

FIN D'UNE CARRIÈRE, POURSUITE D'UNE MISSION

Il y a quarante ans, j'ai commencé à œuvrer dans les domaines de la conservation et de la science. En mai 2021, je prendrai ma retraite. Durant cette période, comment les choses ont-elles évolué?

Depuis 1980, le nombre d'espèces d'oiseaux connues des scientifiques a augmenté, au gré des découvertes et des changements taxonomiques. En même temps, les effectifs de beaucoup d'espèces ont chuté. La perte et la dégradation d'habitats sévissent depuis longtemps et, malgré maintes réussites inspirantes en matière de protection et d'intendance, elles demeurent très préoccupantes. Les changements climatiques, jadis une obscure appréhension de scientifiques, sont devenus la principale menace pesant sur l'humanité et la biodiversité. Et maintenant, la société occidentale et ses scientifiques et conservationnistes amorcent une réconciliation trop longtemps attendue avec les peuples autochtones, dont le savoir traditionnel et les territoires détiennent la clé de la survie de milliers d'espèces aviaires.

Pour moi, la vie est un voyage autour d'un cercle plutôt qu'un parcours rectiligne. Je compte renouer avec mes intérêts pour l'histoire naturelle qui m'ont fait entrer dans le secteur de la conservation en 1980. Ma première expérience comme observateur bénévole remonte à la campagne du premier atlas des oiseaux nicheurs de l'Ontario, au début des années 1980. J'ai récidivé vingt ans plus tard pour le deuxième atlas et je répondrai présent pour le troisième, dont il est question dans ces pages. Je retournerai à mes racines, à mes champs d'intérêt favoris, avec des milliers d'autres participants dans une fascinante étude de l'évolution des populations, de la répartition et des habitats naturels de l'avifaune en quatre décennies.

Pendant ce temps, Oiseaux Canada demeure la force dominante de la conservation aviaire au pays. Son influence se fait sentir sur tout le territoire et au-delà, parmi les partenaires mondiaux de



« Oiseaux Canada demeure la force dominante de la conservation aviaire au pays. »

BirdLife International qui s'occupent des espèces et des menaces indifférentes aux frontières. La conservation est un marathon et non un sprint; nous devons persister et persévérer. Et comme cela peut aussi être une course à relais, j'ai couru mon segment et je passe le témoin. La personne qui me suivra héritera d'une équipe dévouée et passionnée de résultats en science et en conservation pour le bien des oiseaux et de leurs amoureux. Merci beaucoup de votre bénévolat, votre soutien financier et votre voix pour les oiseaux. Je suis fier de porter ces trois chapeaux et je vais continuer, tant qu'il le faudra pour les oiseaux.

Steven Price, Président



Common Merganser; Breeding evidence - (FY) Recently Fledged Young (nidicolous species, whose young are raised in a nest) or downy young (nidifugous species, whose young leave the nest soon after hatching) incapable of sustained flight. Grands Harles. Code d'indice de nidification FY - Jeune ayant récemment quitté le nid (espèces nidicoles) ou jeune en duvet (espèces nidifuges) incapable d'un vol soutenu. Photo: Kris Cu

Ontario's "Atlas-3" will give us more detail than ever on the province's breeding birds

BY KAELYN BUMELIS

Over the winter, volunteers across Ontario have been polishing their bird ID skills in preparation for the province's third Breeding

Bird Atlas. The goal of this project is to map where birds are breeding ("distribution"), and how the abundance of each species varies across the province ("relative abundance"), for all species of birds breeding within the province. Volunteers will collect the data over a five-year period: 2021-2025. Atlas-2 (2001-2005) was



delivered by Birds Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service (Environment and Climate Change Canada), Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry – Government of Ontario, Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO), and Ontario Nature, and the same partners are back to lead Atlas-3. If you can, we hope you'll join in and help make this Atlas the best yet! (But, please adhere to all COVID-19 guidelines.)

Data collected as part of Atlas-3 will provide insight into what has changed for Ontario's breeding birds since the previous two atlases. Atlas-3 also aims to

expand knowledge of the breeding birds of Northern Ontario by increasing the coverage in that region relative to past endeavors. The results of Atlas-3 will help guide environmental policies and conservation strategies for years to come, enabling researchers, scientists, government officials, and conservation professionals to improve the conservation status and appreciation for birds in

"The results of Atlas-3 will help guide environmental policies and conservation strategies for years to come."

Ontario. In addition, the results will be published as an electronic database that is freely available to the public, regulatory agencies, and industries. This will ensure the data are easily accessible for

research and conservation projects.

Ontario's second Breeding Bird Atlas (Atlas-2) was the first atlas in North America to include point counts (see definition on p. 7) as part of its standard data collection. The Atlas-2 team completed counts for an amazing 70,000 points! And now, with Atlas-3, we'll be the first atlas project in Canada to repeat point counts, with many in the exact same locations 20 years later. The resulting dataset will show how the patterns of abundance of many species have changed between atlases. We will also combine the point count data with information on how habitats have changed over the past 20 years to gain insight on causes underlying bird population changes, and to help determine how climate change and other factors are affecting species. This information will be invaluable for devising efforts to conserve declining bird species.

One example demonstrating the value of breeding bird atlases for conservation comes from Ontario's Atlas-2, which alerted researchers to a serious decline in aerial insectivores (birds that specialize on eating flying insects). This has led to many important conservation efforts happening today to protect this bird group. By the third year of Atlas-2, it was already becoming apparent that aerial insectivorous birds including the Purple Martin (see Figure 1) were being reported in far fewer locations than in the first Atlas. By the end of Atlas-2, it was confirmed that all 10 species of aerial insectivores had decreased between Atlases, and that 9 of those 10 species were among the species showing the largest decreases in Ontario.

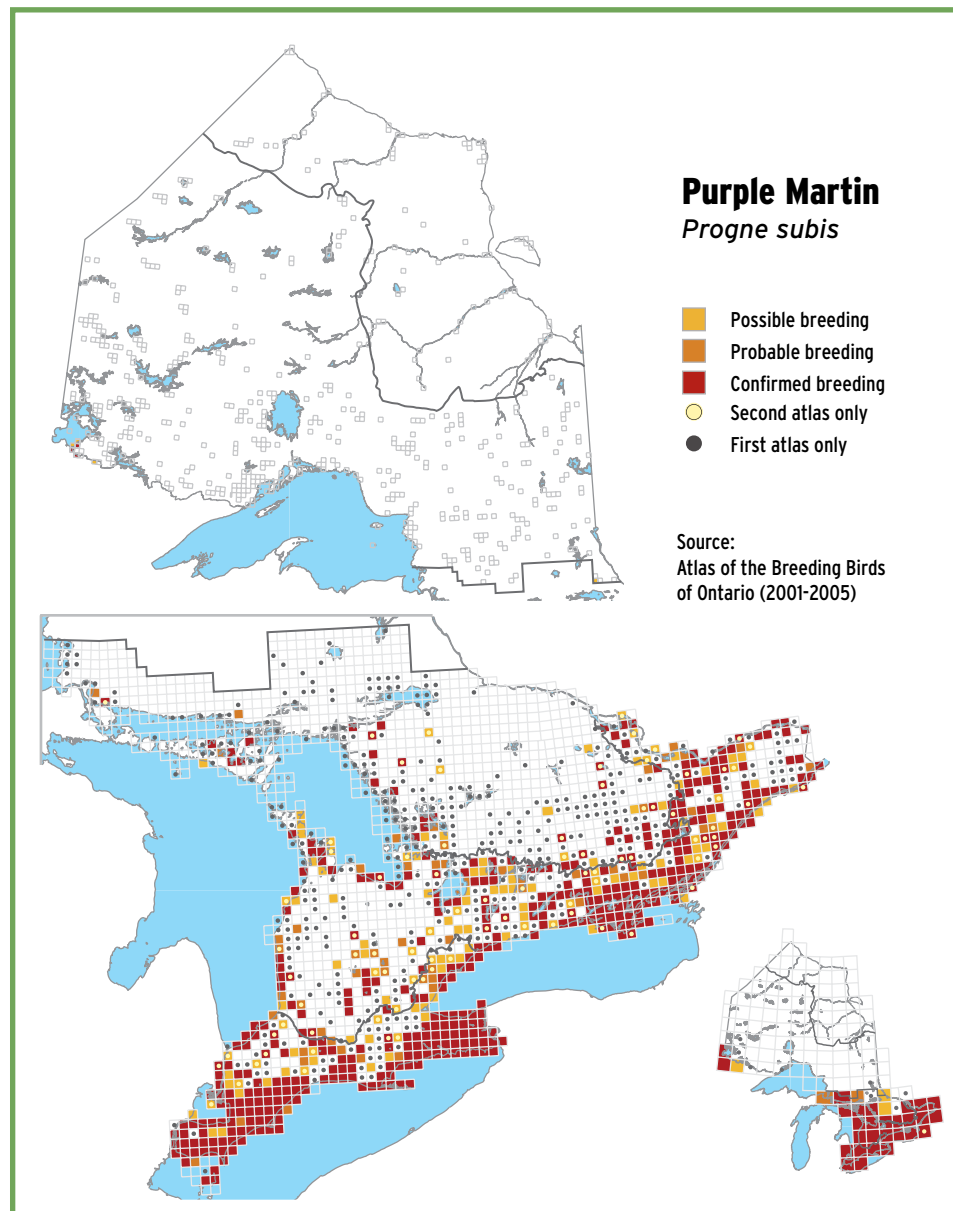


Figure 1. The breeding evidence map of the Purple Martin from the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario (2001-2005)*. Black dots show squares where Purple Martins were found in Atlas-1, but not reported in Atlas-2. Carte des indices de nidification de l'Hirondelle noire dans le deuxième atlas des oiseaux nicheurs de l'Ontario (2001-2005). Les points noirs indiquent les parcelles où l'espèce était présente dans le premier atlas mais absente dans le deuxième.

Many status reports and species assessments published by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada are informed by data from Atlas-2. This includes publications on Barn Swallows, Bank Swallows, and Chimney Swifts, all of which are listed as Threatened species.

The Ontario Breeding Bird

Atlas relies on the involvement of birders to succeed, and people of all skill and availability levels can contribute! There is no minimum requirement. Even completing one checklist as a casual observer will provide valuable data. There are numerous ways to participate, depending on your level of experience and time commitment:



Cedar Waxwing; Breeding evidence - (D) Courtship or Displays involving a male and female (e.g., courtship feeding, copulation) or antagonistic behavior between two or more individuals (e.g., territorial disputes or chases), in suitable nesting habitat during the species' breeding season.

Jaseurs d'Amérique. Code d'indice de nidification D - Comportement nuptial entre un mâle et une femelle (p. ex. parade, nourrissage, copulation) ou comportement agonistique entre deux individus (p. ex. querelle, poursuite) pendant la période de reproduction de l'espèce dans un habitat de nidification propice. Photo: Ian Dickinson

- **General atlassing:** This is how the majority of atlas data are collected. For the purposes of the Atlas, the province is divided into square sections or "squares". General atlassing involves looking for birds breeding in a particular square, and recording breeding evidence (see photos for examples) for each species using checklists.
- **Point counts:** A survey that involves counting all birds seen and/or heard at a designated location during a five-minute period. Point counts are vital to the Atlas, making it possible to map relative abundance of each species and compare it to that from Atlas-2.
- **Incidental records:** Observations of breeding evidence that you make while doing something other than atlassing. For example, you might notice, while you are driving somewhere, a pair of Red-tailed Hawks sitting side by side in a tree in early spring.
- **Special surveys - owls, nightjars, and marsh birds:** We have developed special surveys for these groups of birds to improve on the coverage provided by general atlassing. These involve following specialized, standardized protocols.

Any atlasser can, and is encouraged to, contribute to any square. But we also need experienced birders to become "Principal Atlasers" for as many squares as possible. Principal Atlasers take responsibility for ensuring that each of their squares is adequately covered, and that specific targets for atlassing effort and thoroughness are met (see Figure 2, p. 10).

To take on the role of Principal Atlasser, you will need reliable knowledge of the birds residing in your square and be able to identify them accurately by sight and sound. If, however, you participate as a "casual" Atlasser, your data are still valuable! If you are a new birder, report only observations you're confident about and when in doubt, leave it out. Since the Atlas spans five years, it provides a great opportunity to develop your bird identification skills throughout the project.

Atlas-3 would not be possible without an abundance of amazing volunteers, beginners and experts alike! If you're interested in participating in Atlas-3, please register on the Atlas website: birdsonario.org. Thank you and happy birding!

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