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The Early Bird Gets...Counted!

Results from 2010 Breeding Landbird Survey at Saugus Iron Works

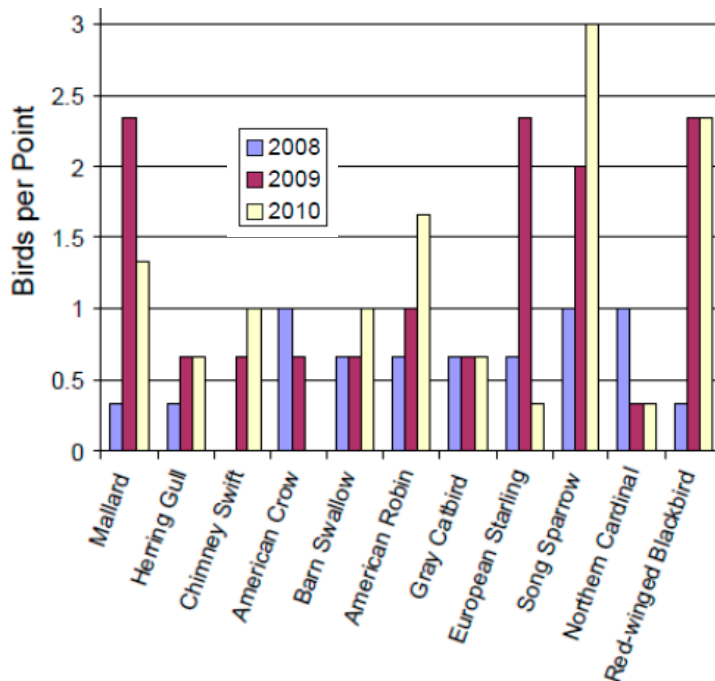
Background

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) have 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 the Iron Works lying in the Southern New England Mid-Atlantic Coast 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 2008 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 should also treat

of the report 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



The 10 most common species detected at Saugus, 2008 - 2010.

hard to detect, the results could be biased. Also, many NETN parks were founded with a primary objective to 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 point counts were established in the park in 2008. During 2010 surveys, volunteer observers detected a total of 103 individual birds of 29 species (six point counts), compared to 151 of 33 species (nine point counts) in 2009, and just 35 individuals of 21 species (3 point counts) during the single survey in 2008. The totals include detections from repeat site visits within a year and may include some double-counted individuals. A total of 33 species have been detected at the park during the 3 years. Average abundance during the first site visit was 15.8 birds per point. In 2010, relative abundance and species



Herring Gull
Bob Devlin photo

richness for the first survey increased from the previous year, thanks in part to the detection of seven new species: Canada Goose, Red-tailed Hawk, Spotted Sandpiper, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, House Wren, and Yellow Warbler. Three species of conservation concern (Chimney Swift, Eastern Kingbird, and Baltimore Oriole) and three non-native species (Rock Pigeon, European Starling,

and House Sparrow) were also detected. The park-wide forest avian Ecological Integrity Assessment for all 3 years combined at SAIR 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 tool was developed to assess the breeding bird

community of interior forests. 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.

33 Species Found in Saugus Iron Works

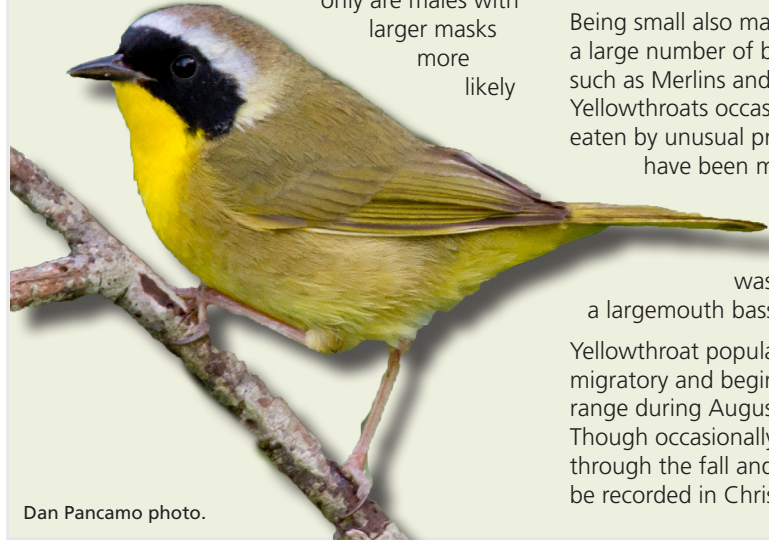
American Crow
American Goldfinch
American Robin
Baltimore Oriole
Barn Swallow
Belted Kingfisher
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Blue Jay
Canada Goose
Chimney Swift
Common Grackle
Common Yellowthroat
Downy Woodpecker
Eastern Kingbird
Eastern Phoebe
European Starling
Gray Catbird
Herring Gull
House Sparrow
House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



Species Spotlight:
Common Yellowthroat

If you spot a small bird with a bright yellow throat, black mask, and olive upperparts hopping from branch to branch in a thicket of shrubs in a wetland, chances are you’re looking at a Common Yellowthroat. This bird likes to frequent thick, brushy, wet areas such as the edges of fields, streamsides, and marshes. The Common Yellowthroat is a wood-warbler, and the only species in its genus that regularly occurs north of Mexico.

Considered a handsome bird by many people, the male Yellowthroat’s black mask is quite appealing to female Yellowthroats as well. Not only are males with larger masks more likely



Dan Pancamo photo.

to gain a partner with whom to raise a family, neighboring females also find large masks irresistible. Female Yellowthroats will dally with males who have larger masks than their partners. Males with large masks therefore sire a greater number of offspring than males with smaller masks.

Yellowthroats eat primarily insects, gleaned from low vegetation or on the ground. A familiar song to most birdwatchers, the call of the male varies between individuals and localities, but has a characteristic rhythm and form. Their ‘witchety-witchety-witchety’ song is often the first clue to their presence. They often sing from an exposed perch. The calls include a harsh ‘tscheck’ and a chatter. These birds are quite loud considering their small size.

Being small also makes them vulnerable to a large number of bird-eating predators, such as Merlins and Loggerhead Shrikes. Yellowthroats occasionally are captured and eaten by unusual predators too. Observations have been made of Chuck-will’s-widow eating Yellowthroats on migration, and one adult Common Yellowthroat was taken from the stomach of a largemouth bass.

Yellowthroat populations in our area are migratory and begin to leave the breeding range during August and early September. Though occasionally some stragglers remain through the fall and some even long enough to be recorded in Christmas Bird Counts.

More Information

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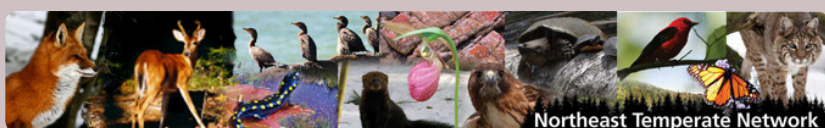
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Full Report online at:
http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/NETN/monitor/flashmo_220_nature/monitor_flash.cfm



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