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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 at Saugus Iron Works NHS

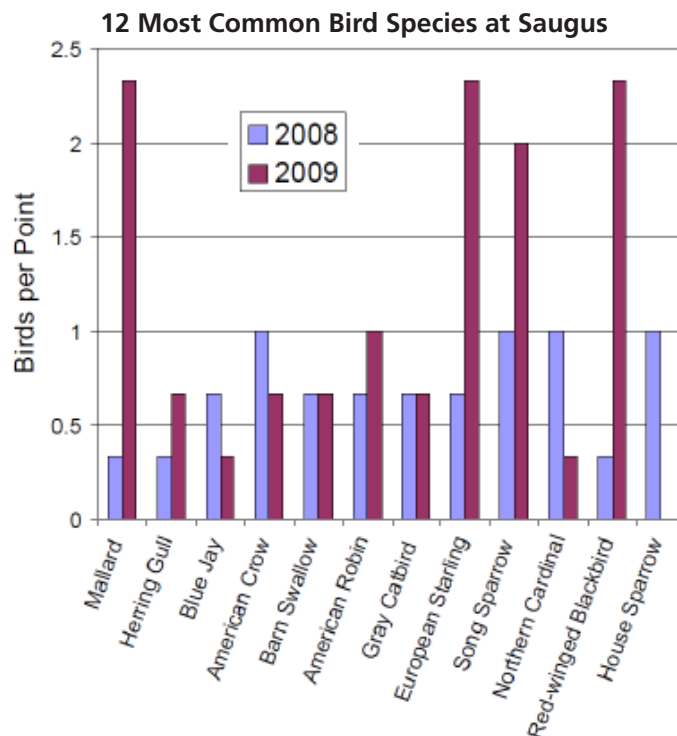
Background

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 (Saugus Iron Works lies in the New England/Mid-Atlantic Coast 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 in the park from 2008 and 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 couple years of data collection. NETN and VCE are

Northern
Cardinal
D. Hanak
photo



currently working 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.

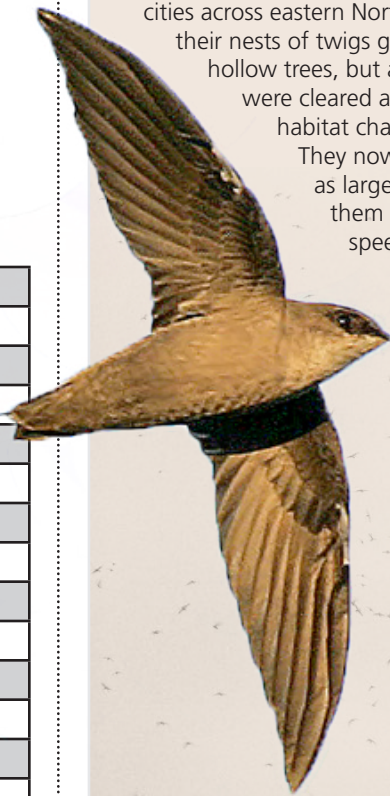
Results and Findings

Three point counts were established in 2008 in the park. A single survey of these three point counts was conducted during June 2008, and three surveys were conducted in 2009. Due to the limited number of point counts, multiple visits are recommended to increase sample size. Including repeat visits, a total of 151 individual birds of 32 species were recorded in 2009, compared to just 35 individuals of 21 species during the single survey in 2008. A total of 35 species have been detected at the park during the 2 years. There was a mean abundance of 14.33 birds per point (excluding repeat visits). In 2009, relative abundance increased from the previous year, while species richness of the first survey declined, despite the detection of five new species (Black-crowned Night Heron, Chimney Swift, Eastern Phoebe, Red-eyed

Vireo, and American Goldfinch). Two species of conservation concern (Chimney Swift and Baltimore Oriole) and three non-native species (Rock Pigeon, European Starling, and House Sparrow) were detected. Mallard, Song Sparrow, European Starling, and Red-winged Blackbird were the most commonly detected species. The park-wide Index of Biological Integrity (IBI) for both years combined at the park resulted in five categories ranked as “Caution” and eight ranked as “Significant Concern”. These results are not surprising considering the heavily urbanized location of this small park and the fact that the IBI was developed to assess the breeding bird

26 species detected in the park.

American Crow
American Goldfinch
American Robin
Baltimore Oriole
Barn Swallow
Belted Kingfisher
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Blue Jay
Chimney Swift
Common Grackle
Common Yellowthroat
Downy Woodpecker
Eastern Phoebe
European Starling
Gray Catbird
Herring Gull
House Sparrow
Mallard
Mourning Dove
Northern Cardinal
Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted Flicker)
Red-eyed Vireo
Red-winged Blackbird
Rock Pigeon
Song Sparrow
Tufted Titmouse



Species Spotlight: Chimney Swift

Often describes as a “flying cigar,” the Chimney Swift is rarely seen perched. Its high-pitched twittering is a familiar sound during summertime in the city as it darts and dashes high above, flying closely together in groups and catching small flying insects. Swifts make great natural controls over small biting insects that so annoy humans. Two parents and their noisy offspring will consume over 12,000 flying insect pests every day, including mosquitoes, gnats, termites and biting flies.

Their breeding season is from May through July near towns and cities across eastern North America. Originally, these birds made their nests of twigs glued together with glue-like saliva in large hollow trees, but as the old growth forests of the northeast were cleared along with suitable snags for nesting, their habitat changed from dense forest to urban jungle. They now nest mostly in man-made structures such as large, open chimneys. A keen observer can see them entering and exiting chimneys at a high speed, almost as if they were being shot out of a cannon.

Swifts are long distance migrants wintering mostly in eastern Peru, though other nesting locations in South America may exist.

Dan Kaiser photo

More Information

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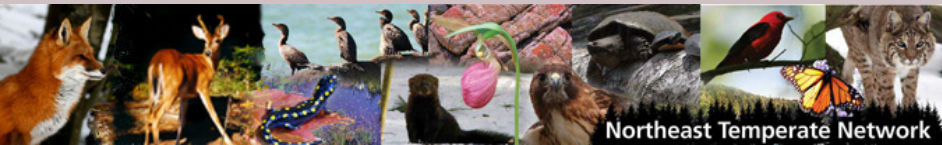
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Full Report online at:
<http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/NETN/monitor/monitor.cfm>



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