

BIRD CONSERVATION

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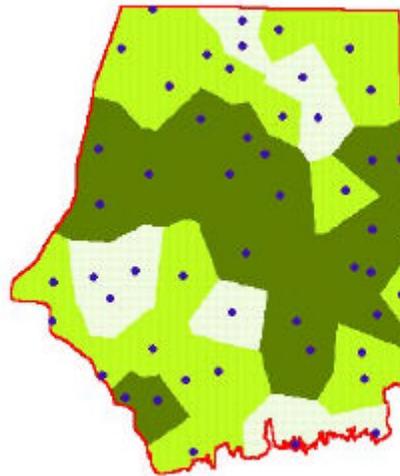
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DIVERSITY PATTERNS UNCOVERED



Eastern Connecticut's forests show a geographic pattern of bird diversity. Light = low diversity, medium = moderate diversity, dark = high diversity, dots = sampling sites. Map: M. Altshul, Green Valley Institute.

Ongoing analyses of our forest bird data from eastern Connecticut have yielded the first ever view of the region's large scale patterns in bird diversity. Diversity, or more precisely species richness, is a measure of how many spe-

cies of birds occupy an area.

The above map suggests that a spike in regional diversities occurs in the central part of the state, and that diversities drop off toward the coast and to-

ward the higher elevations of Northeast Connecticut. BCR is presently investigating the causes of these patterns by examining individual species distributions.

RHODE ISLAND TO BE SURVEYED

The next phase in the Forest Bird Survey of southern New England brings BCR into Rhode Island. With the help of the Audubon

Society of Rhode Island, we are selecting 25-30 sites to be surveyed between the end of May and the beginning of July, 2003.

The goal of the survey will be to expand our understanding of how forest birds are distributed through southern New England. Such information will

RHODE ISLAND SURVEYED

(CONTINUED)

assist conservation planners in making land use decisions.

This new study will further expand our sampling of the region's forest birds. We expect to make an additional 6000 bird observations this summer, along with 4500 habitat measurements. The data will permit us to strengthen our understanding of how habitat and geographic factors influence the distribution and population densities of our native forest birds.



Looking from Voluntown, Connecticut to Exeter, Rhode Island, the still extensive forests of this region are plainly evident.

“We expect to make an additional 6000 bird observations this summer, along with 4500 habitat measurements.”

COOPER’S HAWK RETURNS



After decades of virtual absence, the Cooper's Hawk is returning as a breeder to eastern Connecticut.

Once among the commonest woodland hawks of southern New England, the Cooper's Hawk has been largely absent as a local breeder for much of the past 40 years. However, the intensive studies conducted during the Forest Bird Survey of eastern Connecticut documented the presence of a small and probably growing population.

During surveys, we located birds at five sites. Although based on a very

small sample, we tentatively estimate that 25 pairs of Cooper's Hawks now inhabit the forests of eastern Connecticut.

Cooper's Hawks began disappearing from our region by as early as the 1920s. Heavy hunting pressure was cited as one factor leading to this early decline. However, by the 1960s contamination of the environment with persistent pesticides was thought to have brought about a population collapse

throughout the Northeast. Even in low doses, persistent pesticides interfere with egg-laying, particularly in predatory birds that accumulate these chemicals.

Now that the era of persistent pesticides is receding into the past, these chemicals are disappearing from the environment. Cleaner environments are permitting affected birds to recover their populations.

FIELD TRIPS



Sarah Spulecki and Brendan Keene scan Hamburg Cove for eagles.

Eagle watching has become an annual event among the BCR faithful. This year's intrepid contingent headed

down to the Connecticut River on a windy March day in search of eagles as well as other notable wintering species.

As befits a bird of prey-oriented trip, hawks were the highlight of the day. In addition to 19 adult and juvenile Bald Eagles, we managed memorable views of the Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Northern Harrier.

March also brought the first Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles into the river valley, as well as Eastern Phoebes, large numbers of American Robins, and a variety of waterfowl. Best among the ducks were a flock of Ruddy Ducks.

“Cooper's Hawks began disappearing from our region by as early as the 1920s.”

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Bird

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership is something that we at BCR are pleased and impressed to see just keep growing. If you haven't yet joined our expanding family, we hope that you will do so soon. We

are funded entirely by memberships, grants and gifts. Our modest budget has already permitted us to institute a vigorous research effort, produce a substan-

tial body of technical publications, and offer an expanding program of technical assistance to towns.