

# BIRD CONSERVATION

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## THIRTY-THREE YEARS OF YALE FOREST SURVEYS



Populations of the Tufted Titmouse have quadrupled at Yale Forest since 1985.

**B**CR Director Craig began investigations into the population densities of Connecticut forest birds in 1985 at the sprawling Yale Forest holdings of Union-Ashford-Eastford. This study was the pilot for the *Forest Bird Survey of Southern New England* that began in 2001. The

results of this latter study were published as [\*Forest Birds of Connecticut and Rhode Island\*](#) this past year and are now available as an open-access e-book.

The pilot study established ten one mile-long transects, and last summer we re-surveyed

the same routes using the same procedures as in 1985. An additional re-survey will occur this summer in order to characterize year-to-year variation in results.

Much happened during the 33-year time interval,

*(Continued on page 2)*

# YALE FOREST

## -CONTINUED

*“2018 data have now been compiled, and the number of the population changes that has occurred is striking.”*



Pileated Woodpecker populations have also grown since 1985, possibly in part because of the die-off of White Ash in our region. Dead trees such as this one are actively fed upon by these woodpeckers.

including extensive selective logging and re-growth of areas previously logged. The change in habitat affected bird populations of the region, but other changes cannot be attributed to direct habitat change. In some instances, southern species ranged north into the area and in others northern species ranged south.

2018 data have now been compiled, and the number of the population changes that has occurred is striking. The

southerly-distributed Tufted Titmouse, for example had barely begun to invade the high elevation Yale Forest in 1985. Its numbers in 2018 were four times that of 1985. In contrast, its close relative, the Black-capped Chickadee, declined by about a third. The southerly-distributed Northern Cardinal also dramatically increased in numbers over this time period.

The northerly distributed Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, virtually absent in

1985, was the most common woodpecker in 2018, whereas the Hairy Woodpecker declined by two-thirds.

Other species undergoing large population increases included many forest interior species like the Red-eyed Vireo, Veery and Ovenbird. Moreover, the Pine Warbler, absent in 1985, was among the most abundant warblers in 2018.



# CURLEW STUDY ENTERS NEXT PHASE



These male Eskimo Curlews differ dramatically in back spotting, with heavy spotting typical of spring birds and light spotting typical of fall birds.

Our background study of the Eskimo Curlew that detailed aspects of the species' external anatomy, plumages and historic distribution has been accepted for publication and is presently available as a [preprint](#) document from the BCR web site.

This study demonstrates that males and females are distinguishable particularly through bill measurements and extent of back spotting. It further demonstrates that lightly spotted individuals predominate among later fall migrants, suggesting that such individuals are juveniles. An unreported

plumage state that lacks the characteristic Y markings on the breast is also described, along with important historic data on the breeding and migratory distribution of the species.

Based on insights gained through this study, we are presently working toward launching an expedition to the coast of southern Labrador— the principal North American staging ground for fall migrants— to initiate long-term efforts to produce definitive evidence for the continued survival of the species. We plan to survey different portions of the coast each year in order to maximize the probability of locating any remaining flocks of

migrants. In keeping with the BCR tradition of involving students in scientific research, we are also planning to employ students as part of the survey team.

We also are developing plans to use satellite imagery to help pinpoint prime migratory habitat in Labrador. We hope to use ground observations to correlate to satellite imagery so that we can prepare a map of key habitat for the entire region.

*“... now  
available as a  
‘preprint’  
document  
from our  
publishing  
partner, Arts  
and Academic  
Publishing.”*

# ENDANGERED SPECIES COURSE

*“Why bother?  
The  
philosophical  
underpin-  
nings of  
endangered  
species  
conservation.  
”*



This radio-collared Guam Rail was part of a re-establishment effort for a species that is presently extinct in the wild.

**O**ur newest high level environmental science educational offering will be an upper level college course on endangered species conservation. The course will include the following major topics:

1. Why bother? The philosophical underpinnings of endangered species conservation.
2. When is a species endangered?
3. Global vs. local perspectives about endangerment.
4. Population genetics of rare species.
5. Population viability analysis.
6. The role of exploitation in bringing about endangerment.
7. The role of disease.
8. The role of density-dependent and density-independent events.
9. The role of habitat.
10. Critical habitat.
11. Endangered species recovery plans.
12. Habitat restoration.
13. Translocation.
14. Captive breeding.
15. Resurrecting extinct species.



# FIELD STATION UPDATE



Autumn sun rising over uncut hay— wet conditions this year led many farmers to abandon their fall hay crop as fields were too waterlogged to cut.

**H**abitat management efforts at the BCR field station have been hampered by wet conditions occurring since last June, although in some instances the rain has been a plus. Major efforts at establishing native shrubs and fruiting trees about the edges of our fields have met with great success, as all of our transplants survived their moves. We now have multiple specimens of species like

Shadbush, Spicebush, Sweet Pepper Bush and Striped Maples growing in places where, a year ago, there were only exotic weeds.

Winter activities will include continuation of efforts to eliminate diseased ash trees from the property and replace them with wildlife-attractive fruiting species. We are also working to thin the presence of other species of trees from field borders and to complete

clearing the borders of exotic weeds.

Bird banding will start in late February when we will initiate efforts to capture woodcocks that breed on the property. We also will be continuing to band migrating sparrows and other species characteristic of hayfields and field borders.

***“Major efforts at establishing native shrubs and fruiting trees about the edges of our fields have met with great success...”***

The Newsletter of  
Bird Conservation Research, Inc.

P.O. Box 209  
Pomfret, CT 06258

Web:  
[www.birdconservationresearch.org](http://www.birdconservationresearch.org)

E-mail: [mail@birdconservationresearch.org](mailto:mail@birdconservationresearch.org)

# Bird

## Conservation Research, Inc.

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*Don't sleep through renewing your membership.*

## MEMBERSHIP

If you have not yet become a member of BCR, it is never too late. Memberships remain one of our principal means of funding the projects that

we conduct, so please consider joining us. Membership applications and contribution options are available at [www.birdconservation-research.org](http://www.birdconservation-research.org).

[research.org](http://www.birdconservation-research.org).