

Strategies for Successfully Surveying Your Atlas Block



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Outline

- ❖ Know the Block
- ❖ Know the Birds
- ❖ Know the Breeding Dates
- ❖ Know the Breeding Codes
- ❖ Survey Strategically
- ❖ Block Completion Criteria
- ❖ Other Tips for Success...



Know the Block

❖ Habitats

- ✓ The power of Bing.com's [Birdseye!](#)
- ✓ Make your own sketch on maps

❖ Access

- ✓ Roads, trails, parking, paddling
- ✓ Plat books – online and print
- ✓ Consult county coordinators and local biologists
- ✓ Landowner contacts

❖ Property Ownership

- ✓ As it relates to locational precision of checklists

❖ Scout!

Know the Birds

❖ What birds might be found in my block?

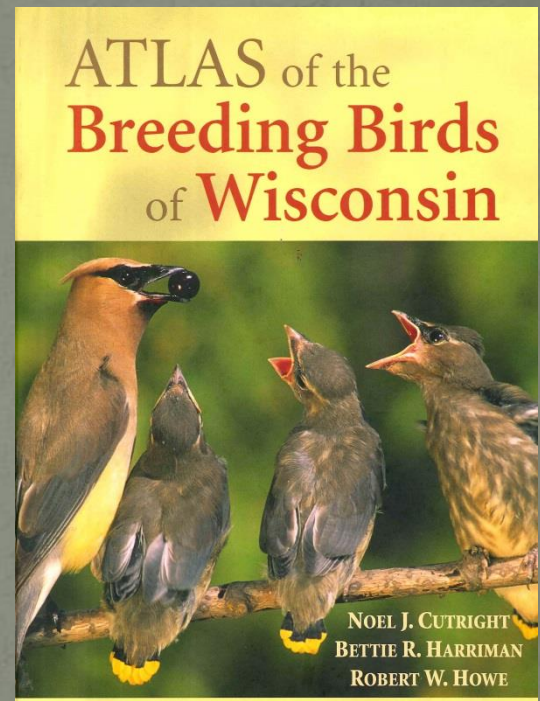
- ✓ Atlas eBird portal
- ✓ First atlas book
- ✓ General eBird and other range maps

❖ Identification by sight and sound

- ✓ Field guides
- ✓ [Additional Resources](#) page on Atlas website
- ✓ Discussion forum and other online groups

❖ Nesting biology and phenology

- ✓ First atlas book
- ✓ BNA Online – Discount rate for Atlasers (Code “WBBA2”)



Know Acceptable Breeding Dates

Is that May 9 American Redstart singing on territory or just in migration?

Is that July 10 Solitary Sandpiper a local breeder?

What about the Northern Cardinal singing in my neighborhood in February?



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❖ Not using specific “safe dates”

❖ Breeding Guideline Bar Chart

- ✓ Mainly affects lower-level breeding codes, such as singing males, migrants, and post-breeding dispersers
- ✓ Confirmations trump the chart!
- ✓ Local knowledge is important

Know Acceptable Breeding Dates

Breeding Guideline Bar Chart – [sortable spreadsheet](#)

Know the Breeding Codes

OBSERVED

— Observed (no code)

F Flyover

POSSIBLE

H In appropriate Habitat

S Singing male (no migrants)

PROBABLE

S₇ Singing male 7+ days apart

M Multiple (7+) singing males

P Pair in suitable habitat

T Territory defense

C Courtship display/copulation

N Visiting probable Nest site

A Agitated behavior

B Woodpecker/wren nest
Building/cavity excavation

CONFIRMED

PE Physiological
Evidence/brood patch

CN Carrying Nest material

NB Nest Building (except
woodpeckers & wrens)

DD Distraction Display

UN Used Nest (use with
caution)

ON Occupied Nest

FL Recently FLedged
young

CF Carrying Food

FY Feeding Young

FS Carrying Fecal Sac

NE Nest with Eggs

NY Nest with Young

S

(unless a migrant)



Two weeks later...

S7





M



FY

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Chestnut-sided Warbler



C



**Observed
- No code**



DD

Bird groups to be careful about...

- ❖ Pelicans, cormorants, herons, egrets, gulls, and terns
 - ✓ Colonial nesters that forage far from colony
- ❖ Ducks, swans, and geese
 - ✓ P, T, and C codes can be unreliable
- ❖ Raptors
 - ✓ Diurnal – big home ranges, carry food when not nesting
 - ✓ Owls – large overlap of breeding birds with migrants
- ❖ Wrens and woodpeckers
 - ✓ Use dummy nests and non-nesting cavities
- ❖ Species difficult to ID
 - ✓ Empidonax flycatchers when not heard
 - ✓ Philadelphia and Red-eyed Vireo when not seen
- ❖ Flyovers, late migrants, shorebirds, and wandering males

Survey Strategically

- ❖ Build species lists early (late May-June)
- ❖ Most confirmations come later (July-early Aug)
 - ✓ FY & FL are your friends!
- ❖ Special effort for some species is critical
 - ✓ Early nesters, nocturnal & crepuscular birds
- ❖ Use Block Summary Card to assist field work

Block Summary Card

PLEASE NOTE: this data form is for personal reference only -- not intended to be submitted as official atlas block data or to be used as a daily checklist data form. Use Atlas eBird portal for all checklist submissions.

Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II



Block Name:

Mt. Ashwabay CE

Survey Date	Nocturnal Survey Hours	Daytime Survey Hours	Travel To/From Home	
			Hours	Miles
4/20/15		3.5	0.75	35
5/17/15	2		0.75	40
6/5/15		5.5	1.0	42
6/30/15	1	4	0.75	35

Species	High Code Date	Highest Breed. Codes		
		P	PR	CO
Canada Goose	6/5			ON
Mute Swan				
Trumpeter Swan				
Wood Duck				
American Black Duck				
Mallard	6/5	H		
Blue-winged Teal				
Green-winged Teal				
Ring-necked Duck				
Hooded Merganser				
Common Merganser				
Red-breasted Merganser				
Ruddy Duck				
Northern Bobwhite*				
Ring-necked Pheasant				
Ruffed Grouse	5/17		C	

Species	High Code Date	Highest Breed. Codes		
		P	PR	CO
Spruce Grouse				
Sharp-tailed Grouse*				
Wild Turkey	6/30	H		
Common Loon				
Pied-billed Grebe				
Double-crested Cormorant				
American White Pelican				
American Bittern*				
Least Bittern*				
Great Blue Heron	5/17-F			
Great Egret*				
Green Heron				
Black-crowned Night-Heron*				
Turkey Vulture				
Osprey				
Northern Harrier				
Sharp-shinned Hawk				
Cooper's Hawk				
Northern Goshawk*	5/17		T	
Bald Eagle				
Red-shouldered Hawk*				
Broad-winged Hawk	*			
Red-tailed Hawk				
Yellow Rail*				
King Rail*				
Virginia Rail				
Sora				
Common Gallinule				
American Coot				
Sandhill Crane				
Killdeer				
Spotted Sandpiper				
Upland Sandpiper*				
Wilson's Snipe				
American Woodcock				
Ring-billed Gull				
Herring Gull				
Caspian Tern*				

Block Name: _____ Year: _____

Species	High Code Date	Highest Breed. Codes		
		P	PR	CO
Black Tern*				
Common Tern*				
Forster's Tern*				
Rock Pigeon				
Eu. Collared-Dove				
Mourning Dove	6/5		57	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo				
Black-billed Cuckoo				
Eastern Screech-Owl				
Great Horned Owl				
Barred Owl				
Long-eared Owl*				
Short-eared Owl*				
Northern Saw-whet Owl				
Common Nighthawk*				
Eastern Whip-poor-will				
Chimney Swift				
Ruby-throated Hummingbird				
Belted Kingfisher				
Red-headed Woodpecker				
Red-bellied Woodpecker				
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	6/5		N	
Downy Woodpecker				
Hairy Woodpecker				
Black-backed Woodpecker				
Northern Flicker				
Pileated Woodpecker				
American Kestrel				
Merlin				
Peregrine Falcon*				
Olive-sided Flycatcher*				
Eastern Wood-Pewee	6/5		M	
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher				
Acadian Flycatcher*				
Alder Flycatcher				
Willow Flycatcher				
Least Flycatcher	6/30			ON
Eastern Phoebe				

Suggested Survey Schedule

- ❖ March to check for early nesters and get familiar with the terrain and ownerships
- ❖ Late April or early May for early nesters
- ❖ Late May or early June to build a species list and note where males are singing (beware of migrants)
- ❖ Mid-June to re-check on the singing males and add more species
- ❖ Early July and early August to get more species into the Confirmed category
- ❖ Include some crepuscular and nocturnal hours in both spring and summer.

Block Completion Criteria

- A. 20+ survey hours in a block over multiple visits.
- B. At least 80% of the species found in the block during the first Atlas are detected.
- C. At least 50% of the species detected are confirmed as breeding.
- D. All habitat types within block have been visited.
- E. Surveys were completed at different times of year.
- F. At least 2 night visits have occurred.

Other Tips for Success

- ❖ Complete block within one season?
 - ✓ Pros: upgrade potential, access, travel logistics
 - ✓ Cons: irruptives, upgrading elusive species
- ❖ Blockbusting & other “team” approaches
- ❖ Enter data in timely fashion (w/in 1-2 days)
- ❖ Communicate using various networks

Notes on nest finding



QUESTIONS?