

BIRD CONSERVATION

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INVENTORYING THE BIRDS THAT USE CROPLAND



This hatching year American Robin was being fed invertebrates found among corn stalks.

For the past several years, we've been inventorying the birds that feed within our vegetable plots as part of investigations into the significance of birds as pest control agents.

Birds feed upon such pests as insects, snails, slugs and small mammals. Bird can, therefore, be part of an integrated pest management strategy—the process of using multiple agents to protect

crops.

It is generally thought that birds can have a significant impact on their prey when prey populations are moderate

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CROPLAND -CONTINUED

“It is generally thought that birds can have a significant impact on their prey ...”



Fenced tomatoes can still be affected by meadow voles, who may eat low-hanging fruit. Insect pests of tomatoes include aphids, white flies, flea beetles and particularly hornworms.

to low, but not when they have major outbreaks. However, there is still much to be learned.

To date, through direct observation and mist netting, we have detected the presence of the following resident and migrant bird species in vegetable plots:

- Cooper’s Hawk
- Bobwhite
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Eastern Kingbird
- Eastern Phoebe
- Black-capped Chickadee

- Tufted Titmouse
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- Mockingbird
- Gray Catbird
- American Robin
- Eastern Bluebird
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
- Starling
- Yellow-throated Vireo
- Yellow Warbler
- Common Yellowthroat
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Palm Warbler
- House Sparrow
- Bobolink
- Common Grackle
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- Northern Cardinal
- Indigo Bunting
- House Finch
- American Goldfinch

- Savannah Sparrow
- Chipping Sparrow
- Field Sparrow
- White-throated Sparrow
- Song Sparrow

Most of these species have been involved in preying upon pests, although a few, notably the House Sparrow and Gray Catbird, have also contributed to crop depredation. Studies continue...

YALE FOREST STUDY NOW AVAILABLE



The Cooper's Hawk was detected as a summering species for the first time in 2020.

A “preprint” of our latest contribution to ongoing work at Yale-Myers Forest in Union, Connecticut is now available at <http://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/Yale%20Forest.pdf>. It is currently undergoing peer review, and at the close of this process a final definitive version will be made available.

This work highlights our finding of a 24% population increase in the birds of northeastern Connecticut during the

past 34 years. Moreover, it documents a 50% shift in species composition over this time even though the total number of species present has remained constant. It reports the explosive population increase of some species as well as the complete disappearance of others.

Some patterns observed are consistent with predictions of climate change, whereas others appear related to habitat manipulation. Still other patterns appear related to ongoing adaptation to new

environments and to recent interspecific competition.

Work in this system will continue in December, when we will begin our second season of winter surveys. By the end of 2021, we will have a 20-year sequence of population change at two environmental scales.

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FIELD STATION UPDATE

“All these efforts ... are creating a regional environment in which birds now infrequent in Connecticut can again find attractive habitat.”



This Bobwhite appeared at the BCR field station for the first time this summer, where it frequented gardens, vegetable plots and field borders.

Conversion of our field borders from alien thickets to ones in which native plants predominate has been an ongoing project at the field station. In addition to planting native shrubs and trees to replace exotic ones, we have been underplanting native herbs and are working to suppress the return of exotics. The alien shrubs and trees removed have been turned into brush piles

at spots about the property in order to provide cover for wildlife.

All these efforts, as well as forest management on adjacent Wyndham Land Trust properties, are creating a regional environment in which birds now infrequent in Connecticut can again find attractive habitat. For the first time this year, one of these species returned on its own— the Bobwhite. It

joins the American Woodcock, a species already present, as species that profit from management of field borders.

BANDING MIGRANT USERS OF FARMLAND



This hatching year Palm Warbler, a boreal forest breeder, becomes a bird of agricultural land during migration.

As we wind down our farming operations for the year, our attention is again turning to ongoing investigations into the use of agricultural land by migrant birds— notably those associated with shrublands, grasslands and open landscapes. We have already documented the presence of a variety of such species, and through banding we hope to determine if Connecticut agricultural land provides a significant migratory stopover for Midwestern grassland species.

To date, we observed species in addition to those reported above, including the Peregrine Falcon, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Barn Owl, Screech Owl, Vesper Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Killdeer and Horned Lark. Moreover, in lands near the field station, such local rarities as the Grasshopper Sparrow, Sedge Wren and Sandhill Crane have appeared.

By continuing to band migrants each year, we hope to learn whether

any of our banded birds reappear as Midwestern breeders.

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The Newsletter of
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Bird Conservation Research, Inc.

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\$25 Regular member
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Become part of the flock.

MEMBERSHIP

There's still 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.