Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas Project

MINNESOTA BREEDING BIRD ATLAS
Website Instructions


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Introduction

This manual provides instructions on how to request a Priority Block (for Surveyors) and how all Observers can submit and review their observations to the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas. Your feedback is welcome. It can be helpful to know that the MNBBA project has two separate but closely integrated websites.

The project website (www.mnbba.org) is an informational site and the portal to our database. This is the best place to find background information, learn how to participate, and find volunteer materials and instructions. In addition, this site includes a map for locating blocks, a photo gallery with images of birds representing different evidence codes, and atlas results available by map and by query.

By selecting the Join the Project, Request a Block, or Enter Observations tabs on the mnbba.org home page, you are directed to the database website managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

The Cornell site is where participants register to submit observations. This is also the place to locate and request a block to survey, enter and edit observations, and view personal and project progress. The Cornell site can be accessed directly at: http://bird.atlasing.org/Atlas/MN. In addition, Regional Coordinators and Administrators use this website to review project progress and the species and evidence codes submitted. All viewers can see results or browse the state for blocks and block status (priority block, owned, survey completed) without being registered.

For quick and easy access, bookmark one or both websites to add them to a favorites list.
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Registration and Sign-in

Register as an Atlas Participant
Viewing Minnesota’s BBA survey blocks and results are available to anyone coming to the site, to contribute your observations, either as a Surveyor or a Field Observer, you must be registered. The process is very easy.

Step 1. Go to mnbba.org and click on Join the project.

This will take you to the Welcome page of the Minnesota BBA data website, managed by Cornell (see page 6 of the Volunteer Handbook for a description of the two Minnesota websites).

If you already have a User Name and password from another Cornell citizen science project, including eBird, your User Name and password can be used here. On the Welcome page, you just need to click Sign-In and enter your existing User Name and password; you are already registered!

Step 2. Select click here in the upper right corner to open the Registration window.
Step 3. On the Register page, enter a **user name** and **password** and the **email address** where you would like messages sent. Confirm your password and email address. All data fields are required.

If you do not want to Sign-in every time, leave the **Remember Me** box checked. If not, deselect the box.

Click on **Continue** to open the Edit Profile page to add your name and address.

Company and Phone Number are optional.

Click **Continue** to proceed to your personal home page (My Home).

Sign In to Your MNBBA Account
Once you are registered, the next time you come to this website, click **Sign In** on the Welcome page to open the Sign In page.

Enter your **user name** and **password** and click **Login**. You will go directly to your My Home page.

If the **Remember Me** box is checked, you will not need to sign in again.
My Home – Your Personal MNBBA Page

This page gives you quick access to your adopted blocks, your survey results, your statistics, and your account information.

From your My Home page, you can select options to:
- Request block ownership
- Enter observations
- View or modify your observations
- Enter effort (survey time in block)
- View your Atlas statistics (in the My Totals box on the right side of the screen)
- Update your Atlas account information
- Be reminded of incomplete observations or survey effort
- Go directly to your blocks from the My Blocks list

You can always return to your My Home page from any page by clicking on the My Home tab.

For Surveyors: when you adopt a block(s), a list of those blocks will appear under My Account / My Blocks. Click on the block in that list for quickest access to the Block Profile.

For Regional Coordinators: when you have been assigned a region(s), a list of those regions will also appear under My Account / MY Regions. Click on the region in that list for quickest access.
Request a Priority Block (for Surveyors)

When you know the Block ID of the block you want to adopt, enter the **Block ID** in the box in the upper left corner and press Enter.

To find a block

From the mnbba.org website, click on *Request a Block*, or
From your My Home page click the *View Regions & Blocks* tab.

On the View Regions and Block page, zoom in and pan to your area of interest. When you find an available priority block (outlined in red with no blue fill), click on the block to open a call out box with options.
Select the *Request* option, which will open a Request Block Ownership box, then click the *Submit* button.

A request message is sent to the Regional Coordinator and will appear as a ‘Pending Request’ on your *My Home* page under *View My Requests*.

To view the status of your block request, from your *My Home* page, click *View My Requests* under *My Account*. A link to the block profile will appear on your *My Home* page when the Coordinator responds.
Block Profile – Home Page for the Block

On the Block Profile page, under the **General Information** tab, you can:

- Request ownership
- Identify the block owner
- View total hours of effort contributed to the block (both owner and non-owner/s)
- View number of species reported for the block, by level of breeding evidence
- Enter observations for the block
- Print a block map
- View observations you have submitted for that block
- Contact the Regional Coordinator

On the map, you can zoom out using the + and – tabs and select how you want your map displayed (satellite, hybrid or terrain) using the down arrow next to Map.

Under the **2009-2013 Results** tab, you can:

- Review species reported for the block from all observers
- Sort Species list by taxonomic or alphabetic order
- Sort Breeding Evidence by evidence code
- Identify species with observations that need review by a project Coordinator
- Print the species and highest breeding evidence reported for the block

**Note:** descriptions of evidence codes are available at the bottom of the page.
Entering Observations

Two important notes: 1) to enter observations in the Atlas database, you must be a registered participant, and 2) you need to know, or find, the Block ID where the observation was made.

**Remember**, any registered participant can enter observations for any block in the state, whether or not it has been adopted by someone.

**First: Identify the block where the observation was made**

Surveyors are in luck. There is a link on their My Home page to the Block Profile. Click the link under My Blocks, then click the Enter Observations link.

**When you don’t know the Block ID**

**Option 1: From your My Home page.**

Click the Enter Observations tab and zoom and pan the map to find the block. You can change the map display by selecting Map, Satellite, or Terrain.

When you find the block, single-click and select the Enter Observations link to open the Data Entry Options page.

**Option 2: From mnbba.org**

Click Regions and Blocks, select Alternate Block Finder-Google Maps to open an image of the state.
Pan and zoom the map to your area of interest; single-click on the map and the block outline will appear. Block information will display at the top on the green title bar, including Block ID.

To enter observations, click the Enter Sighting button in the top right corner to open the Data Entry Options page.

You can change the map display by selecting Map, Satellite, Hybrid, or Terrain.

Option 3: From mnbba.org, when you have the GPS Coordinates

Click the Regions and Blocks tab and select Alternate Block Finder-GPS Location or Block ID. This will bring you to a Latitude / Longitude to Block Conversion Tool. Enter the coordinates (note the guidelines for different formats), then click Show on Map. Click the Enter Sightings button in the top right corner to open the Data Entry Options page.

When you know the Block ID

Option 1: From your My Home page

Click the Enter Observations tab and enter the block ID or select it from the Blocks with Data drop-down list, then click Continue to open the Data Entry Options page.

Option 2: From mnbba.org

Click the Enter Observations tab, enter the block ID, then click Continue to open the Data Entry Options page.
**Second: select Data Entry Option**

Choose the option for Highest Breeding Bird Codes depending on whether you are entering observations for just one day, or entering one evidence code for each species from multiple days. Click *Continue* to enter data.

Atlas volunteers do not need to track numbers of birds so the All Breeding Observations option is not used.

**Third: Enter Data**

The data entry page is a list of MN breeding species in taxonomic order (or click on *alphabetic* to change the list in order of species common name).

**For Highest Breeding Bird Codes: Single Day**

- Enter the date (MM/DD/YYYY)
- For each species observed, click the drop-down list for the species and select the appropriate breeding evidence code.
- When all species codes have been entered, click *Continue* to open the Review page.
For Highest Breeding Bird Codes: Multiple Days
The only difference is that you need to enter the date for each species reported in addition to the highest evidence. Surveyors use this when they want to report just once at the end of a season.

Special Situations

Ooops! The following items need your attention.

1. This message will appear when an O or X code is reported outside the safe dates. Return to the species with the X and set the code back to ‘-’ or check for an incorrect code entry.

2. The X will also appear when the date is not within the Atlas period or the format is incorrect. Just correct the date and continue.

1. This alert appears when a Probable or Confirmed code is entered outside the safe dates. Check that the date is correct or return to the species to correct the code or click the Confirm box to approve (see below).

2. It also will occur when a Species to Verify is entered. It just requires that you return to the species and confirm the entry since it is an unexpected observation.
These are quality control checks to be certain the dates, species, and codes are entered correctly. Once you have confirmed or edited the data, click Continue to open the Review screen.

To report a Species to Verify

Click the Add Species button and select the species from the list. It will add the species to the data entry list and you can then select the code for your observation. Note the Confirmation Alert above. You will be prompted to confirm the entry of these species.

Remember: Once a species has been entered, you do not need to enter another observation for that species unless you can upgrade the breeding evidence code.

Four: Data Review

Once you click the data entry Continue button it will open the Review screen. This is your chance to review what you have entered and add other information as needed. All the observations you entered are displayed. For special species, this is where Location, Notes, and Habitat are entered. Descriptions of information requested are at the top of the page.

To revise information, click Edit to return to the data entry screen and make corrections.
**To add a specific location,** required for Species to Verify, either enter GPS coordinates or click Plot Location to display a block map where you can zoom in and click on the specific location.

Zoom and pan to the location of the observation in the block.

Single-click on the site, then click Continue to return to the Review screen where latitude/longitude will automatically be entered.

Cancel returns you to the Review page without adding a location.

**We encourage observers to include field Notes,** important for any observation of special interest and helpful to reviewers. Notes are required for Species to Verify. Don’t forget, a Verification form is also required for these species so the Notes text can be brief.

When the data are complete and correct, click **Submit** to save your data.
Don’t Forget to Enter Block Effort

**For Surveyors**
Tracking the time spent surveying is important for evaluating block completion and for future analysis. Please report the time you spend actively surveying in the block.

It is quickest to report your time right after you submit your observations.

On the Thank You page, click *Enter Effort* to report the time spent actively surveying. The effort record is considered incomplete until you have entered the information.

**Block Effort** (Time spent surveying)
- Check the box that indicates the period of the day when you recorded your observation
- Enter the amount of time in hours and minutes (in ¼ hour increments) to describe the time spent conducting the survey
- Click *save*

**Other Effort** allows participants to document miles driven and time associated with the trip for their own purposes (e.g. taxes).

- Enter total miles driven for the date displayed
- Enter the time spent on the trip, when you were not conducting the survey
- Click *save*

You can enter or update Effort information any time from your My Home page by clicking the Enter Effort tab or clicking the link in the Messages table.
View or Edit Observations

From your My Home page, click on View or Modify my Observations.

View Your Observations
This page displays all your observations for all blocks.

- You can filter your observations to view only your observations by species or by block. Click View All to display all observations if you have selected a filter.
- You can also sort your species observations alphabetically or taxonomically, by date, block, or level of breeding evidence by clicking on the column header.

Observations with incomplete information (missing Notes for Species to Verify, missing Block Effort) will have an icon of the half-page in the second column.

Observations flagged for review include all Species to Verify. When the record is reviewed, the flag will disappear.

Edit Your Observations

- Click delete to permanently remove the observation when the species was entered incorrectly.
- Click edit to change information associated with the observation of the species.

Click Continue to save the changes and return to the View My Observations.
View Results

The View Results tab on the top of the page allows you to select a number of different ways to view the current state-wide status of the MNBBBA project. This page also summarizes the current status of the overall atlas effort, by total blocks and by priority blocks.

To see a state-wide map of:

- statistical results, click the drop-down list of Themes.
- species distribution maps, click the drop-down list for Species.

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**Statistical Map**

**Species Map**