

BIRD CONSERVATION

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CENTRAL CONNECTICUT SURVEYS UNDERWAY



Higby Mt. in Middlefield is part of the series of traprock ridges that run from north to south through central Connecticut.

The mild and snowless winter of 2006-7 has been notable to date in the low number of birds recorded by the Forest Bird Survey of Southern New England. Compared to previous years, even such winter regulars as the Black-capped Chickadee and White-breasted Nuthatch have occurred at some

sites only infrequently.

The most extensive forests of central Connecticut, those of the traprock ridges that run north to south through the Connecticut River valley, have proven to hold comparatively few species and individuals. However, with only eight of 25 sites sur-

veyed to date, it is still too early to determine whether this trend will hold.

Surprisingly, the greatest variety of species found so far has been at Penwood State Forest near Hartford. In the previous six winters of the survey, the most species have been found in coastal locations.

SEASONAL CHANGES IN BIRD POPULATIONS

“Bird populations of Connecticut’s forests undergo profound seasonal changes...”



The last survey of winter, 2006 was conducted at Bradley Mt. in Plainville, Connecticut.

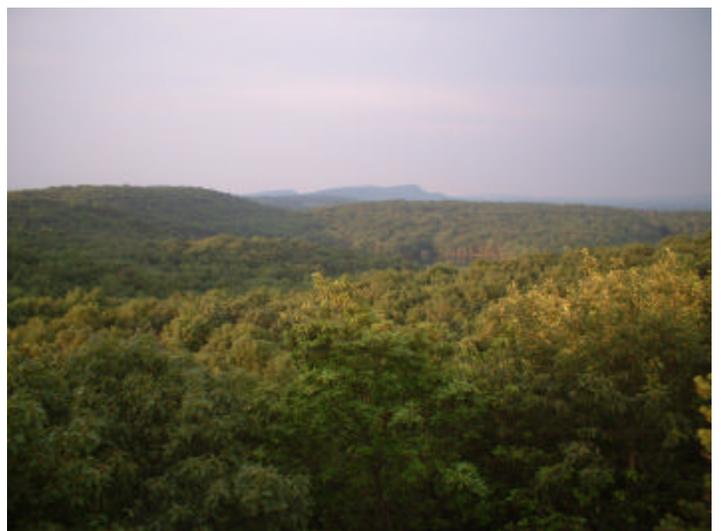
Bird populations of Connecticut’s forests undergo profound seasonal changes in both species composition and populations. In studies conducted thus far, only about 20-30% as many species are present in winter as in summer.

At Bradley Mt. in Plainville, recent surveys uncovered the presence of only 10 species of wintering birds, whereas last summer the same site had 31 species. Few birds remain year round, and fewer still appear only in winter.

For those species that remain, winter populations may actually grow over summer numbers. Year-round residents like the

Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Downy Woodpecker, and Hairy Woodpecker all typically

have greater Connecticut populations in winter than in summer.



The same site last summer was home to a very different group of birds.

DISTINCTIVE HABITATS OF TRAPROCK RIDGES



The summits of traprock ridges are often open and park-like, with a dense cover of bottlebrush grass carpeting the forest floor. Stunted trees, like those seen here, are also typical of this environment.

Central Connecticut is quite geologically distinct from the rest of the state. As a consequence, it has some habitats that differ from those found elsewhere, and these different habitats are associated with distinctive kinds of bird communities.

Traprock ridges are particularly notable habitats of this region. In a portion of the state that has been heavily deforested, the traprock ridge forests remain largely intact.

Moreover, the soils that develop on them is neutral to slightly alkaline, unlike most other Connecticut soils, which are decidedly acid. The traprock soils also tend to be rather rich, and produce forests where maples, ashes and beeches abound. Some bird species like the Wood Thrush are very much at home in these types of forests, whereas others like the Veery and Ovenbird are much less common than they are in oak-dominated woodlands.

Traprock ridges also have

very dry, rocky summits typically vegetated by stunted oaks, redcedars, bearberry, and a forest floor of the handsome, tall, bottlebrush grass. These more open areas are home to species like the Prairie and Blue-winged Warblers, along with other birds typical of open forests like the Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

“Central Connecticut is quite geologically distinct from the rest of the state...”

The Newsletter of
Bird Conservation Research, Inc.

90 Liberty Highway
Putnam, CT 06260

Phone: 860 928-2178

E-mail: mail@
birdconservationresearch.org

Bird Conservation Research, Inc.

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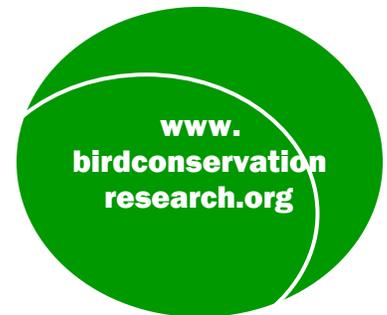
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Trustees Michael Curtis and Ron Tillen team with Tom Prescher to get in a little winter bird watching at South Cove, Old Saybrook.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It is again time for our annual membership drive, so soon you will be receiving a member renewal form in the mail. Memberships provide a significant por-

tion of our annual operating funds, so in order for us to expand our programs we need your continued support.

Please help BCR by renew-

ing your membership. Membership applications and payment options are also available at www.birdconservation-research.org.