

# BIRD CONSERVATION

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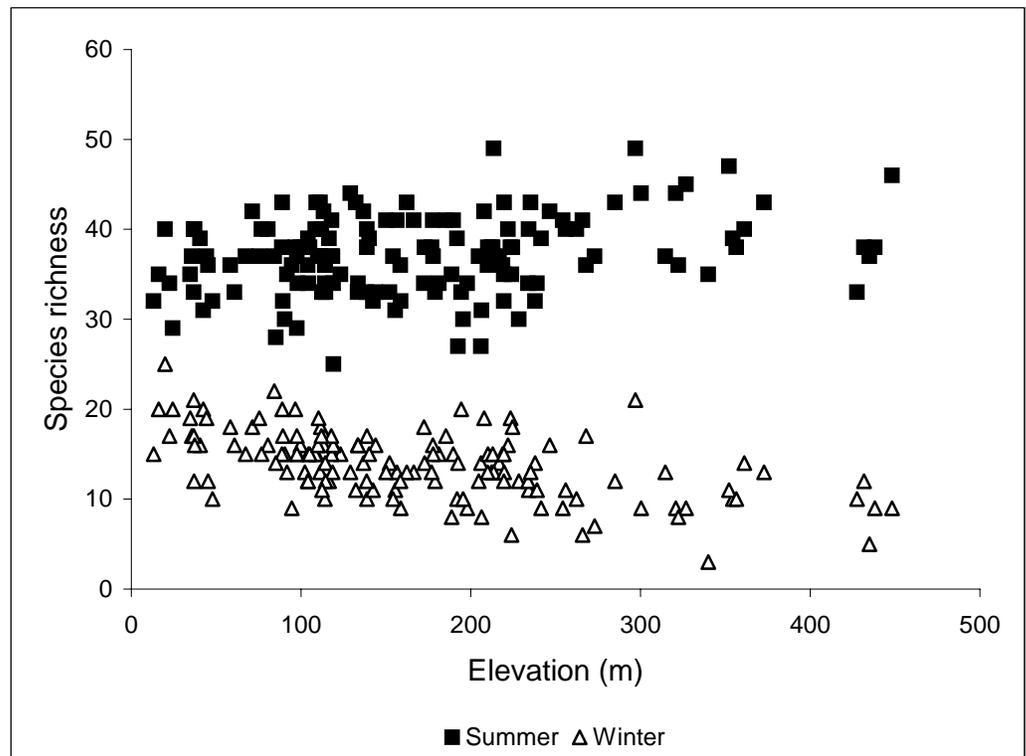
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## FOREST BIRD OF CT & RI AFFECTED BY ELEVATION



**In summer, number of species is greater at higher elevations, whereas in winter it is lower.**

**W**ith the species accounts for the *Forest Birds of Connecticut and Rhode Island* now complete, our attention has focused on writing a general *Results and Discus-*

*sion* section for this work. This section examines the forest bird community as a whole, and is itself in the process of final editing.

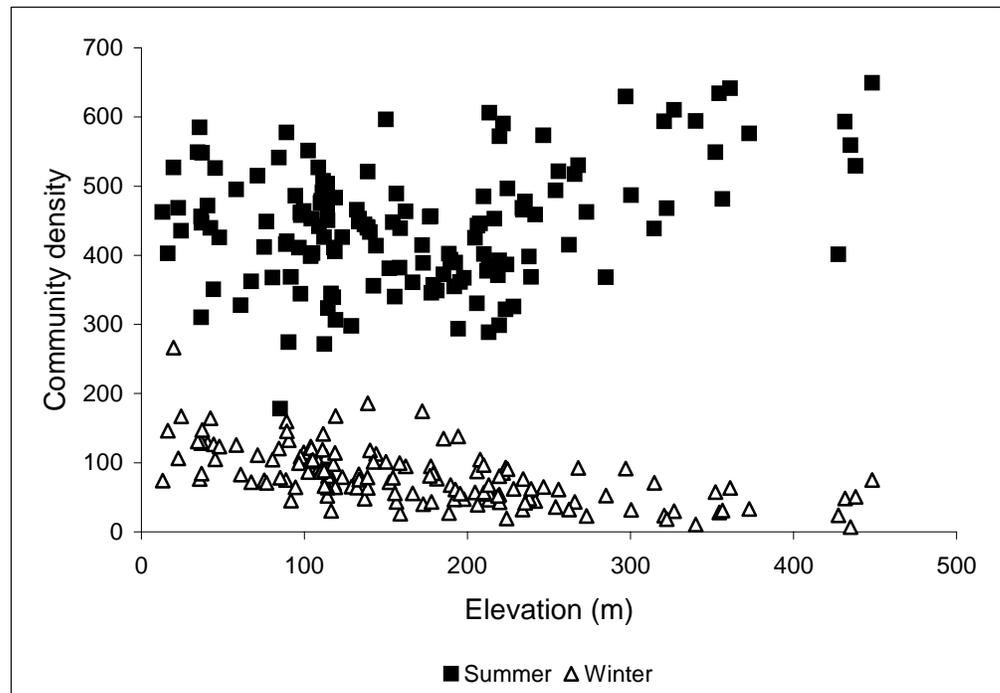
One of the most notable findings of this community analysis has been that elevation plays a major role in determining how

*(Continued on page 2)*

# FOREST BIRDS

## -CONTINUED

***“... it costs more calories to live at higher, colder elevations than at lower coastal elevations...”***



**In summer, community population density is greater at higher elevations, whereas in winter it is lower.**

many species and how many individuals are present. In summer, breeding communities become more diverse as elevations increase. Because elevations increase from south to north, this also means that there are more species present in northern than in southern portions of the study area. Population density follows a similar pattern (see graphs above). In winter, however, the reverse occurs. Species and populations become more concentrated at lower elevations near the coast.

The explanation for the winter pattern appears obvious: it costs more calories to live at higher, colder elevations than at lower coastal elevations where the ocean moderates temperature. Hence, it is less taxing to make a living at lower elevations at this lean season.

The summer patterns has a less intuitive explanation, albeit one also associated with energy: there is a shorter growing season in the higher elevation areas, and this results in a more concentrated pulse of biological

productivity in these areas; i.e., food density is greater at the higher elevations.

Indeed, this pattern of more species occurring to the north appears to continue right into the Canadian maritime provinces. The concomitant increase in density makes sense in light of the concentrated energy hypothesis, but our data are the first to conclusively demonstrate that density also increases.

# ESKIMO CURLEW SEARCH



**The interface between the Cape Cod dunes and salt marshes is a place where the elusive Eskimo Curlew once occurred.**

Already in its fifth year, the search for the Eskimo Curlew continues to be an exercise in patience and determination. This past August, our explorations of Cape Cod occurred during weather that was not conducive to the appearance of curlews or, for that matter, other species of shorebirds.

The kind of coastal storm that blows from east to west off the Atlantic did not materialize until later in the migratory season. By then, curlews might have been past our area and out to sea on the long

cross-ocean flight to South America.

Our search continued to concentrate on the back side of sand dunes where wet swales make their way via tidal creeks to adjacent salt marshes. Any birds present would be unlikely to use the salt marshes themselves, but they might use uplands where low shrubs produce the kinds of small fruits that migratory curlews historically ate.

A major advance in our ongoing search has been our acquisition of a copy of

the shooting journal of George MacKay, who hunted for curlews and other species of shorebirds in the Cape Cod area during the late 19th and early 20th century. This journal contains a wealth of first hand observations on behavior and habitat use by this species.

***“Our search continued to concentrate on the back side of sand dunes where wet swales make their way via tidal creeks to adjacent salt marshes.”***

# FIELD STATION UPDATE

*“Our plan is to develop a garden habitat that is attractive enough to bird predators to make them major control agents for agricultural pest species.”*



**Wildflowers planted at the edge of our vegetable plot are part of our strategy to encourage the presence of insect and bird predators in the plot.**

The BCR field station continues to move forward in developing organic agricultural operations that will provide opportunities to examine the effects of bird predators on pest insects.

At present, a variety of

sparrow species are using our vegetable plot. They are feeding on the seeds of wildflowers planted at one edge of it, and they are feeding as well on insect pests that are present on our crops.

Our plan is to develop a

garden habitat that is attractive enough to bird predators to make them major control agents for agricultural pest species.

## ARTS AND ACADEMIC VIDEOS



**The Rufous Fantail of the tropical Pacific is a species that appears to have the breadth of its ecological niche reduced when it co-occurs with the larger Tinian Monarch.**

Another of the videos in the environmental science series that is available through our internet publishing partner, **Arts and Academic Publishing** ([www.artsandacademic.net](http://www.artsandacademic.net)), is entitled **Species Competition**. It begins by exploring community assembly: how it is that particular physical environments come to be occupied by particular groups of species. It

then examines how species within such communities might come into competition for such resources as food and living space.

The video then goes on to explore ideas about discrete communities as opposed to communities of environmental gradients, where assemblages of species gradually pass from one to another. It examines in more detail

the types of environmental gradients that occur along an ordinary New England wooded hillside.

The video goes farther afield in examination of niche overlap and instances of inter- and intra-specific competition, looking at examples not only from New England but also from tropical regions.

***“It begins by exploring community assembly: how it is that particular physical environments come to be occupied by particular groups of species.”***

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# Bird Conservation Research, Inc.

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*Help feather our nest.*

## MEMBERSHIP

Thanks to all those who have renewed their membership for 2016. You should by now have received a membership acknowledgement that you

can use for tax purposes.

If you are not yet a member, please consider becoming one. Membership applications and con-

tribution options are also available at [www.birdconservation-research.org](http://www.birdconservation-research.org)