



The Early Bird Gets...Counted!

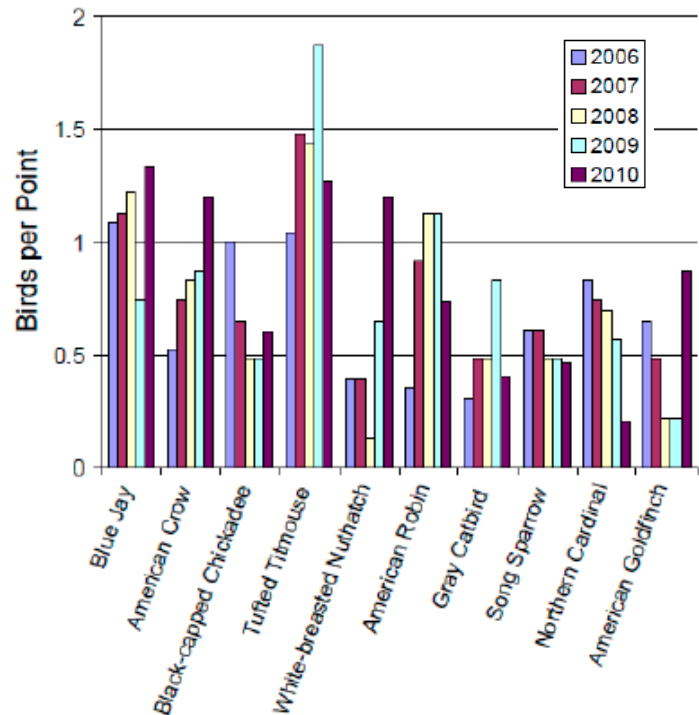
Results from 2010 Breeding Landbird Survey at Minute Man

Background

With the invaluable help of volunteer birders that traverse mosquito infested forests and who start their surveys even before the sun wakes up in the morning, 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 13 network parks are located within the temperate deciduous forest biome. At a finer scale, the parks range across four Bird Conservation Regions (BCR) with Minute Man lying in the Southern New England-Atlantic Forest BCR. BCR's, developed by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, are ecologically defined areas that provide a consistent framework for bird conservation across North America. Each BCR has its own unique list of "priority" species ranked by conservation importance according to a standardized set of criteria.

Purpose and Scope

This latest report summarizes data collected from 2006 through 2010. 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. Readers of the report should also treat the Ecological Integrity Assessment results as provisional because the assessment assumes that the bird community is completely characterized, and if a subset of species are rare and hard to detect, the results could be biased. Also, many NETN parks were founded with a primary objective to



The 10 most common species detected at Minute Man, 2006- 2010.

manage for the historical landscape rather than biological integrity or ecosystem structure and function; thus, management action may not always be warranted when some groups of bird species are rated "significant concern." In an attempt to better characterize the bird community at each park and reduce bias, the 2010 assessment results presented for each park were produced by combining data from all survey years at the park. In the future, NETN plans to work directly with park managers to produce a parallel assessment based on park management goals.

Results and Findings

Three study sites were established at the park in 2006. During 2010 surveys, observers detected a total of 205 birds of 34 species (15 point counts), compared to 471 of 48 species (31 point counts) in 2009, 347 of 36 species (27 point counts) in 2008, 380 of 39 species (31 point counts) in 2007, and 269 of 42 species (23 point counts) in 2006. Fifty-six total species were recorded over the 5 years of monitoring. Average abundance during the first site survey across all 5 years was 13.1 birds per point. In 2010, both total abundance (13.7 birds per point) and species richness (34) declined over 2009, but fewer points were surveyed in 2010.

56 Species Found in Minute Man

Alder Flycatcher	Red-winged Blackbird
American Crow	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
American Goldfinch	Scarlet Tanager
American Redstart	Song Sparrow
American Robin	Swamp Sparrow
Baltimore Oriole	Tufted Titmouse
Barn Swallow	Veery
Black-billed Cuckoo	Warbling Vireo
Black-capped Chickadee	White-breasted Nuthatch
Blue Jay	Wild Turkey
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Wood Thrush
Blue-winged Warbler	Yellow Warbler

A total of 10 species of regional conservation concern were detected during the 5-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. The park-wide forest avian Ecological Integrity Assessment (EIA) for all years combined at the park resulted in most categories ranking as

either “Caution” or “Significant Concern”. This result was not unexpected since the assessment was designed for forested landscapes and the park sits in an urbanized and highly fragmented landscape.

The EIA has been calculated for each site individually, and the results are provided in Appendix C of the report. For more information on findings for this park and all other Network parks, download the report from NETN’s Monitoring webpage.



Species Spotlight: Great-crested Flycatcher

The Great-crested Flycatcher can be visually identified by its slightly crested head, brown back, gray throat, yellow belly, rufous wings and tail, and pale brown base of its lower mandible. Its common habitats include open



Drew Weber photo

forests, orchards, and large trees in farm country. Generally a treetop hunter, the Great Crested Flycatcher spends very little time on the ground, and does not hop or walk, preferring to fly from place to place on the ground. Its loud “wee-EEP” calls often make it easier to hear than to see. The only eastern flycatcher that nests in cavities, it has the unusual habit of often using shed snake skins in its nest lining. Whether this is intended to frighten off predators or merely decorate the nest is not known.

This species is to woodlands what the Eastern Kingbird is to open country. Like the Kingbird, it is noisy, territorial, and aggressive, but even more colorful. Males often engage in aerial battles including clawing at one another and pulling out intruders’ feathers. Because of this aggressive personality, these birds are usually solitary or in pairs during the mating season.

They have a varied diet including beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, butterflies, dragonflies, katydids, small lizards, many fruits, and bees. Great Crested Flycatchers rely on other animals, especially woodpeckers, to make holes for them to live in. Sometimes they have to fight with squirrels or European Starlings over a nesting hole. Usually, the flycatcher loses. Squirrels also prey on baby flycatchers. Other predators of this bird include hawks, owls, and snakes.

More Information

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Full Report online at:

http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/NETN/monitor/flashmo_220_nature/monitor_flash.cfm



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