

BIRD CONSERVATION

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Forest fragmentation</i>	1
<i>Fragmentation—continued</i>	2
<i>Bobolink</i>	3
<i>Field station update</i>	4
<i>Mockingbirds</i>	5
<i>Membership</i>	6

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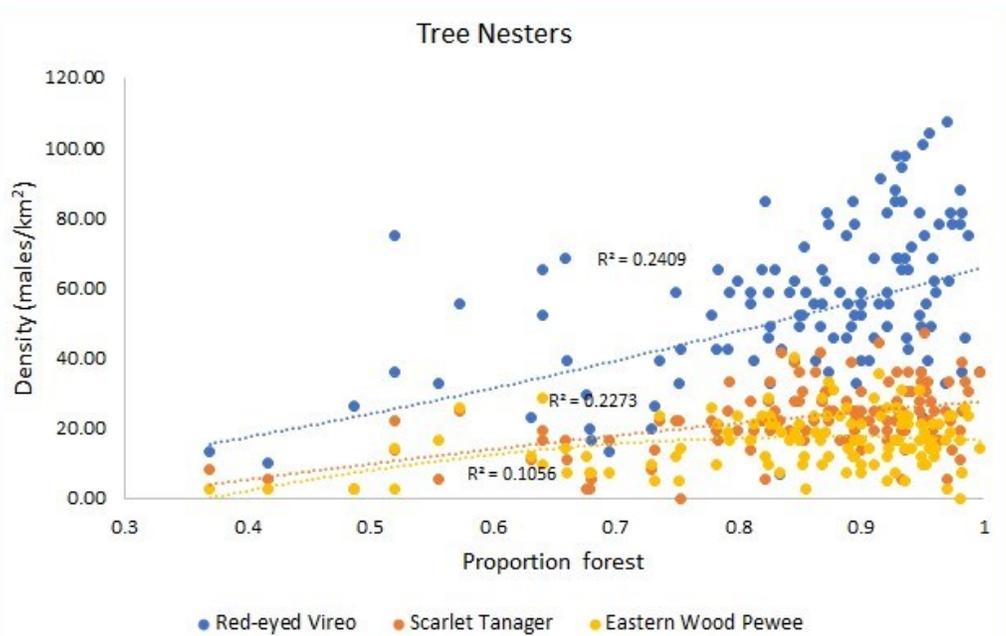
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FOREST FRAGMENTATION STUDY NEARS COMPLETION



The average density of the Red-eyed Vireo and Scarlet Tanager increases as amount of forest grows, although the Eastern Wood Pewee shows a weaker relationship to forest cover.

The multi-year study into the effects of habitat fragmentation on forest birds in Connecticut is nearing completion. We will soon be posting a review draft of the results to the BCR web site.

This study performed a comparative analysis of four landscape measures to determine if any one predominated in influencing the structure of bird communities. These measures, made

within an 800 m wide corridor along each of the 121 study sites, were 1) perimeter/area of forest cover—a measure of how fragmented the forests were—2) amount of core

(Continued on page 2)

FRAGMENTATION

-CONTINUED

“This study performed a comparative analysis of four landscape measures to determine if any one predominated in influencing the structure of bird communities.”



This study site in Weston, CT shows the central yellow line of the survey transect and the 800 m wide corridor around it used for making landscape measures. The bright green is core forest and the purple is forest not within core forest. The pink areas are roads, houses and other non-forest habitats.

forest, defined as the amount of forest more than 100 m from an edge, 3) the total amount of forest present, and 4) the amount of human-associated and natural forest breaks present.

In addition to these landscape measures, we also gathered data at each of our 1,815 survey point on the forest type, soil moisture, canopy cover, understory density, stand age, elevation and vertical vegetation complexity. These measures were

also compared to characteristics of the bird community to determine if these habitat features were more or less important than landscape features in influencing the communities.

The graph on page 1 shows the responses of three common tree-nesting species to the proportion of the study area covered by forest. It shows that their densities all rise with increasing forest cover, although the effect for

the Eastern Wood Pewee is weak. In this case, the pewee's increasing densities are primarily associated with more deciduous forests and more closed forest canopies.

BOBOLINKS BEGIN BREEDING AT THE FIELD STATION



This female Bobolink was the first of its species to breed successfully in the field station hayfield.

The BCR field station has been undergoing intensive management for nine years. During that time, we have greatly diminished the extent to which invasive exotic plants have extended into what was once hayfield. As these were removed, we planted valued forage grasses like red fescue (*Festuca rubra*, orchard grass (*Dactylus glomerata*) and timothy (*Phleum pratense*) to replace the alien shrubs. As a consequence, our hayfield is much more extensive than it once was.

Hayfield extent is an important consideration when attempting to attract bird species to live in these environments, as some species like the Bobolink do not recognize small hayfields as breeding habitat. Since expanding our hayfield, Bobolink males have appeared each year, but until this breeding season none were successful at finding a mate and so did not remain. However, this year a male found a mate, and shortly thereafter we captured and banded this female. She had a well developed brood patch on her abdomen—bare skin that is pressed against

eggs to incubate them, so we were confident that nesting was occurring. By mid-June, the juveniles were out and we observed them foraging in our vegetable plots and flower gardens.

One large advantage we have over commercial agricultural operations is that we can delay our first hay cutting until July, by which time all nestlings have fledged. In commercial operations that must maximize hay yield and nutritive value, the first cutting of hay occurs in late May-early June.

“One large advantage we have over commercial agricultural operations is that we can delay our first hay cutting until July...”

FIELD STATION UPDATE

“Although typically found in nature as a large shrub, it can grow to small tree size in appropriate habitats...”



Viburnum lentago is a native fleshy-fruited shrub or small tree of high wildlife value. It is able to compete aggressively with alien invasive species.

This spring, work continued on enhancing the presence of native shrubs and trees within our field border. The species in the photo above is one of those that we have encouraged by releasing it from competition with alien invasive species. It is one of the natives that is capable of out-competing and even replacing aliens in the landscape, so it is a good one to encourage.

Known by the common

name nannyberry, it is also a species of high wildlife value in that it flowers heavily in spring and produces a dense crop of edible fruits by late summer. It is such an attractive species that it is often brought into cultivation as a garden shrub.

Although typically found in nature as a large shrub, it can grow to small tree size in appropriate habitats such as those with richer, moister soils bordering swamps. Our largest specimen occurs in moister soil near a

stream and is presently about 10 feet tall, although it may reach as much as 18 feet tall in such a location.

THE MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY



The Mockingbird successfully bred for the first time at the field station, where it nested in the garden holly tree at the upper right in this photo.

The Mockingbird family, the Mimidae, is a New World family of perching birds. Among the members of the family are some that mimic the calls of other bird species. One of these mimics is a new nester at the field station—the Northern Mockingbird. A pair successfully produced young, one of which is in the image above.

In New England, we have three species of mockingbird relatives—the one above as well as the Gray Catbird and Brown Thrasher. Several pairs of catbirds

nest on the property each year, although only one pair of thrashers is present.

All three species are inhabitants of earlier successional landscapes, with the Gray Catbird being the most versatile in habitat requirements. It will nest in field borders, shrub swamps and gardens as well as in small forest openings.

The Brown Thrasher is the most habitat restricted of the three, and is associated solely with early successional old fields and upland shrubby areas adjacent

to fields, such as we have at the field station. We manage part of our field border as an open shrubby environment, and it is here that our one pair of thrashers occurs each year.

The Northern Mockingbird is the most associated with human habitats and can even be found nesting in cities. It often inhabits gardens, although it also occurs in shrubby overgrown fields, particularly where thickets of thorn-bearing plants like raspberries or multiflora rose are present.

“The Northern Mockingbird is the most associated with human habitats and can even be found nesting in cities.”

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Bird Conservation Research, Inc.

Membership

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A Trumpeter Swan appeared opposite the field station this spring.

MEMBERSHIP

It is time to renew your membership for 2023. If you have not yet become a member, you may do so online through GoFundMe ([https://](https://www.gofundme.com/f/1nqjss)

www.gofundme.com/f/1nqjss). 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 also available on our web site: <https://www.birdconservationresearch.org/membership.php>.