

BREEDING BIRD CODES - Maine Bird Atlas 2018-2022

These breeding codes are sorted according to level of confidence that a species is breeding in your block given the observed behavior. So the “confirmed breeding”, “probable breeding”, “possible breeding”, and “observed or flyover” are listed here in decreasing levels of evidence for breeding. Within each of these categories, the breeding codes are also sorted to show the level of confidence a species is breeding, with codes closer to the top of the page within each category having greater evidence of breeding than the codes lower down on the page. We replaced “Singing Male” with “Singing Bird” since females also sing and have calls in some species.

Confirmed Breeding

NY—Nest with Young: nest with young seen or heard. Presence of cowbird young confirms both the cowbird and the host species.

NE—Nest with Eggs: nest with eggs, incubating adult, or eggshells on ground. Nests and eggs must be accurately identified via presence of an adult bird. If no birds are seen, use the UN code below. Presence of cowbird eggs confirms both the cowbird and the host species.

FS—Carrying Fecal Sac: adult carrying white fecal sacs away from the nest; only songbirds and woodpeckers produce fecal sacs.

FY—Feeding Young: adult feeding recently fledged young, but are not yet flying and independent (should not be used with raptors, terns, and other species that move many miles from the nest site).

CF—Carrying Food: adult repeatedly carrying food in the same direction for the young (should not be used for corvids, raptors, terns, gulls, and certain other species that may move many miles from the nest site). Use this code with caution as some adults carry food a long distance or may be engaged in courtship feeding.

FL—Recently Fledged Young: recently fledged or downy young observed while still dependent upon adults, incapable of sustained flight, restricted to natal area by dependence on adults or limited mobility (e.g., baby grouse, baby geese, baby killdeer that cannot yet fly). Very short tail feathers are usually a good sign the young originated locally. Young cowbirds begging for food confirms both the cowbird and the host species.

ON—Occupied Nest: occupied nest presumed by parent entering and remaining, exchanging incubation duties, etc. To be used for nests which are too high (e.g. the tops of trees) or enclosed (e.g. chimneys) for the contents to be seen

UN—Used Nest: used nest or eggshells present but no adult birds seen nearby. Use only if you are certain of the species and that nesting occurred during the atlas period. If you did not observe any individuals of the bird species that made the nest during your visit, then enter a “0” in the number field during data entry.

DD—Distraction Display: distraction display, defense of unseen nest or young, or feigning injury. Killdeer may give a “broken wing” display, Common Yellowthroat, Ovenbirds, and sparrows may feign injury to distract from nest or young, Cooper’s hawks may dive at you near the nest site, or an Ovenbird may run about with wings fluttering.

NB—Nest Building: nest building at the apparent nest-site (should not be used for certain wrens, woodpeckers, kingfishers, chickadees, titmice, and other species that build dummy nests or excavate roosting cavities)

CN—Carrying Nesting Material: Adult carrying nesting material, such as sticks or other material but nest site not seen. For raptors, confirm the material is not incidental to prey transport. Do not use for species who build multiple dummy nests, such as wrens.

PE—Physiological Evidence: physiological evidence of breeding, usually a brood patch or egg in oviduct based on bird in hand. To be used by bird banders on local birds during the nesting season.

Probable Breeding

B—Woodpecker/Wren Nest Building: Some species, including wrens, woodpeckers, kingfishers, chickadees, and titmice, may build dummy nests or excavate roosting cavities and nest building activity cannot be considered confirmation of breeding but instead probable breeding.

A—Agitated Behavior: agitated behavior or anxiety calls from adult that indicate a nest or young in the vicinity. This excludes responses elicited by “pishing”, playback recordings, predators, or mobbing behaviors. This can occur between different species, e.g. Northern Parula scolding a Brown-headed Cowbird, and in this instance, both species can typically be coded as “A”.

N—Visiting Probable Nest Site: repeated visiting of probably nest site but without enough evidence to upgrade to Confirmed nesting, used primarily for hole nesters or shrub nesting species.

C—Courtship, Display, or Copulation: courtship, displays, or copulation observed. Courtship behaviors include transfer of food, displays, and grooming between a pair of birds.

T—Territorial Defense: territorial behavior (fighting or chasing individuals of same species) or singing male present at same location 7 or more days apart. Do not use for colonial birds or species that might forage or loaf a long distance from their nesting site (e.g. Kingfisher, Turkey Vulture, male waterfowl).

P—Pair in Suitable Habitat: pair observed in suitable habitat during its breeding season. Confirm through behavioral cues that it is a mated pair.

M—Multiple (7+) Singing Birds: 7 or more singing or territorial birds of a species detected in suitable nesting habitat during breeding season on one day.

S7—Singing Bird Present 7+ Days: Singing bird (breeding vocalizations only) present at the same location (same tree or shrub) 7 or more days apart.

Possible Breeding

S—Singing Bird: singing bird present in suitable nesting habitat during its breeding season on only one occasion. Code also used for owls and rails giving their primary vocalization during the breeding season. Include non-vocal sounds that are associated with breeding such as in Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, Common Nighthawk, and Woodpeckers. Only use for colonial species if nesting is suspected in the block.

H—In Appropriate Habitat: Adult or independent juvenile birds hatched in the current breeding season observed in suitable nesting habitat during its breeding season. Only use for colonial species if nesting is suspected in the block.

Observed or Flyover

F—Flyover: a species only observed flying overhead, and never observed to interact with the habitat in the block.

No Breeding Code Entered — Observed Species: any species entered into eBird without any other breeding code noted above will be automatically considered “Observed”. This should be used for species observed during its breeding season but not in suitable nesting habitat (e.g., herons or egrets foraging with no indication of a nearby rookery, migrants, etc.). We suggest reporting complete species lists that include all birds observed, even those not breeding.