

# BIRD CONSERVATION

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 3 JULY 2007

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Northwest Connecticut</i>	<b>1</b>
<i>Forest Floor Inhabitants</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>New Findings</i>	<b>3</b>
<i>Membership Renewal</i>	<b>4</b>

## Board of Trustees

Marvin Haltzer,  
President

John J. Carta, Jr.

Gregory M. Castanza

Michael P. Curtis

Thomas Prescher

Judith Radasch

Katherine Sheldon

Ronald J. Tillen

Donald E. Williams

\*\*\*\*\*

Robert J. Craig, Director

## SUMMER SURVEYS OF NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT



**Purple mountain majesty ...  
reigns across the peaks leading to the summit of Mt. Algo in Kent, Connecticut.**

The cool, dry spring and early summer weather provided ideal conditions for conducting forest bird surveys. An unprecedented 28 sites were studied in northwestern Connecticut—a large and heavily forested region of the state.

With completion of this winter's re-surveys of the

region, only one year will remain before the *Forest Bird Survey of Southern New England* is complete. Upon completion, the enormous amounts of data gathered will be analyzed and developed into a definitive view of the region's forest bird resources.

In the meantime, analysis is underway on four years

of data already gathered in eastern Connecticut. Works in progress include studies of bird diversity and population density, studies of the seasonal community dynamics and studies of habitat use by individual bird species.

## INHABITANTS OF THE FOREST FLOOR

**“If we go far enough back into Earth history, we can trace the lineage of birds to the amphibians.”**



The orange juvenile (Red Eft) phase of the Red-spotted Newt is found abundantly in the moist, mountainous forests of northwestern Connecticut.

If we go far enough back into Earth history, we can trace the lineage of birds to the amphibians— the first backboned animals to bridge the divide between water and land. So, let us digress...

New England’s only “true” salamander, the Red-spotted Newt is unusual among our resident amphibians in having a terrestrial juvenile and aquatic adult phase. The bright orange juvenile is also distinctive in being conspicuously present on the floor of mountainous forests, where it travels about on leaf litter rather than beneath it like other salamanders. One reason why the species is able to do this is that its skin is toxic and unpalatable to most predators, including birds.

with black speckles. This change signals the beginning of the adult phase, when individuals return to the water.

This summer during bird surveys, we encountered newts abundantly in the cool and moist forests we studied. While conducting surveys, we had the opportunity to photograph the species in the process of changing from juvenile to adult. For those readers receiving the online color version of this newsletter, the dramatic change in appearance from juvenile to adult will be evident.

The orangy “Red Eft” is a juvenile, air breathing phase that develops from an aquatic, water breathing larva. After spending up to three years as a juvenile, the orange begins to fade to tan and under parts become yellowish



The yellow and tan of this Red-spotted Newt indicates that it is in the process of metamorphosing from a terrestrial juvenile to an aquatic adult.

## THIS SUMMER'S NEW FINDINGS

The eventful summer of 2007 produced a range of rarities, notable sightings and new insights. As is always the case, large numbers of hours in the field yielded the unexpected or, in the language of statisticians, the low probability observations.

A highlight of the summer season was discovery of the nest of a Black Vulture. Once found only from southern New Jersey south, the species has rapidly ranged north over the past decade, and it is now found regularly, albeit still rarely, in western parts of Connecticut.

Another stunning change from findings of previous years was the sheer abundance of nesting Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. In the 1970s the species was largely absent as a summer resident in Connecticut, although a small population had established itself in northwestern parts of the state. It now ranks as the most abundant woodpecker of that region, far outnumbering the Downy Woodpecker, which in the rest of Connecticut is the most abundant species. There was also some indication that the Downy Woodpecker was least common in areas where the Sapsucker was most common, suggesting that competitive interaction between the species may be occurring. A similar population decline occurred in



**Satan's Kingdom:**  
the deep gorge through which the Farmington River passes in New Hartford, was the starting point for one of our summer surveys of forest birds. It was home to some of the region's typically northern-associated species.

Black-capped Chickadees after the Tufted Titmouse first invaded northwestern Connecticut in the 1960s.

Still another striking change that has occurred in northwestern Connecticut is the population expansion of the Black-throated Blue Warbler, which now ranks as one of the region's commonest species. In the 1970s it was far more local in its occurrence, being found particularly in the

most mountainous regions along the New York-Massachusetts border.

Other notable observations were the continued northward range expansion of the Red-bellied Woodpecker and Worm-eating Warbler and the southward range expansion of the Common Raven.

**“Another stunning change from findings of previous years was the sheer abundance of nesting Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers.”**



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.

## Membership

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Regular member
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$35 Family membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 Sustaining member
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Contributor
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 250 Patron
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 500 Benefactor
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 1000 Grand benefactor

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_



The drab Least Flycatcher, an inhabitant of young forest and forest openings, is a comparatively rare bird in the forests of northwestern Connecticut. However, it occurred there more frequently than in other regions of the state.



## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

If you have not yet done so, please support our annual membership drive by returning your member renewal form. Your memberships have recently purchased for us the latest in

statistical analysis software, paid our student interns, and helped defray our considerable travel expenses. In order to expand our programs we need your continued support.

Please help bird conservation by renewing your membership. Membership applications and payment options are also available at [www.birdconservation-research.org](http://www.birdconservation-research.org).