

BIRD CONSERVATION

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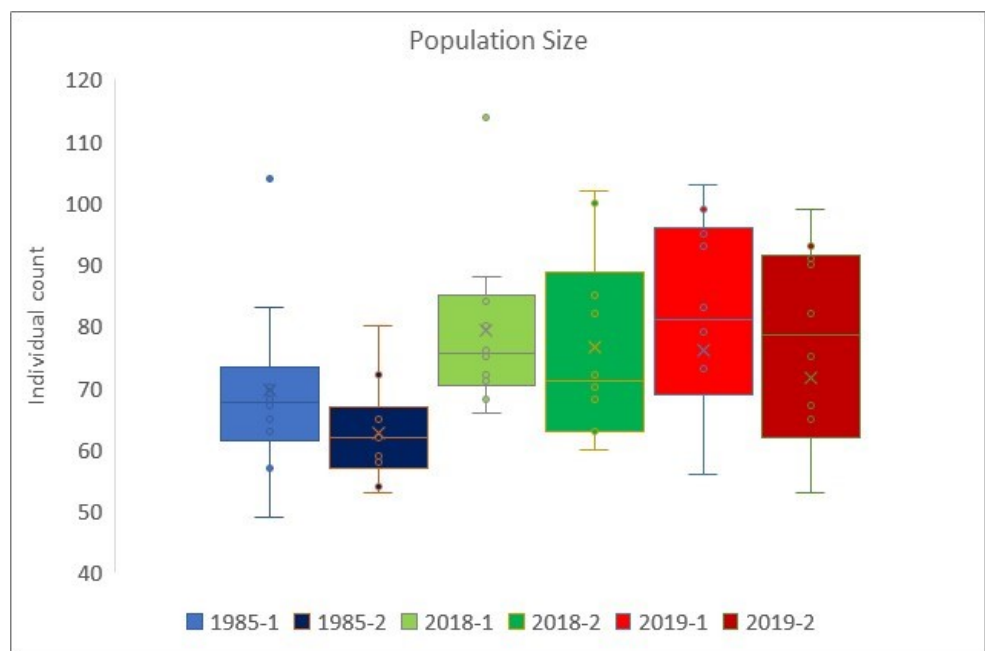
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YALE FOREST BIRDS SHOW INCREASE



Bird populations at Yale Forest have increased since 1985, but the amount of variability among individual study sites has also increased. As the figure shows, surveys were duplicated each year to gain a perspective of survey variability.

Recent analysis suggests that continental bird populations have, over the past 50 years, declined by a third. BCR is also reviewing its long term data to detect at the

regional level the population trends in bird communities.

Our study examines populations in about 10,000 acres of contiguous forest

centered at the Yale-Myers Forest near Union, CT on property managed by the Yale University School of Forestry. Surveys were first

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YALE FOREST

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Areas at Yale Forest cut over in 1985 have now grown up to young forest, changing the types of birds found in such locations.

“Unlike the decline witnessed in continental populations, birds at Yale Forest have undergone an increase averaging 20%.”

conducted there in 1985 as a pilot study for the eight year long *Forest Bird Survey of Southern New England*. These early surveys were of note because they sampled for the first time the population densities of forest birds of this region.

Changes in community composition over the 34-year period of study have been profound, with species appearing and disappearing from the forest over these years. In several instances, species not even present in 1985 are now among the most common species in the forest.

Some of the changes in species composition can be linked to habitat management carried out by the Yale Forestry School, but a number of other species appear to have ranged north in response to a warming climate. Still other species have ranged south, apparently in response to the maturation of regional forests.

Unlike the decline witnessed in continental populations, birds at Yale Forest have undergone an increase averaging 20%. Particularly certain species like the Pine Warbler, Veery and Red-eyed Vireo have had

substantial population increases.

The difference in our findings from those for the continent is a subject for our continued investigation. The large, contiguous forests of the region appear to be serving as a refuge for species that are undergoing continental declines as forests elsewhere are replaced with urbanizing landscapes. Species undergoing continental declines are typically found to retain high densities within optimal habitats even when other populations are suffering.

CURLEW SEARCH ENTERS TENTH YEAR



Greater Yellowlegs explore the sand flats of Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge.

Only once in the past ten years have we made a likely sighting of the elusive and critically endangered Eskimo Curlew. In 2011, we briefly observed a bird with clear cinnamon wing linings— the key field mark of the species— in a dune swale at Barnstable Beach on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Since then, we have observed no birds and no other reliable sightings have been made elsewhere.

This year, we focused our search on the Monomoy area of Chatham, where

hunters once gathered to shoot curlews when they and other shorebirds were still considered game birds. Curlews were unusual among shorebirds in not preferring to feed on tidal mudflats and sandflats. Instead, they appeared in dune thickets, where they fed upon small fruits. Substantial tracts of such habitats still survive on the Cape, thanks in large part to their protection as part of Cape Cod National Seashore, national wildlife refuges, state parks and town parks.

With a September

hurricane off the Cape, conditions were ideal for curlews migrating from their historic staging grounds in Labrador to be blown onto the Chatham's beaches. However, we found only typical migrants there, including Greater Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Plovers and Black-bellied Plovers. We will continue our efforts to locate birds next fall.

“We focused our search on the Monomoy area of Chatham, where hunters once gathered to shoot curlews...”

CELEBRATING AGRICULTURE

“Wildlife management has historically been considered an agricultural discipline...”



Exhibitor Barbara Lussier and BCR board member Ron Tillen at this year's Celebrating Agriculture.

Wildlife management has historically been considered an agricultural discipline and, as such, it has been offered as an academic major by colleges of agriculture. The goal of BCR since its inception has been to provide data useful for wildlife conservation action. Hence, when we were invited to participate in this year's Celebrating Agriculture event, held annually at the Woodstock, Connecticut fair-

grounds, we accepted. Particularly in the past few years, a focus of our research has been to learn how birds use agricultural landscapes.

At this year's event, we publicized our ongoing work to event visitors. We also publicized our technical publications on the forest birds of Connecticut and Rhode Island.

FIELD STATION UPDATE



Perfect organic cabbages, fertilized with chicken manure, protected from pests by row covers and protected from weeds by landscape fabric.

“Particularly sparrows, notably the Chipping, Song and lowly House Sparrow increased usage during summer...”

The growing season is now coming to a close during a year in which we continued to expand our agricultural operations in order to investigate the role of birds as part of organic farming protocols. This year, we expanded plantings of corn, potatoes, tomatoes and fruit trees.

We experimented with leaving more weeds at the edges of crop plantings to observe whether this would

encourage more birds to use these areas. Particularly sparrows, notably the Chipping, Song and lowly House Sparrow increased usage during summer, and as fall has progressed migrant warblers including Palm and Yellow-rumped Warblers have been frequenting the fields. Other users have included Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Bobolink and American Goldfinch.

We experimented as well with removing row covers

from pest sensitive crops like broccoli in order to observe whether birds could keep cabbage moths from becoming significant pests. As of this writing, we have observed no cabbage moth larvae on our broccoli.

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Bird Conservation Research, Inc.

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Be part of this year's crop.

MEMBERSHIP

Thanks to all those who have become BCR members in 2019. If you have not yet become a member, it is never too late. Memberships

remain one of our principal means of funding the projects that we conduct, so please consider joining us. Membership applications

and contribution options are available at www.birdconservation-research.org.