

# BIRD CONSERVATION

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## NORTHEAST CONNECTICUT BIRDS: 20-YEAR UPDATE



Within forested landscapes, the American Goldfinch is typically associated with forest openings in both winter and summer.

**A** follow-up study to the 2001-initiated survey of the forest birds of northeastern CT (<http://www.artsandacademic.net/pdf/forest%20birds%20of%20CT%20&%20RI%202.pdf>) has just been completed, with surveys conducted in both summer and winter.

The study provides a 20-year view of changes that have occurred within the forest bird community. It offers a contrast to our previous study of birds within the intensively managed lands of Yale-Myers Forest ([http://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/Yale%](http://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/Yale%20Forest.pdf)

[20Forest.pdf](http://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/Yale%20Forest.pdf)). Unlike at Yale-Myers Forest, which has undergone significant change since studies began there in 1985, the present study examines forests where habitat change has been limited.

*(Continued on page 2)*

# NORTHEAST CT

## -CONTINUED

**“Compared with 2001, the survey points show that forests have become more open due to forest management and die-off of Eastern Hemlock.”**



The management practices of the Yale School of Forestry have produced a landscape in which shrubs and saplings flourish in the understory of an open forest canopy.

The five two mile-long survey routes of this study had six measures of habitat recorded at each of its 75 survey points: conifer cover, vegetation type, moisture regime, tree age, canopy cover and understory density. Compared with 2001, the survey points showed that forests have become more open due to forest management and die-off of Eastern Hemlock. The forests were also more deciduous and with more understory cover. In all instances, however, the differences that have occurred are slight.

Although we are in the earliest stages of examining changes in bird populations, some findings are already evident. As in 2001, the Ovenbird, Red-eyed Vireo and Veery remain the most abundant summering species. Several species have become better established as well, including the Nashville Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Common Raven and particularly the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Wintering birds tend to

be more variable from year to year. Indeed, 2021 was notable for its incursions by Evening Grosbeaks, Red Crossbills, White-winged Crossbills and Red-breasted Nuthatches. However, several species, including the Tufted Titmouse and Red-bellied Woodpecker do appear to have increased their winter presence over time.



# RESTORATION OF ALIEN THICKETS FOR BIRDS



Not all alien species are invasive or undesirable. This Siberian Crabapple escapes from cultivation only infrequently and provides multi-season wildlife value.

Restoring borders of agricultural fields that have become overgrown with invasive alien species is a difficult challenge. However, a number of native species are aggressive competitors and can also invade these habitats. Our goal has been to encourage such species while discouraging aliens.

Where we have found natives, we have cleared around them to give them the opportunity to become

established. Natives that appear capable of colonizing these thickets include Spicebush, several species of viburnum and several species of dogwood. In addition, we have found such native vines as Fox Grape, Carrion Flower, Wild Blackberry and Virginia Creeper. Tree species like American Elm, Shagbark Hickory and Black Cherry are also invading. We have introduced such species as Sweet Pepperbush, Serviceberry,

Chokeberry and Buttonball Bush into the thickets to supplement these natives.

We have not discouraged all aliens, however, as some are not invasive and have significant value for a variety of birds. The Siberian Crabapple illustrated above provides early spring nectar for hummingbirds as well as late summer fruits for fruit-eating birds.

“Restoring borders of agricultural fields that have become overgrown with invasive alien species is a difficult challenge.”

# FIELD STATION UPDATE

“Chestnut was once one of the most valuable seed producers for wildlife in all of eastern North America.”



As part of our larger effort to restore alien thickets bordering our agricultural fields, we have planted 20 American Chestnut seedlings.

**S**ummer bird banding is underway at the field station and we are also continuing to inventory birds that use our vegetable plots. Attracting birds to the plots this year has proven particularly important, as we are experiencing an infestation of Colorado Potato Beetles. There is no effective organic control of these beetles other than hand picking and crop rotation, so attracting birds that can eat them is particularly

valuable. We have recorded some new birds in the plots this year, including Eastern Kingbird, Barn Swallow and Orchard Oriole, although sparrows and Eastern Bluebirds continue to be among the most frequent visitors.

Additional efforts have been directed at re-establishing American Chestnut to field borders as part of our work to improve the quality of border habitat. Chestnut was once one of the

most valuable seed producers for wildlife in all of eastern North America. To date, 16 of our 20 planted seeds have sprouted and are now nearing a foot tall. We will shortly be installing electric fencing to discourage deer browsing on developing saplings.



# SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND'S ORIOLES



This Orchard Oriole female adult is identified by its dark wing coverts and rounded tail feathers, which contrast with the duller plumage and narrower tail feathers of juveniles.

Hardly larger than a vireo, southern New England's smaller and lesser known oriole, the Orchard Oriole, is becoming more widespread in northern parts of Connecticut and Rhode Island. Unlike the common Baltimore Oriole, it is not generally found in small forest openings but is instead an inhabitant of open landscapes. It is often associated with park-like

stands of trees like those found in orchards as well as with the wooded borders of hayfields. Here at the field station, we typically have 1-2 pairs present in these habitats each year .

Although widespread in forests, with Connecticut-Rhode Island forest populations estimated at 85,217 males, the Baltimore Oriole (known for a time as the Northern

Oriole) is also widespread in agricultural landscapes and gardens, where it often attaches its pendulous nest to the branches of fruit trees such as crabapples.

**“Unlike the common Baltimore Oriole, it (Orchard Oriole) is not generally found in small forest openings but is instead an inhabitant of open landscapes.”**

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# Bird Conservation Research, Inc.

## Membership

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*Despite what they may think, chickens do not make good indoor pets.*

## MEMBERSHIP

It is time to renew membership for 2021. Existing members have received renewal forms in the mail. If you have not yet become a member,

you may do so online through GoFundMe ([.https://www.gofundme.com/f/1nqlss](https://www.gofundme.com/f/1nqlss)). 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 also available on our web site.