

North American Ornithological Atlas Committee (NORAC) Workshop Proposal

Contacts:

Charles M. Francis, NORAC Chair, charles.francis@ec.gc.ca

Andrew Couturier, acouturier@bsc-eoc.org

Background

Ornithological atlases are active monitoring projects that involve hundreds or thousands of amateur and professional birders in an intensive effort to document the distribution of birds in a particular region (state, province, or county) over a fixed time period (often 5 years). Although most often used to track breeding birds, the same approaches can also be used for birds at other times of year.

The North American Ornithological Atlas Committee (NORAC) was originally formed from representatives of many of the active bird atlas projects in the Americas to develop standards for data collection and data analyses, especially for breeding bird atlases, and it continues to play an important role in facilitating communication among project coordinators.

With the current surge of second atlases and the increased emphasis on ensuring that bird monitoring programs are relevant to bird conservation and management, NORAC continues to have an important role in developing standards and exchanging information on new approaches for bird atlases. Our previous NORAC meeting, held at PDX2008, was attended by ~25 people, representing 15 Breeding Bird Atlas projects across Canada and the United States. There is a demonstrated need to follow up on the topics raised at the PDX2008 meeting and to continue to share experiences, approaches, and methods among atlas coordinators and other interested participants.

We therefore propose to hold a full day meeting/workshop of the North American Ornithological Atlas Committee (NORAC) on Sunday 7 February 2010, the day before the start of the formal scientific program at the AOU/COS/SCO meetings.

Objectives and Agenda

The objectives of the workshop are to facilitate the exchange of information on atlases and to develop a compendium of "best practices." This compendium, or atlas handbook, will function as a central resource for those considering implementing a breeding bird atlas. The agenda will consist of a mixture of short presentations and informal discussions throughout the day, concerning the following topics:

1. Updates on current atlases, emphasizing innovative approaches of interest to other projects;
2. Developing appropriate standards for quantitative sampling to estimate abundance or relative abundance;
3. Exchanging information on data management and data analysis tools;
4. Exchanging information on the logistics of running and organizing atlases;
5. Publishing options for atlas projects;
6. Other types of bird atlases (e.g., wintering, year-round, urban, marine)
7. Combining data from neighbouring jurisdictions for analysis purposes;
8. Habitat associations/modelling;
9. Analyzing change between atlases – methods to correct for survey effort;
10. Mapping methods and approaches;
11. Identifying when and where atlases might be appropriate tools for monitoring and conservation in Latin America and promoting their development.

Who can attend

This workshop is open to anyone interested in learning more about ornithological atlases, how they can be used, and how to implement them.

Additional information

More information on NORAC can be obtained here: <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/norac>