

BIRD CONSERVATION

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FOREST BIRD SURVEY YIELDS ADDITIONAL POPULATION ESTIMATES



Although not often thought of a forest bird, the *Chipping Sparrow* is an inhabitant of forest edge and even small forest openings.

Ongoing computations of bird populations continue to reveal a large scale view of bird densities across southern New England. We are presently nearing the half

way point in our calculations.

Estimating populations is a painstaking process that involves repeatedly running the same set of computations while

slightly varying parameters in the equations. When a best fitting mathematical model is found, the estimate is made.

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FOREST BIRDS- CONTINUED



**The Veery is one of the most abundant forest birds in southern New England.
This photo is of a typical ground nest.**

“Ongoing computations of bird populations continue to reveal a large scale view of bird densities ...”

(Continued from page 1)

The most recent population estimates are the following:

Brown Creeper

Summer (males):

Northeast CT: 3003
Southeast CT: 989
Central CT: 1744
Northwest CT: 3148
Southwest CT: 338
Rhode Island: 2344

Winter (individuals):

Northeast CT: 6774
Southeast CT: 30,773
Central CT: 24,065
Northwest CT: 15,619
Southwest CT: 5493
Rhode Island: 14,953

White-breasted Nuthatch

Summer (individuals):

Northeast CT: 20,895
Southeast CT: 14,921
Central CT: 20,154
Northwest CT: 10,444
Southwest CT: 8635
Rhode Island: 12,095

Winter (individuals):

Northeast CT: 22,566
Southeast CT: 23,852
Central CT: 31,684
Northwest CT: 17,368
Southwest CT: 15,012
Rhode Island: 19,812

FIELD TRIPS



Rafts of eiders and scoters were present off the rocks at Sachuest Point, RI.

A mid-winter field trip to Sachuest Point, Rhode Island was well attended and produced a large number of wintering birds, particularly waterfowl.

The highlights of the trip were two Snowy Owls—one of which sat on a coastal dune and another of which perched on an offshore rock looking over the rafts of ocean-going ducks that surrounded it.

Large numbers of Common Eiders were present as well, mixed with scoters of two species, as

well as considerable numbers of Harlequin Ducks. Sachuest is about the southernmost wintering point for eastern populations of this latter species.

There was considerable discussion about one of the eiders, which appeared to be a female King Eider—much more difficult to identify than the male of the species. Wintering King Eiders do appear with some regularity in the Sachuest area.

Other notable species included the Great Cor-

morant, Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Glaucous Gull and Purple Sandpiper.

A spring trip is planned for the near future, so stay tuned...

“A mid-winter field trip to Sachuest point, Rhode Island was well attended and produced a large number of wintering birds.”

Bird Conservation Research Blog

Recent news from Bird Conservation Research, Inc. about its work on the conservation of New England's birds and on the promotion of environmental education.



AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH: BIAS IN SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATION

Science should be about truth and truth alone; not what is expedient, not turf protection, not money, not politics, not prestige, not career advancement. Of course, all we'd need to do, if we could, would be to quiz Galileo about his experiences with conducting science to know that other considerations have long entered into scientific publication.

A clue that bias remains and perhaps has increased in scientific publication is in the proliferation of 14 author papers in even ornithological journals. It's hard to imagine that political factors are not at play for this many individuals to be claiming manuscript authorship. I had long thought that ornithology was immune to such phenomena, there being no money to speak of in ornithological research, but I've been forced to reassess this view because factors other than money can also be potent biasing agents.

Here's a personal example: ten years ago, I sent off for publication a manuscript about endangered species designation. It concerned a field in which I had worked since the early 1970s, so it was one in which I had significant experience. I was fully aware that the topic was controversial and would likely elicit vigorous debate among peer reviewers, but when the reviews arrived their content was beyond this. They bordered on if not crossed the line into hysteria. The most telling of these was by a reviewer who wished the ms. rejected because his group had the same ideas and should be allowed to publish them first. That group, I learned, was part of a new and well-connected national initiative on bird conservation. I had unknowingly tread on their toes. To be sure, some of my findings were not politically correct- but again, science is about truth and not about political expediency or bureaucracies established about a particular paradigm. Three years passed while I searched for a publishing venue. Publication only came when I sent the ms. to a journal abroad. Notably, that paper has gone on to be one of the more frequently viewed in that journal's history.

Of course, this is only a single instance from a single individual. Any journal editor will tell you that things can on occasion go wrong with peer review. The question is, to what degree does bias affect scientific publication in general? The evidence from a growing body of literature is that bias is indeed pervasive across scientific disciplines. To summarize some of the notable findings, papers with negative results, with women authors, with foreign authors, and with authors who are not celebrities or from prestigious institutions are at a significant disadvantage during editorial review.

(To view the complete transcript of this blog, go to <http://birdconservationresearch.blogspot.com/2012/03/inconvenient-truth-bias-in-scientific.html>)

*“Science
should be
about truth
and truth
alone...”*

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Bird Conservation Research, Inc.

Membership

- \$25 Regular member
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Memberships provide a significant part of the funds necessary to conduct our research and

public education activities. Membership applications and payment options are also available at www.birdconservation-research.org.