



Black-capped Chronicle



Issue 4

Newsletter of the Maine Bird Atlas

Spring/Summer 2019

New This Year - Make Sure Your Effort Counts!

New and Existing Volunteers – Please Read

Did you know that this project wouldn't be possible without you? Literally! Everyone hopefully knows by now how valuable your bird observations are, but it's also your time and mileage contributions to this project that are enabling us to fund it. As a Department project, we have an allotment of federal funds for use, but those dollars come with a catch. They require matching \$\$\$. Fortunately, we are allowed to use volunteer time and mileage contributions as match, because IF&W doesn't have a half-million dollars lying around at its disposal. Now, for some Q & A:

What time and miles should I be counting?

Any work you do for the project counts, aside from incidental submissions, including: travel time to and from a field site, miles of travel to and from field sites, time preparing for field surveys, attendance at training/informational events, time entering data, etc. We just need the total amount of time and miles contributed to the project on any given day.

OK, How do I get this information to you?

We'll need you to sign up as an official volunteer for the project through the Department's new Citizen Science portal (ifw.citizenscience.maine.gov). Click on the Bird Atlas and read through the instructions to Register as a User.



Even if you already have an eBird account or adopted a survey block, **please register on this site as well**. This is the only way we can track your hours and miles of effort as a Maine Bird Atlas volunteer.

Why can't you just use the effort tracked by eBird?

Two reasons: 1) eBird only tracks hours of active survey time, and you're worth so much more to us than that. 2) Your eBird time won't count for federal reporting purposes if you are not signed up as an official volunteer with the department first. We know, one more hoop to jump through. We're sorry, but it's a really important hoop.

I volunteered for the project last year. Does that time count?

Absolutely!!! If you kept track of your time or mileage last year or can even guesstimate what you contributed to the project on any given day, you can enter it retroactively. If you didn't keep track, that's OK. Please still sign up as a volunteer though so we can mine your active survey time from eBird for last year. Then you'll also be set up for entering effort from this point forward.

I'm mailing in my bird observation datasheets. What should I do with my effort information?

You can mail that in too, to the same address and we'll take it from there. We will mail you an official volunteer form to sign and send back to us so we can count your time.

By Adrienne Leppold, Ph.D., Project Director/Department Songbird Specialist

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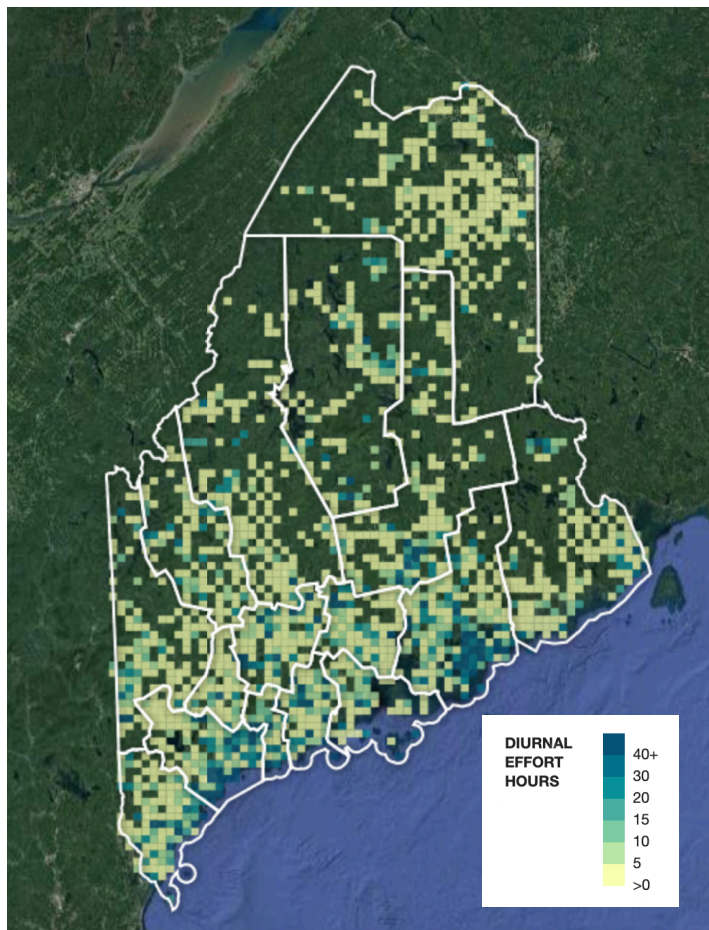
The 2019 Season is Underway: Tips on where, when, and what to look for.

With the first breeding season under our belt, it is amazing to see the results and fun to plan where to spend our time atlasing in this second nesting season. This article will detail some of the tools available that can help you decide where to spend your time, what species to look for, and much more.

Many of the tools outlined here are available through the Maine Bird Atlas portal, at ebird.org/atlasme/explore

Use Species Maps to fill in the gaps:

One way to direct your effort going into year two is to fill in the gaps for the species you know best. These species might be ones you know well, are particularly interested in, or are just lucky at finding them doing breeding behavior. Use the Species Maps tool on the Explore page in eBird (Maine Bird Atlas portal) and search for breeding maps of any species you are interested in. Unlike the regular eBird Range Maps which only show frequency, these Maine Bird Atlas Species Maps show breeding evidence by marking blocks with possible, probable, or confirmed records. These breeding maps are updated in real-time, as checklists are submitted.



Map showing the diurnal effort hours spent through spring 2019.
Photo from ebird.org/atlasme/effortmap

The breeding maps can be helpful at identifying gaps where species have not been found breeding. You may recognize areas where you have seen certain species breeding in the past, which can prompt you to go visit that location. For example, is there an Osprey nest that you've seen in the past but notice it hasn't made it on to their breeding map yet? Maybe you could detour over to that site next time you are in the neighborhood and see if that nest is still active.

Also, since these maps show different breeding codes, you can quickly find which blocks only have possible or probable breeding codes for your species of interest. You can use these maps to direct your effort in spending time looking for confirmed records of those species.

See Block Level Results to Date:

This is especially useful for those who adopted a block or if you have a few blocks that you atlas regularly. By using the Explore Atlas Regions tool on the Explore page, you can search for results from individual blocks, entire counties, or the whole state.

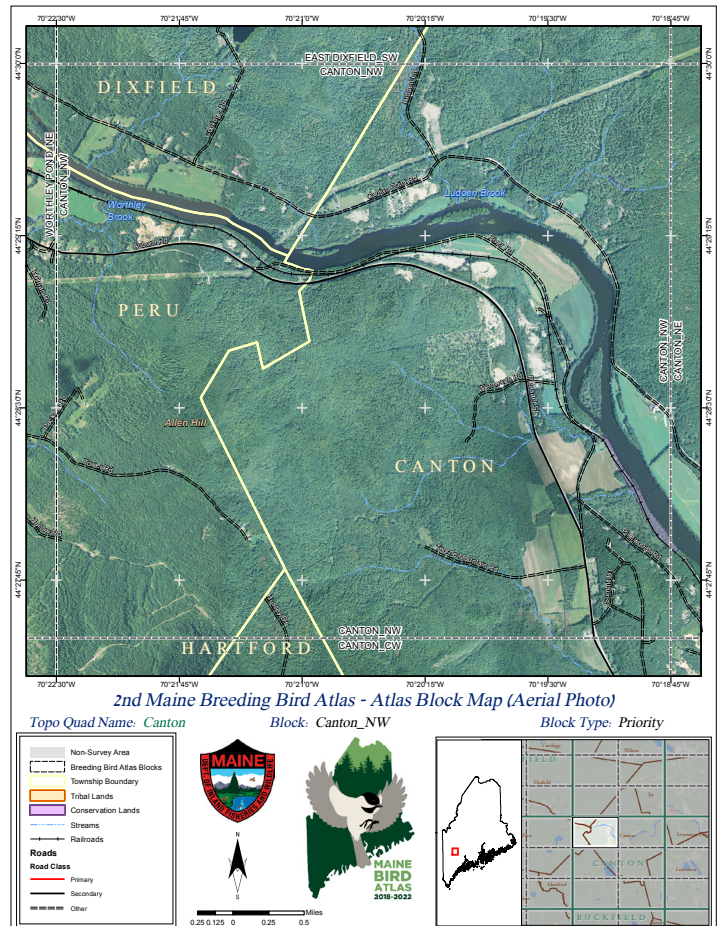
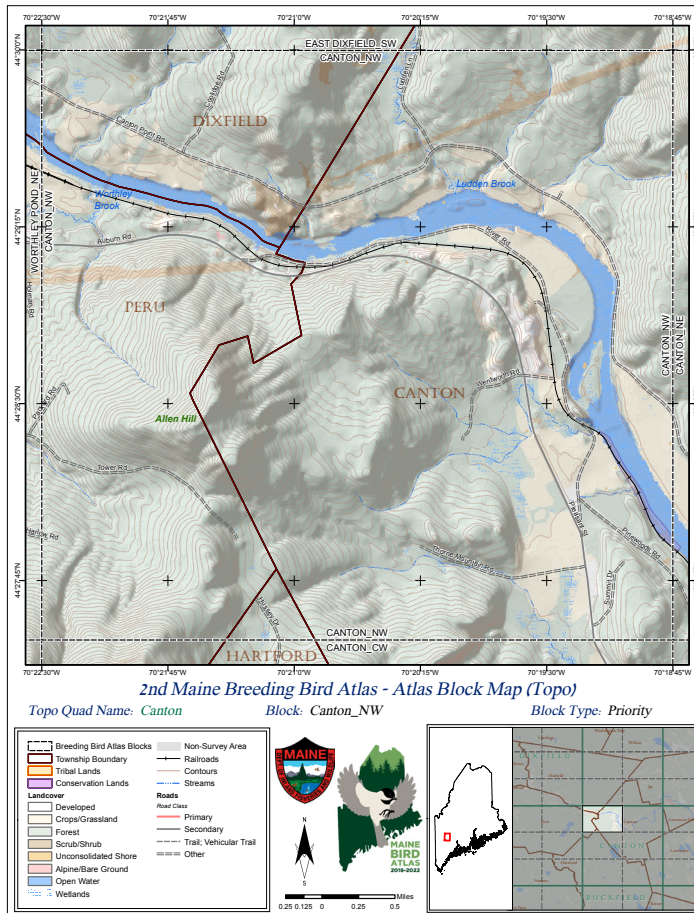
On the specific block pages there are several useful stats listed at the top: The status of the block, i.e., whether it is complete or not. The block type, either priority or normal. And the amount of hours, both diurnal and nocturnal, that have been spent in the block to date. (See map inset.)

Volunteers should find exploring block level pages especially helpful for knowing which species have been observed and at what level of breeding within each block. A very useful tip is that on each block's explore page, the species have several ways they can be listed. The default is ascending order by date, which lists the species most recently seen in the block. This is interesting but not necessarily helpful for atlasers. A more useful sorting can be seen by clicking on the "breeding evidence" header, which will sort by breeding codes over the entire time frame of the project. This will show you which species have already been confirmed and therefore do not need additional time or effort in documenting for that block. Below the confirmed species you will see the species that are only probable, possible, or observed within the block. You can use this list to target species that have already been documented in the block but haven't been confirmed yet.

Confirm new species:

In the first year, we had 28 people who were able to confirm 50 or more species. Can you join those ranks, or maybe be the first person to confirm over 100 species in Maine?

This can be especially fun because some very common species in the state can be quite hard to confirm as a breeders. On the Maine Bird Atlas portal's Explore page, there is a section titled "Species you need", located about half-way down the page. Clicking on the Atlas Target Species



Above are sample topo and aerial maps of the Canton_NW block. These are available for all 4,080 blocks across Maine by using the Interactive Atlas Block Tool on the Maine Bird Atlas website, maine.gov/birdatlas. These can be especially helpful for identifying different habitat types within each block, like the wetlands near Wentworth Street on the Topo Map. The farmlands and powerline cuts, each likely to host different breeding species, are better viewed on the Aerial Map. These are also very helpful in visualizing block boundaries, you can see here how Packard Road is bisected by the western boundary of this block so special care should be made in plotting those locations.

link here will bring you to a page that will list the species you have not confirmed yet in any block, county, or for the entire state.

Direct your effort to Priority Blocks:

In the first nesting season, 101 blocks were completed. This is a great effort for the first year as many blocks take several years. As you complete the blocks that you frequently visit or have adopted, consider finding nearby priority blocks to start visiting. There is likely a priority block adjacent to any normal block you've been working on so minimal effort should be required to access these.

On the Maine Bird Atlas eBird Portal you can use the Atlas Effort Map to see each block over-layed on the state. The default of this map shows the number of diurnal effort hours spent in each block and completed blocks can be "blacked out". Zooming in on this map, priority blocks become visible with a thick black border around them at the 5 km scale and below.

Don't forget about the [Interactive Atlas Block Map Tool](http://maine.gov/birdatlas) on the maine.gov/birdatlas website. On the page you can adopt

a block, see which are already adopt, which are already completed, and those that are priority or normal. This is where you can also download PDF topo or aerial maps for every block (examples above). These PDFs can be especially helpful in helping identify different habitat types within each block, locating roads and conservation lands, and especially help you see the block boundaries.

Get out there and have fun!

Whether you are tracking down new confirmed breeders in priority blocks or watching your local birds in your backyard remember that every bird counts. We need your reports, near and far, common and rare, to have a successful atlas-ing project so get out there and let us know what you are seeing! Challenge yourself to see how many species *you* can confirm. This can be especially fun and rewarding to learn more about the lives and natural histories of even some of our most common species. Think of species like Turkey Vultures: These are seen nearly daily by many Mainers, but despite being observed in over 500 blocks, only 4 have confirmed records so far!

New Web-tool for looking up Safe Dates

Safe dates can be tough to remember and you are probably not likely to be carrying your Volunteer Handbook in the field, but now you can easily look up safe dates thanks to a web app created by volunteer Christine Murray!

This spiffy new web app allows you to select any nesting species from a drop down menu and it will show you the range of safe dates for that species. To make it even easier to understand, the background will be green if we are within the safe dates of the selected species, or turn red when we are outside of those dates.

By the time of this newsletter coming out we are within the safe dates of nearly all of our nesters but beware of how quickly the window closes! Some of our early nesters, like Gray Jays, and early [southern] migrants, like Louisiana Waterthrush, have safe dates ending by the first week of July.

Safe Dates Reminder

Remember to always check the safe dates before reporting any possible breeding codes (S or H) or lower probable code (S7, M, P). This helps ensure that birds are actually on their breeding grounds and keeps from reporting migrants which will also often sing



Louisiana Waterthrush is an early migrant warbler that nests along fast-flowing streams in the southern region of the state. They arrive in Maine by mid-April and have all departed by early August.

You can access (and bookmark) Christine Murray's web app by visiting:

<https://christinemurr.shinyapps.io/CheckDates/>
or <http://bit.ly/2W7JPao>

Check Safe Dates for Maine Bird Atlas

You will see a green square if today's date falls within the safe dates (breeding codes H or S permitted) for this species; red if otherwise.

Choose species
Ovenbird

Ovenbird
May 25 to August 01

Created by Christine Murray, christinemurr@gmail.com Maine Bird Atlas Volunteer Handbook

Take on Weekly Challenges and win atlas gear!

In the earlier “2019 Season is Underway” article we outline some tools that you can use to decide where and when to go atlasing. To make it simpler, keep an eye out for near-weekly challenges being posted to the Maine Bird Atlas Facebook page and Maine-birds Listserv.

These were started last year and we are slowly building back up now that the season is underway. Each week there will be three challenges, usually of increasing difficulty. As an added bonus for your taking on these challenges this year, we are offering incentives! One lucky person each week, who completes the challenge, will win a free item from our [online Maine Bird Atlas store](#).

Weekly Challenges will be posted on the Maine Bird Atlas Facebook page at: facebook.com/mainebirdatlas/ and the Maine-birds Listserv at: groups.google.com/group/maine-birds or birding.aba.org/maillist/MAINE.



Weekly Challenges will range from easy to hard. Easier takes will include common and wide-spread species or codes that are easy to detect, like S-Singing Bird. Harder challenges may include range restricted species like the Willet above, or task you with going out in the evening to listen for crepuscular birds like Eastern Whip-poor-wills.

Remote Travel Grants

Is paddling the Allagash Wilderness Waterway scanning for waterfowl, wading birds, songbirds, and inland gulls on your birding bucket list? Have you dreamed about heading out with friends for a few days of exploring the North Maine Woods looking to add boreal birds like American Three-toed Woodpeckers, Spruce Grouse, and Boreal Chickadees to your life list? Maybe you have always wanted to hike sections of the Appalachian Trail listening for the alpine songs of Bicknell's Thrush and Blackpoll Warbler? We can help make your birding expedition a reality through an exciting new grant opportunity for Maine Bird Atlas volunteers.

The Maine Bird Atlas is currently accepting proposals from experienced and adventure-seeking birders who are in-

terested in adopting and surveying atlas blocks in remote regions of the state during the 2019 breeding season. Grants will be awarded to volunteers to help cover the expenses associated with traveling to these remote areas. To apply for a grant, volunteers must complete and submit the [2019 Grant Application](#) which includes information about which remote atlas blocks you propose to cover, the approximate dates for your trip(s), and an itemized list of trip expenses. Grant proposals should be submitted to Glen Mittelhauser, Coordinator of the Maine Bird Atlas as soon as possible to be considered for the 2019 breeding season.

Thank you for supporting the Maine Bird Atlas. We look forward to reviewing your proposals!

Read more at: mainenaturalhistory.org/travelgrant



Species Accounts: Know what codes to look for!

With over 200 species known to breed in the state, it can be confusing to know what behaviors to look for with each species. To help, we've written individual species, or sometimes family accounts that will provide specific details about different behaviors to look for with each bird.

These are not meant to be complete accounts of behavior for each species behaviors but will serve as a guide for common and frequently observed behaviors that will help your atlas. Most of our recommendations come from personal experience or by analyzing results from other state and provincial atlas nearby. Just because a behavior is not listed, does not mean that species doesn't do it. With any uncommon species or behaviors we recommend adding detailed notes to your report.

New species are added weekly, typically to coincide with the species on the "Weekly Challenges" (see page 5). Each account is meant to help aid with the completion of the challenge so expect them to be seasonally helpful.

Read these species accounts online at:

<https://ebird.org/atlasme/about/species-profiles>

Other print and online resources for learning breeding bird behaviors:

Books

The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior (2001)
by Elphick, Dunning, and Sibley

The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds (1988)
by Ehrlich, Dobkin, and Wheye

Websites:

Birds of North American - <http://www.birdsna.org>
(subscription required)

Google Scholar - <http://scholar.google.com>
(Try searching a species name and "breeding")

All About Birds - <http://www.allaboutbirds.org>

NestWatch - <https://www.nestwatch.org>

Local Atlases:

Maritimes - <https://www.mba-aom.ca/jsp/map.jsp>

Quebec - atlas-oiseaux.qc.ca/donneesqc/cartes.jsp



The code FL-Recently Fledged Young should only be used for recently fledged or downy young observed while still dependent upon adults. Young Northern Cardinals are fairly easy to identify by plumage but caution should be used to not be coding birds as "FL" by plumage alone. The bird photographed here shows markings typical of a young bird, splotchy plumage and dark bill, but was coded "FL" because it was still being fed by the adult male visible in back left.

Tips for Species Difficult to Confirm

Listed below are a few species or families that can be especially difficult to confirm nesting. Here we identify a few of the most likely behaviors to look for to confirm these birds.

Kingfishers:

Coding an Occupied Nest is probably the most likely way to confirm breeding: And this could be used for an adult occupying, leaving or entering a probable nest site (visible or not) and whose behavior suggests the presence of an occupied nest. Coding a Used Nest is probably the next most likely way to confirm breeding.

Hummingbirds:

Observing recently fledged young is probably the most likely way to confirm breeding. Young can be identified by plumage by looking for pale gray edges on the tips of fresh feathers, especially the green back and upperpart feathers. Coding an Occupied Nest is also a potential way to confirm breeding: And this could be used for an adult occupying, leaving or entering a probable nest site (visible or not) and whose behavior suggests the presence of an occupied nest.

Chimney Swift:

Coding an Occupied Nest is probably the most likely way to confirm breeding: And this could be used for an adult occupying, leaving or entering a probable nest site (visible or not) and whose behavior suggests the presence of an occupied nest. Recently fledged birds can also be spotted flying around with adults by examining their molt patterns: adults will begin wing feather molt while on the breeding grounds, while juveniles complete their prejuvenile molt while on the nest. So swifts seen flying around in active wing molt are breeding adults and from those flocks you can pick out juvenile birds with recently completed wing molt.



Compare these Chimney Swifts, an adult in active flight feather molt on the left and a recently fledged juvenile on the right.



Example of a natural Turkey Vulture nesting site in Knox County. Photograph by Don Remier/Macaulay Library ML159886301

Turkey Vulture:

Nest with young (seen or heard) could be possible. Coding an Occupied Nest is probably the most likely way to confirm breeding: And this could be used for an adult occupying, leaving or entering a probable nest site (visible or not) and whose behavior suggests the presence of an occupied nest. They nest in abandoned buildings, so that is a place to check out. Also could nest on cliffs, but usually not out in the open, but instead hidden among boulders or in a large crevasse.

Bitterns:

Observing recently fledged young incapable of strong flight is a likely way to confirm breeding in these species. Also, coding an Occupied Nest is probably the most likely way to confirm breeding: this could be used for an adult occupying, leaving or entering a probable nest site (visible or not) and whose behavior suggests the presence of an occupied nest.

Coots and Rails:

Adults carry cattails or other emergent plants used to build the nest and this should be looked for early in the season. Carrying food can be observed by the adults but most young are capable of feeding themselves within just a few days after hatching. Observing recently fledged young is probably the most likely code for confirmation of these marsh-birds as they take 3-4 weeks after leaving the nest to become fully developed. The dark-plumaged downy young can make some rails difficult to identify so try tracking down the adult if you see these little chicks.

Good luck tracking down these tricky species! If you are interested in more of these examples, you can find out likely acceptable breeding codes for all species on our Resources and Materials page of the project website. Under the "Advanced" section, look for the link to "Acceptable Breeding Behavior Codes By Species."

New look to online eBird checklists and how to change portals

In April 2019, eBird changed the layout of checklists as they are viewed on a web browsers. This makes them much easier to view, especially on mobile devices but made minor changes to the way that some tasks were performed. One important change for atlasers to know was the process for changing the portal that a list goes to is different. Remember, only lists that have at least one breeding code on them should be entered in the Maine Bird Atlas portal. Any lists without breeding codes should be moved to the Maine eBird portal.

Here are instructions for the new process of changing your portal:

1. Open your checklist. You can always find your lists in the “Manage My Checklists” link under the “My eBird” tab. This link will also get you directly there: ebird.org/eBirdReports?cmd=subReport. Click the “View or edit” link on the right-most column of the list you want to open.
2. At the top-right corner of your list, you will see the new “Checklist Tools” blue button. Clicking on that will show a drop-down window with options to edit the location, edit the date and time, share your list with others, etc. Click on the option to “Change Portal” from that list.
3. A pop-up window will direct you to choose a new portal from the drop down menu.
 - a. If your list of Maine birds includes at least one breeding code, please select “Maine Bird Atlas” from the drop-down.
 - b. Any other lists, that is any list with no breeding codes, should use a different portal, such a “Maine eBird”.
4. Then click the green “Change Portal” button and you are all set!

CHECKLIST 547251312

Tue 17 Jul 2018 9:50 AM [Edit Date and Effort](#)

Gilsland Farm—North Meadow—Maine Bird Atlas (43.7084, -70.2388) [Edit Location](#) [Checklist Tools](#)

Portland East NW, Cumberland County, Maine, United States

Doug Hitchcox [Share](#)

Incidental Incomplete [1](#)

Breeding birds in North Meadow (complete list:)
Submitted from eBird for iOS, version 1.21 [Edit comments](#)

SUBMIT ANOTHER FOR...

Same location and date
Gilsland Farm—North Meadow—Maine Bird Atlas (43.7084, -70.2388), Cumberland County, Maine, US on Tue Jul 17, 2018

Same area and date
Another location near Gilsland Farm—North Meadow—Maine Bird Atlas (43.7084, -70.2388), Cumberland County, Maine, US on Tue Jul 17, 2018

Same area
Another location near Gilsland Farm—North Meadow—Maine Bird Atlas (43.7084, -70.2388), Cumberland County, Maine, US

Same date
Tue Jul 17, 2018

Different location and date

5 Species observed

1 Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*
adult bird caught adult lep sp and flew into known nesting location
BREEDING CODE: CF Carrying Food (Confirmed) [Review](#) [Remove](#)

3 Tufted Titmouse *Parus bicolor*
BREEDING CODE: FY Feeding Young (Confirmed) [Review](#) [Remove](#)

4 Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
two adult males (beginning prebasic molt); one female being closely followed by a short-tailed fledgling
BREEDING CODE: FL Recently Fledged Young (Confirmed) [Review](#) [Remove](#)

3 Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia*
BREEDING CODE: FY Feeding Young (Confirmed) [Review](#) [Remove](#)

25 House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
BREEDING CODE: NY Nest with Young (Confirmed) [Review](#) [Remove](#)

The new layout of eBird checklists on web browsers makes them much easier to view on mobile devices. The new “Checklist Tools” button on the top right corner of the checklists houses the link to “Change Portal”.

What’s Next?

Change is our way to never stop improving. Here are a few things to keep an eye out for in the coming months:

Additional Training Resources. Walk-through videos are nearly complete and coming to the Maine Bird Atlas website. These will cover topics on how to submit breeding records to eBird, how to lookup block specific information, and much more. Full training videos are also in the works!



Training Video:
How to submit records online

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