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MORRISTOWN NHP • ROOSEVELT-VANDERBILT NHS • SAINT-GAUDENS NHS • SAUGUS IRON WORKS NHS • SARATOGA NHP • WEIR FARM NHS

Surveying is for the Birds

Results of Annual Breeding Landbird Survey

Background

Using volunteer birders, the Northeast Temperate Network (NETN) and the Vermont Center for Ecostudies (VCE) has been monitoring breeding landbirds in most network parks since 2006. On a broad scale, all 11 network parks are located within the temperate deciduous forest biome. At a finer scale, the parks range across four Bird Conservation Regions (Minute Man lies in the Appalachian Mountains BCR). Bird Conservation Regions, developed by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, are ecologically defined units that provide a consistent spatial framework for bird conservation across North American landscapes. By employing broad scale units that are ecologically meaningful to bird populations, conservation efforts can be tailored to support groups of species throughout the heart of their ranges. Bird Conservation Regions are being used to help assign “conservation priority” scores for bird species. Each BCR has its own unique list of “priority” species ranked by conservation importance according to a standardized set of criteria.

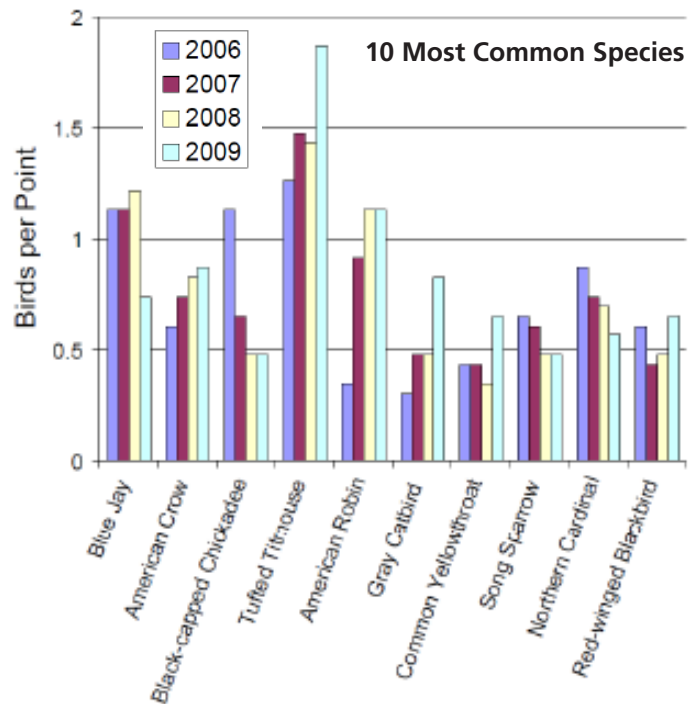
Purpose and Scope

The recently released report summarizes data collected from 2006 through 2009. As with any long-term study, as more years of data accumulate, interpreting study results becomes more relevant and meaningful. Therefore, it is important to not read too much into the results of only a few years of data

collection. NETN and VCE are currently working



Common Yellowthroat
Cephas photo



to improve quality control procedures for this project, including a thorough review of existing data. The results presented here may change slightly in future reports if data errors are detected and subsequently corrected.

Results and Findings

Three study sites were established at the park and have been surveyed annually since 2006. Two of these sites (The Bluff and Miriam's Corner) consist of eight point counts each, and one site (Hartwell Tavern) consists of seven point counts. The Bluff was surveyed twice in all years except 2006. Including repeat surveys, a total of 471 individual birds were detected in 2009, compared to 347 in 2008, 384 in 2007, and 286 in 2006. A total of 56 species were recorded during the four survey years, with an average abundance of 13.13 birds per point (excluding the repeat surveys). In 2009, both total abundance (15.78 birds per point) and species richness (47) increased over 2008, thanks to six new species being detected. A total of 10 species of regional conservation concern were detected during the four survey years, including four species that were detected in all years (Eastern Wood-Pewee, Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, and Rose-Breasted Grosbeak). Tufted Titmouse, American Robin, and Blue Jay were the most abundant species detected.

56 species detected in the park.

Alder Flycatcher	House Finch
American Crow	House Sparrow
American Goldfinch	House Wren
American Redstart	Indigo Bunting
American Robin	Killdeer
Baltimore Oriole	Mourning Dove
Barn Swallow	Northern Cardinal
Black-billed Cuckoo	Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted Flicker)
Black-capped Chickadee	Northern Mockingbird
Blue Jay	Ovenbird
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Pine Warbler
Blue-winged Warbler	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Brown-headed Cowbird	Red-eyed Vireo
Canada Goose	Red-tailed Hawk
Carolina Wren	Red-winged Blackbird
Cedar Waxwing	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Chimney Swift	Scarlet Tanager
Chipping Sparrow	Song Sparrow
Common Grackle	Swamp Sparrow
Common Yellowthroat	Tufted Titmouse
Downy Woodpecker	Veery
Eastern Bluebird	Warbling Vireo
Eastern Kingbird	White-breasted Nuthatch
Eastern Phoebe	Wild Turkey
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Wood Thrush
Gray Catbird	Yellow Warbler
Great Blue Heron	
Great Crested Flycatcher	
Hairy Woodpecker	
Hermit Thrush	

More Information

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Full Report online at:
<http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/NETN/monitor/monitor.cfm>



Species Spotlight: Eastern Bluebird

The Eastern Bluebird, *Sialia sialis*, is a small thrush found in open woodlands, farmlands and orchards, and most recently can be spotted in suburban areas. They occur across eastern North America and south as far as Nicaragua. Birds that live farther north and in the west of the range tend to lay more eggs than eastern and southern birds. The population of the Eastern Bluebird

declined seriously enough in the past century to reach critical status by the mid-1900s. The decline was due to habitat destruction through loss of fields and nesting cavities in split-rail fences; clearing of dead trees and nest predation by House Sparrows and European Starlings - both of which are non-native, introduced species.

The species was rescued by a network of birding enthusiasts who erected nesting boxes for Bluebirds, with close monitoring necessary to prevent House Sparrows from nesting in them. They remain thoughtful of conservation, however, with competition still prevalent from other species (e.g. Tree Swallows, which are a native species and which also nest in cavities) and in certain states of the US they can still be difficult to spot. It is worth noting that due to the increase in their numbers in the past few decades, they are not protected under CITES or U.S. Endangered Species Act.

Approximately two-thirds of the diet of an adult eastern bluebird consists of insects and other invertebrates. The remainder of the bird's diet is made up of wild fruits. Favored insect foods include grasshoppers, crickets, katydids, and beetles. Other food items include earthworms, spiders, millipedes, centipedes, sow bugs, and snails. Fruits are especially important when insects are scarce in the winter months. Some preferred winter food sources include dogwood, hawthorn, wild grape, and sumac and hackberry seeds.



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