducks
 - ◇ Eagles
- ◇ Some even exhibit confirmed behaviors far from where they breed
 - ◇ Terns
- ◇ Only code these if you think you are at a likely breeding site, otherwise leave un-coded



Possible codes: H vs. S



S

- ◇ Singing in the correct habitat
- ◇ Especially singing repeatedly or from prominent perches



H

- ◇ Bird is in correct habitat but seen only
- ◇ One sex seen but not the other
- ◇ Appropriate for many species that don't "sing" like corvids, waterfowl, waxwings...

Upgrading to probable: When S becomes S7



S

- ◇ Singing in the correct habitat
- ◇ Especially singing repeatedly or from prominent perches



S7

- ◇ Still singing 7+ days later
- ◇ In same habitat close to the same spot
- ◇ Has to be the same year as first observation

Who is not eligible for S and S7 codes?

- ◆ **Golden rule: the bird has to make a sound that is unique to advertising its territory in the breeding season**
- ◆ This rules out
 - ◆ Corvids
 - ◆ Waxwings & Hummingbirds
 - ◆ Most waterbirds
- ◆ Woodpecker drumming is their “song”
- ◆ Especially important for S7 codes
- ◆ Don't worry, there are other ways to get these species to “Probable”!



Probable codes: “A” vs. “T”



T

- ◇ Involves an interaction that is likely because of a territorial dispute
 - ◇ Territorial singing is “S”, not “T” unless it causes a dispute
- ◇ Territorial defenses can involve the same species or different species

Not to be confused with...



A

- ◇ “A” differs because it doesn’t need to involve an interaction
 - ◇ Angry call-notes are a good example
 - ◇ Repeatedly returning to same disturbance is a good example

“DD”: Distraction Display

- ◆ DD is a unique display of fluttering and/or feigning injury to draw a predator in a direction
- ◆ Many species do not give a DD
- ◆ One of the biggest sources of confusion during year 1
 - ◆ Extreme agitation is still “A”
 - ◆ Mobbing or harassing a predator is “T”



Ryan Brady

DD

T



Joel Trick

DD for Raptors

- ◇ Continuous dive-bombing is how raptors perform a distraction display
- ◇ Almost always against humans or mammal predators
- ◇ Rather rare
- ◇ Not to be confused with territorial actions against other raptors



Confirmed codes: CF and Raptors

- ◇ Raptors naturally carry food because their prey is too large to eat on the spot
- ◇ When coding, make sure they are not just carrying it to eat for themselves
- ◇ Hints
 - ◇ Carrying to same location multiple times
 - ◇ Carrying into likely nesting area
 - ◇ Carrying seemingly long-distance
- ◇ Same goes for Crows and Ravens



Ryan Brady

Confirmed codes: FL vs. FY



Ryan Brady

FL

- ◆ FL is any bird that is out of the nest, whether it can fly or not
- ◆ Code as FL if you DO NOT see it get fed
- ◆ Can be with or without parent(s)



Ryan Brady

FY

- ◆ Use FY code when you SEE or HEAR a young bird get fed
- ◆ Again, this is for birds out of the nest

FL vs. FY for Precocial species



FL

- ◇ Again, young birds that have left the nest
- ◇ You will often see them following parent closely



FY

- ◇ Very rare code for these species
 - ◇ Except loons
- ◇ Only use if you witness parent directly feed young
 - ◇ Does not include parent showing young where to eat

NY vs. FL/FY for Precocial species



NY

- ◆ Always use NY if young are still in the nest
 - ◆ Whether you see parent feeding or not
- ◆ Rare code for precocial young
 - ◆ Only if eggs just hatched



FL

- ◆ FL & FY are for birds that have left the nest
 - ◆ FL if you don't see it fed
 - ◆ FY if you see it get fed

Confirmed codes: CN vs. NB



Jim Edlhuber

CN

- ◆ You do not see where the bird ends up going
- ◆ You don't ultimately see the nest



Tom Schultz

NB

- ◆ You see the bird reach the nest
 - ◆ Or if it reaches a cavity and goes in

Cavity-nesters: N vs. B vs. NB vs. ON

- ◆ The longer you can watch what is happening or the more often you can visit, the better idea you'll have
- ◆ **N**= Bird is showing interest in a cavity, may or may not be entering
- ◆ **B**= Woodpecker is drilling a hole large enough to eventually become a cavity
- ◆ **NB**= "B" activity has been happening for prolonged period
- ◆ **NB**= Bird is consistently tossing out woodchips or bringing in material
- ◆ **NB**= Never valid for wrens
- ◆ **ON**= Bird enters cavity repeatedly
 - ◆ Bird enters cavity for prolonged periods
 - ◆ Male and female enter repeatedly
 - ◆ Bird has been entering cavity several days



N

Ryan Brady

ON



Cavity-nesters: CF vs. NY vs. FY

FY



- ◆ Remember, FY is only used for birds out of the nest
- ◆ A cavity hole is the same as a nest in this case



NY

- ◆ Usually, you will hear the young in the cavity
 - ◆ NY is used most often for food carried to cavity
- ◆ If you don't hear young, repeated food carrying implies the presence of young in the cavity
- ◆ If carrying food into silent cavity, CF can be used

Special Case: Turkey Vultures

- ◆ Turkey vultures are complicated because they have large feeding ranges, they don't sing, and you cannot identify to sex
- ◆ Be cautious when coding this species
- ◆ Never code flyovers unless flyover is consistent over a long period of time (H)
- ◆ Be wary of coding perched birds
 - ◆ Don't code if carrion nearby
- ◆ Code when you notice repetition
 - ◆ Same perches used over period of time
 - ◆ Flyover in same location and direction



O



H



O

Special Case: Chimney Swifts

- ◇ Not hard to see one near a chimney
- ◇ Very hard to get access to check for nest
- ◇ Again, look for repetition
 - ◇ Does bird enter over and over again?
 - ◇ Has bird been entering over a substantial period of time?
- ◇ Other hints
 - ◇ Does it stay in long enough where it could be incubating?
 - ◇ Do members of the pair trade off?
- ◇ Can use ON code if you witness enough of the above to be convinced
- ◇ If not, code as N



Jim Edlhuber



Tom Schultz

Observing multiple codes

- ◆ If you see multiple codes, use the highest breeding code possible
- ◆ Lowest on the list and drop-down list in eBird

BREEDING CODES	
	<i>OBSERVED</i>
	Observed (enter in eBird, no code required)
F	Flyover
	<i>POSSIBLE</i>
H	In appropriate <u>H</u> abitat
S	<u>S</u> inging male (excluding migrants)
	<i>PROBABLE</i>
S7	<u>S</u> inging male heard <u>7</u> + days apart
M	<u>M</u> ultiple (7+) singing males
P	<u>P</u> air in suitable habitat
T	<u>T</u> erritory defense
C	<u>C</u> ourtship display/copulation
N	Visiting probable <u>N</u> est site
A	<u>A</u> gitated behavior
B	Woodpecker/wren nest <u>B</u> uilding/cavity excavation
	<i>CONFIRMED</i>
PE	<u>P</u> hysiological <u>E</u> vidence/brood patch
CN	<u>C</u> arrying <u>N</u> est material
NB	<u>N</u> est <u>B</u> uilding (except woodpeckers & wrens)
DD	<u>D</u> istractio <u>D</u> isplay
UN	<u>U</u> sed <u>N</u> est (use with caution)
ON	<u>O</u> ccupied <u>N</u> est
FL	Recently <u>F</u> ledged young
CF	<u>C</u> arrying <u>F</u> ood
FY	<u>F</u> eeding <u>Y</u> oung
FS	Carrying <u>F</u> ecal <u>S</u> ac
NE	<u>N</u> est w/ <u>E</u> ggs
NY	<u>N</u> est w/ <u>Y</u> oung

Low



High

Comments: Everyone's best friend!

- ◆ Especially useful for confusing situations
- ◆ Describe the situation as best as possible
- ◆ Even brief comments are MUCH better than having no comments
- ◆ Best friend of:
 - ◆ You when you look back at your records
 - ◆ Your WBBA County Coordinator
 - ◆ Your local eBird reviewer
 - ◆ The WBBA II team

1 Red-tailed Hawk	Remove Species	Review
1 Rough-legged Hawk	Remove Species	Review
3 Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	Remove Species	Review
2 Eurasian Collared-Dove	Remove Species	Review
Two birds on powerlines singing on north side of Lulu St. Reported and photographed previously by another birder. Large gray dove with squared-off tail with more white than MODO and black collar on neck. Could have been a pair but they weren't sitting closely together and it seemed like both were singing. Bears watching for higher evidence of breeding		
Breeding Code	S Possible--Singing male	
2 American Crow	Remove Species	Review



Tom's Top 5 favorite comments from year 1

- ◇ 1) “A recently fledged young bird showed up with an adult to eat out of my dog's food dish in the backyard. I see two adults do the same thing occasionally during the winter months and have seen as many as four adults at the same time.”

--Brett Bockhop, Gray Jay – FL, Iron County

- ◇ 2) “Adult trying to escape insistent fledgling. Fledgling was holding on to adult's tail and being dragged along the ground. In farmstead yard.”

--Laura Coglan, Chipping Sparrow – FL, Crawford County

- ◇ 3) “One of the Black-capped chickadees was on the ground pulling rabbit hair from coyote scat. I assume it was gathering material for its nest. It flew off with a huge mouthful of hair but I never saw its final destination.”

--Charles Henrickson, Black-capped Chickadee – CN, Dane County

- ◇ 4) “Male performing Oscar- worthy distraction performance on road, literally at my feet.”

--Keith Merkel, Common Yellowthroat – DD, Wood County

- ◇ 5) “You'd think they have had enough. ...but still MORE nest building!!!”

--Andrea Szymczak, Field Sparrow – NB in late July, Waukesha County

It's OK to be confused!

- ◇ We're all still learning
- ◇ We all made mistakes in year 1
 - ◇ Thankfully, they're easy to fix!
- ◇ Many outlets for questions
 - ◇ Facebook WBBA II Discussion Group
 - ◇ Consult handbook/tutorials
 - ◇ Email the atlas team
 - ◇ Ask a friend



Questions/Comments?

