

BIRD CONSERVATION

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FOREST BIRD SPECIES ACCOUNTS



The White-throated Sparrow was a regular winter resident but rare summer resident in the forests of southern New England.

The Forest Birds of Connecticut and Rhode Island, the chronicle of the eight-year long forest bird survey of southern New England, is continu-

ing to produce species accounts. At present, song bird accounts are being developed. Populations, distributions, habitat requirements, histori-

cal status and conservation concerns are focused upon.

An example species account follows:

WILD TURKEY

MELEAGRUS GALLOPAVO

Summer

Density (birds/km²): **0.89** (N = 50, 95%

CI: ± 0.26)

CT: 1.02

RI: 0.28

Population (birds): **8,153** (95% CI: ± 2405)

CT: 7,702

RI: 451

Density.- Although males were more conspicuously vocal than females in summer, we detected them with about equal frequency. Hence, we consider our computations to represent most reasonably total population density. Summer densities averaged least in southeastern Connecticut (0.54 birds/km²) and Rhode Island and greatest in southwestern Connecticut (1.63 birds/km²). Population estimates are based on less than 60 detections of males and females, so have greater variance associated with estimates.

We found only five Wild Turkeys in forests during winter. Because of their low winter detectability, we made no winter population estimates. Low detections may have been due in part to the species' secretive nature at this season, although the few winter tracks we observed suggested that birds largely vacated forest habitat during this season. Indeed, most birds we have observed in winter have been in agricultural land.

Population variance.- Breeding Bird Survey data showed exponentially increasing continental (trend = 8.4, N = 2120, %CV = 116.37) and northeastern (trend = 19.2, N = 87, %CV = 174.02) populations, particularly since 1990. U.S. (Kendall's tau = 0.99, N 48, P < 0.001, %CV = 108.7) and New England (Kendall's tau = 0.95, N 48, P < 0.001, %CV = 128.7) Christmas Counts also showed exponential increases since 1990.

On ten line transects through northeastern Connecticut, Craig (1987) incidentally detected the species but did not compute its densities. Elsewhere, densities are generally

TABLE 9. Summer population densities of Wild Turkeys showed no correlations with habitat characteristics. P(t) = probability level of Kendall's tau, N = 147. Corrected false discovery rate significance probability = 0.01. F = forest type, M= moisture regime, D = dbh, C = canopy cover, U = understory density. * = significant relationship.

	Habitat Characteristics				
	C	U	F	M	D
P(t)	-0.45	0.19	0.45	0.58	0.04

estimated at 1-5 birds/km² (Eaton 1992)- values similar to those of this study.

Habitat.- Of 25 summering Wild Turkeys observed at or within 70 m, birds used 20% hydric, 56% mesic and 24% xeric habitats. Birds inhabited 56% open and 44% closed canopy forests, occupied 72% deciduous, 16% mixed and 12% conifer forests, and occupied 12% open, 46% moderate and 42% dense understory forests. We also made incidental summer observations of birds feeding in hayfields, croplands and lawns as well as nesting in hayfields. We made only one winter observation of a bird within 70 m, so could make no assessment of winter habitat use.

When we compared summer population densities of birds to habitat characteristics, we found no significant correlations, although a positive relationship between density and increasing understory density approached significance. Elsewhere in the Northeast, the species is reported to inhabit open, mature hardwood forests from fall to spring and forest openings in summer (Eaton 1992). Such open forests tend to have high understory density.

History.- The Wild Turkey was extirpated from Connecticut and Rhode Island by the early 19th century (Howe and Sturtevant 1899, Sage et al. 1913), but was reestablished during the 1970s when wild caught

“Breeding Bird Survey data showed exponentially increasing continental and northeastern populations.”

WILD TURKEY- CONTINUED

birds were released at various Connecticut locations (Zeranski and Baptist 1990).

In the 1970s, the Wild Turkey was a definite or probable breeder at 10 western Massachusetts locations (Cardoza 2003). In the 1980s, it was a definite or probable breeder at 177 particularly northwestern Connecticut locations (Smith and Devine 1994c). It was also definite or probable at five Rhode Island locations (Enser 1992). By the 2000s, definite and probable breeders had ex-

plosively increased to 630 locations across Massachusetts (Walsh and Peterson 2013).

Synthesis.- Our present density estimates for southern New England are in line with density estimates from elsewhere. Populations appear greatest in western Connecticut and least in southwestern Connecticut and Rhode Island. As populations grow, this distinction is likely to vanish, however.

Our observations of habitat use were in general agreement with other re-

ports that highlight the presence of forest openings in areas occupied. Birds occupied these at a rate above their availability (Table 3).

Conservation.- Breeding Bird Survey and Christmas Count data show that Wild Turkey populations are undergoing a rapid continental and regional increase.

“Populations appear greatest in western Connecticut and least in southwestern Connecticut and Rhode Island.”



BCR has established the first of several organic vegetable plots at its field station (see next page).

BCR FIELD STATION

“The BCR field station in Pomfret, CT is establishing agricultural landscapes that can be occupied by wildlife.”



A stand of Dame's Rocket inhabits the field being planted to an orchard this summer.

The BCR field station in Pomfret, CT is establishing agricultural landscapes that can be occupied by wildlife. To date, we have established the first of several organic vegetable plots and have begun transforming an overgrown hillside into an organic orchard. Trees will be added through the fall— a good planting time for trees in New England.

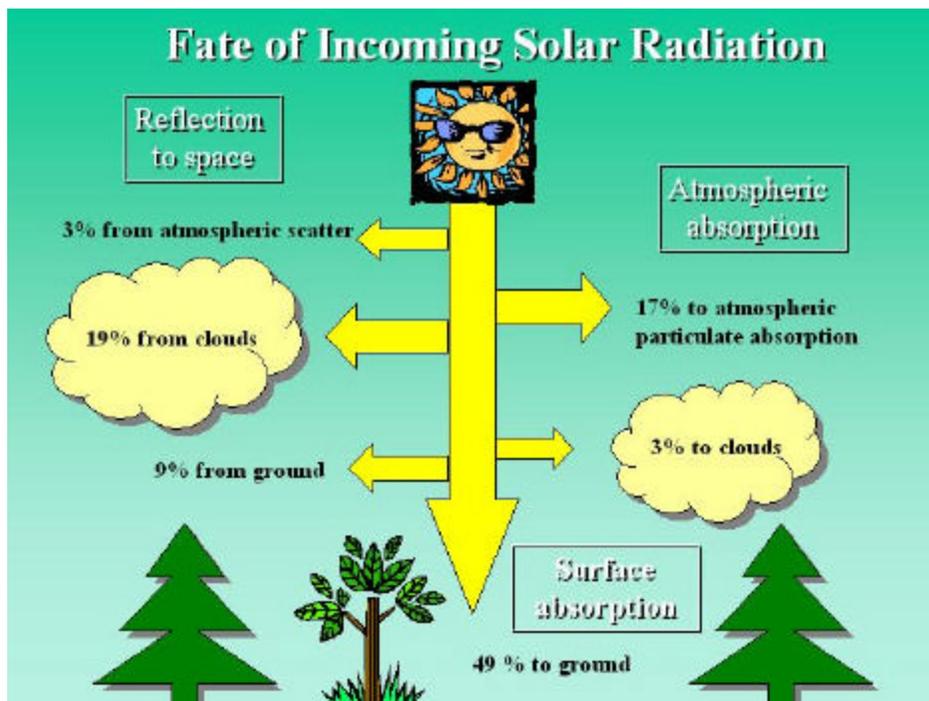
Our initial vegetable plot is now in full production

and is already being planted for fall crops. A number of perches exist around its border to encourage bird use of the area. To date, Indigo Buntings, Song Sparrows, Catbirds, Northern and Orchard Orioles, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and American Goldfinches have been among the species using the plot to feed upon insects and nectar. The borders of the plot have also been planted to wildflowers to provide an ad-

ditional source of wildlife food and to serve as habitat for predatory insects that can assist with keeping insect pests under control.

The field station also has nearly eight acres in hay production, and we are exploring options for maximizing the value of the hayfield for wildlife. This spring, Wild Turkeys were among the nesters in this habitat.

ARTS & ACADEMIC VIDEO FOCUSES ON SEASONALITY AND THE ATMOSPHERE



This graphic from the video *Seasonality and Atmospherics* illustrates the fate of solar radiation that reaches the Earth.

“The 30 minute video *Seasonality and Atmospherics* explores how solar radiation is distributed on planet Earth.”

The 30 minute video *Seasonality and Atmospherics* explores how solar radiation is distributed on planet Earth. It then examines how solar radiation interacts with the tilt of the Earth’s axis to produce seasonality.

The video goes on to explore the Earth’s atmosphere and how it has evolved since early in

Earth history. The development of the oxygen atmosphere is investigated and the structure of the present atmosphere is reviewed. The video concludes with a comparison of the terms weather and climate.

This video is available through Bird Conservation Research’s publishing partner, [Arts and Academic Publishing](#). The first two videos

in the series are available for free download from the Video Library page. Other videos are available for purchase, although A&A is presently upgrading its delivery vehicle so that videos may be viewed instantaneously.

The Newsletter of
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MEMBERSHIP

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