BIRD CONSERVATION

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BIRD SURVEYS OF THE NORTHEAST UPLANDS: 20-YEAR UPDATE

The Black-capped Chickadee has had a 40% population drop since the invasion of the Northeast Uplands by the related Tufted Titmouse.

This summer season, we re-surveyed bird populations at five two mile-long transects first established in 2001. We also continued surveys at ten one mile-long routes through Yale-Myers Forest first established in 1985. All are in the forests of Connecticut's Northeast Uplands Ecoregion– a tongue of higher elevation

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YALE FOREST
-CONTINUED

"...these two sets of surveys permit contrast of the effects of forest management on bird populations..."

Porcupines also inhabit the forests of the Northeast Uplands.

landscape at the southern tip of the Worcester Plateau.

The longer transects traverse habitats largely unchanged since their initial surveys, whereas the latter ones occupy areas intensively managed for earlier successional habitats. Hence, these two sets of surveys permit contrast of the effects of forest management on bird populations within the larger context of regional population change over time.

This summer's surveys marked the re-appearance of breeding Brown Creepers, which we have not found in the previous two years. We also documented the continued spread of the Red-bellied Woodpecker, Cooper's Hawk and Yellow-bellied Sap-sucker, which is quickly becoming the region's commonest woodpecker. Similarly, the Pine Warbler, absent in 1985, has become among the region's commonest wood-warblers.

Other notable summer observations included the occurrence of a number of early successional species that otherwise are largely absent from forested landscapes, including the Ruffed Grouse, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Magnolia Warbler and Least Flycatcher. This year also saw the first occurrence on surveys of the southerly-distributed Carolina Wren.

Yale Forest Study Presented at ESA Meeting

A recently logged area at Yale-Myers Forest shows an open forest floor that will within several years be vegetated by dense stands of sapling trees.

The Ecological Society of America– one of the premier scientific societies of North America– has accepted our paper for presentation at its 2020 meeting this August. The abstract of the paper may be viewed at https://eco.confex.com/eco/2020/meetingapp.cgi/Paper/88484. The full text will be available to our readers shortly at http://www.birdconservationresearch.org/research_journal/scientific_papers.php.

This work highlights our finding of a major population increase in the birds of northeastern Connecticut during the past 34 years. Moreover, there has been a major shift in species composition even though the total number of species has remained constant over time. It documents the explosive population increase of some species as well as the complete disappearance of others. In some instances, patterns observed are consistent with predictions of climate clange, whereas other patterns appear related to habitat manipulation.

"This work highlights our finding of a major population increase in the birds of northeastern Connecticut during the past 34 years."

BCR Assists Wyndham Land Trust

From the BCR field station, the newly acquired parcel is present in the left mid-ground. In the background, existing Wyndham Land Trust properties are visible.

"The importance of parcel size for the protection of wildlife has been demonstrated by multiple BCR studies..."

BCR joined forces with Wyndham Land Trust to protect a critical parcel adjacent to existing Wyndham Land Trust properties and to the BCR field station. Within a week of the parcel becoming available we, Wyndham Land Trust and concerned neighboring land-owners raised the funds necessary to purchase the property.

Through acquisition of this land, a contiguous band of natural habitat now exists. The importance of parcel size for the protection of wildlife has been demonstrated by multiple BCR studies (see especially http://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/pub_14_species-area.pdf) and is a key principle in the field of conservation biology.

Future possibilities for the field in the mid-ground above is the establishment of a plantation for newly developed blight-resistant American Chestnut trees. This species once formed the backbone of Northeastern forests and was a critically important species for wildlife. It has been gone from our forests for over 100 years.

Field Station Update

The lowly House Sparrow has proven to be one of the major predators of pest insects inhabiting vegetable plots.

As we enter mid-summer, our agricultural operations are in full swing, with major plantings of potatoes, corn and tomatoes as well as smaller plantings of a variety of other vegetables. As part of our organic protocol, we have been working to encourage the use of our plots by birds. Birds can have a significant impact on populations of pest insects.

To date, the principal bird predators recorded in our plots have been sparrows, including the Song and Chipping sparrows, although we also recorded a visiting Field Sparrow in early summer along with Indigo Buntings and Bobolinks. Other frequently-occurring species have included the Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Phoebe, American Goldfinch, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Gray Catbird, Eastern Bluebird and Eastern Kingbird.

However, one of the most commonly occurring species has been the non-native House Sparrow. When we have conducted netting experiments near the vegetable plots, this species has been the most frequently caught bird. Although often maligned as a pest species, its contribution to biological control of harmful insects should not be underestimated.

"Although often maligned as a pest species, its [House Sparrow] contribution to biological control of harmful insects should not be underestimated."

The Newsletter of
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Bird Conservation Research, Inc.

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Be part of this year's crop.

MEMBERSHIP

It's time to renew membership for 2020. Existing members have received renewal forms already. 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.