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Yale Forest Surveys Expand to Winter

Downy Woodpeckers are about as common in winter as summer in southern New England.

Analysis of this summer's bird studies in Yale-Myers Forest is still ongoing and is on track to produce a report this year. In addition, BCR is initiating winter studies on the 10 one mile-long transects first surveyed in 1985.

During the 2001-2009 *Forest Bird Survey of Southern New England,* five additional two-mile long routes were established in this same location. These transects are to be repeated as well. Although the new surveys do not cover the same 34-year time period as the summer studies, they will still provide a 19 year update on these previous studies.

(Continued on page 2)

YALE FOREST
-CONTINUED

	IV%	Population trend	Habitat
Black-capped Chickadee	113.6	increase	generalist
White-breasted Nuthatch	108.7	increase	generalist
Tufted Titmouse	107.6	increase	generalist
Downy Woodpecker	103.6	n/c	generalist
Golden-crowned Kinglet	102.6	increase	interior
American Goldfinch	96.4	increase	generalist
American Crow	91.1	increase	edge
Blue Jay	84.7	decline	generalist
American Robin	84.2	increase	edge
Hairy Woodpecker	76.3	n/c	generalist
Red-bellied Woodpecker	73.6	increase	interior
Pileated Woodpecker	67.8	increase	interior
Northern Cardinal	60.6	increase	edge
Brown Creeper	56.1	decline	interior
Dark-eyed Junco	55.7	increase	edge
Mourning Dove	50.2	n/c	edge
Red-tailed Hawk	37.7	increase	generalist
Pine Siskin	34.1	decline	generalist
Carolina Wren	34.0	increase	edge
Eastern Bluebird	26.1	increase	edge
Northern Flicker	25.9	increase	generalist
White-throated Sparrow	23.7	increase	edge
Common Raven	21.4	increase	generalist
Common Redpoll	21.0	n/c	generalist
Cedar Waxwing	17.0	n/c	edge
Red-shouldered Hawk	15.3	increase	generalist
Red-breasted Nuthatch	15.1	increase	interior
Song Sparrow	14.7	increase	edge
Winter Wren	14.6	decline	interior
Ruffed Grouse	12.2	decline	edge
Wild Turkey	9.4	increase	edge
Gray Catbird	9.4	increase	edge
Yellow-rumped Warbler	7.4	decline	edge
Sharp-shinned Hawk	6.1	decline	generalist
Easterm Towhee	5.6	increase	edge
Red Crossbill	4.3	n/c	generalist
Pine Grosbeak	3.7	decline	generalist
Northern Goshawk	3.2	decline	generalist

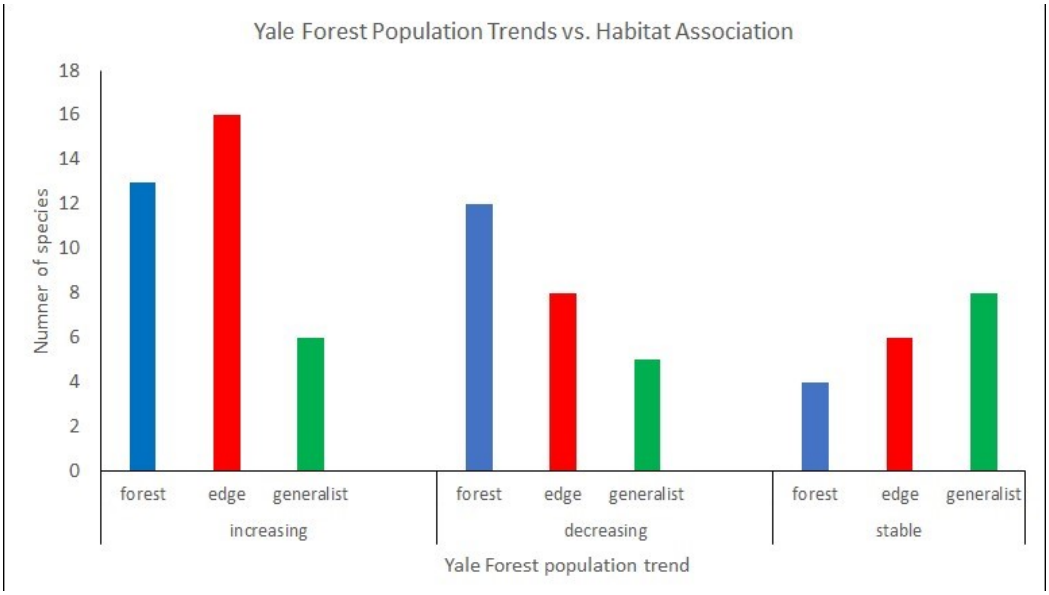
Data from the *Forest Bird Survey of Southern New England* illustrate that generalists are of among the most important of wintering species.

"Winter communities characteristic-ally experience far more annual variability than summer communities."

In previous winter studies, habitat generalists predominated among the most important species encountered. A majority of species also were experiencing long term population increases, with declines predominating only among the least frequently occurring species. Importance is calculated as a function of not only population density but also frequency of occurrence and community biomass.

Winter communities characteristically exper-ience far more annual variability than summer communities. This is related in part to the more nomadic nature of winter species, with some invading from northern areas only during certain years and other species leaving our area especially during hard winters.

Population Trends vs. Habitat Association



Populations of particularly edge-associated species appear to be profiting from forest management at Yale-Myers Forest.

"...edge-associated species primarily increased in both summer and winter."

Our studies of the summering birds of Yale Forest have already shown some distinct patterns of population trends among species associated with major habitat categories. Particularly species that inhabit forest edge and forest openings have increased since 1985. In contrast, inhabitants of forest interior include those most often declining.

Contrasting with data from wintering species encountered on the *Forest Bird Survey of Southern New England*, generalist species did not show a strong trend toward increasing. However, edge-associated species primarily increased in both summer and winter.

As we survey this winter, we will evaluate in greater detail and with more directly comparable data population trends in the region's forest birds. As with our present analyses of summer data, our ultimate goal is to uncover the reasons behind the trends. By examining changes in habitat over time as well as by examining factors like continental population trends, we hope to determine the driving forces behind regional population dynamics.

Forest Management

Director Craig cuts down an 85 foot White Ash at the forest border.

"Wildlife management and forest management are intimately linked."

Wildlife management and forest management are intimately linked. Our diverse forest bird community has members that are adapted to specific features of the forest environment. Some are associated with particular vegetation types, whereas others are associated with stands of specific age and configuration with other types of habitats.

One of the reasons why we believe bird populations are increasing at Yale Forest is because active forest management produces a heterogeneous forest landscape that proves particularly advantageous for birds. More species can be supported at larger populations when a variety of forest types are present.

Using similar logic, we are managing the wooded borders of our field stating to improve habitat diversity and quality. For the past few years, we have been focusing particularly on removing alien weeds and replacing them with native understory plants. We have also been removing diseased White Ashes and replacing them with fruiting and nut-bearing species with high wildlife value.

Field Station Update

Soybeans are planted not only for their fruits but also to help make the vegetable plot sustainably harvestable.

Agriculture, when practiced organically, relies on multiple strategies to produce viable crops. Soil fertility is maintained not only by addition of compost and manure, but also by growing crops that enhance soil nitrates. Chief among these are bean relatives, so each year we plant a variety of beans to improve soil fertility.

Some bean relatives like yellow sweet clover and alfalfa can be grown as cover crops– crops planted during a year when a field remains fallow or planted early and then tilled under before planting a main crop– doing so not only enhances soil fertility but also improves the capacity of soils to hold water.

Cover crops can also benefit wildlife, particularly birds, by providing food and cover for them. Many species of ground feeding birds eat not only seeds and fruits but also insects, so attracting birds with cover crops can produce a secondary benefit of having them reduce populations of pest insects.

"...attracting birds with cover crops can produce a secondary benefit of having them reduce populations of pest insects."

The Newsletter of
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