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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

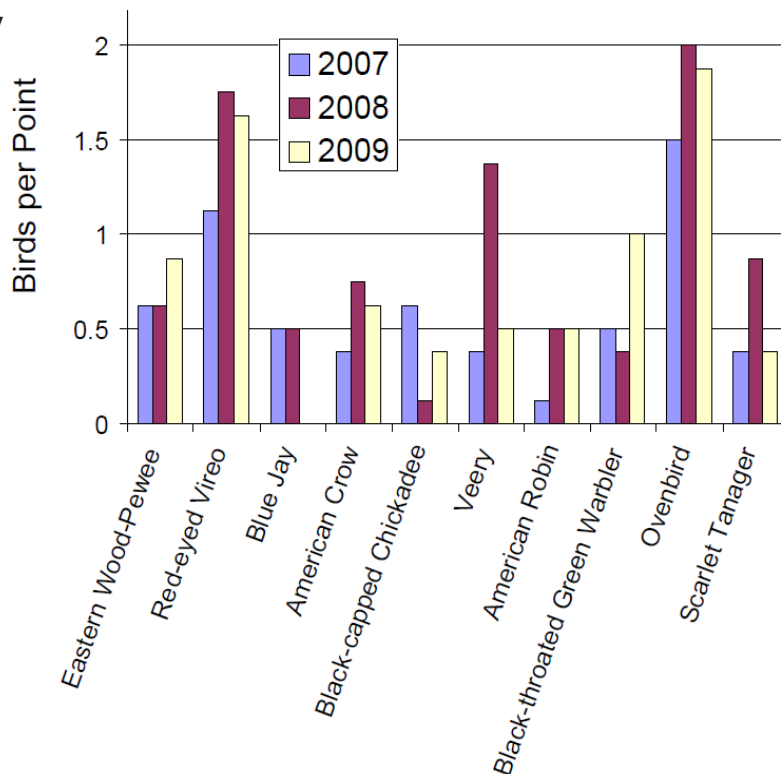
Background

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 (Saint-Gaudens lies in the Atlantic Northern Forest 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

This 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 to improve quality control procedures for this project, and this effort includes 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

There are eight bird point count locations in the park that have been surveyed annually since 2007. The park was surveyed twice in 2008 and 2009. Including repeat surveys, a total of 211 individual birds were detected in 2009. A total of 48 species were recorded during the three survey years. There was an average abundance of 11.25 birds per point. In 2009, both relative abundance and species richness during the first count decreased from the previous year, despite the detection of six new species. Three species of regional conservation concern were detected during the surveys: Belted Kingfisher, Willow Flycatcher, and Wood Thrush. The most commonly detected species were Ovenbird and Red-eyed Vireo.

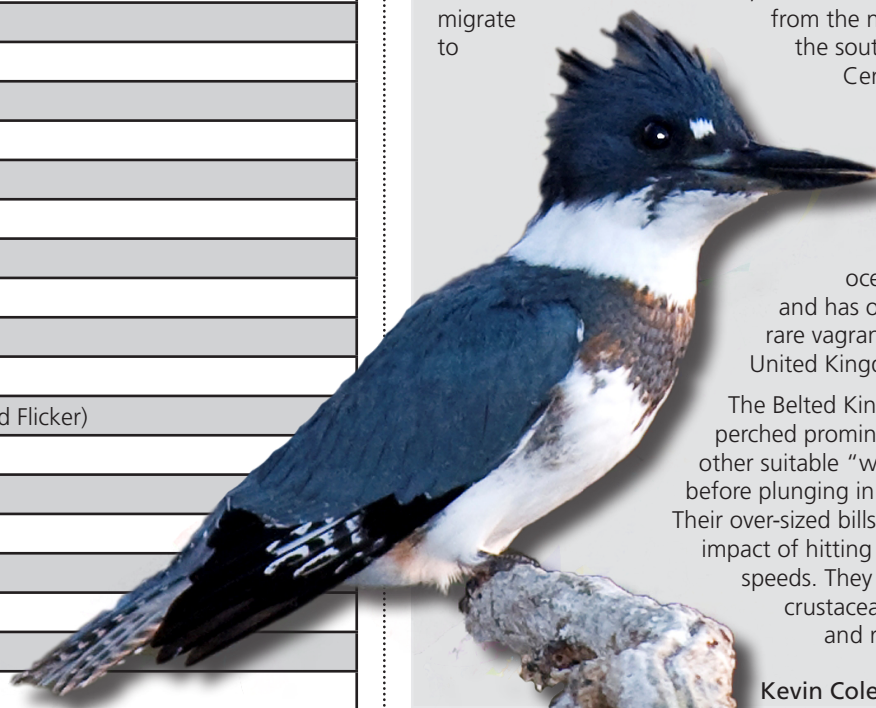


Red-eyed Vireo

John Benson

44 Species detected in the park

American Crow
American Goldfinch
American Redstart
American Robin
Baltimore Oriole
Belted Kingfisher
Black-and-white Warbler
Black-capped Chickadee
Black-throated Green Warbler
Blue Jay
Blue-headed Vireo
Brown-headed Cowbird
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Eastern Phoebe
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Gray Catbird
Great Crested Flycatcher
Hairy Woodpecker
Hermit Thrush
Least Flycatcher
Louisiana Waterthrush
Mourning Dove
Magnolia Warbler
Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted Flicker)
Northern Waterthrush
Ovenbird
Pileated Woodpecker
Pine Warbler
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Red-eyed Vireo
Red-winged Blackbird
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Scarlet Tanager
Song Sparrow
Tufted Titmouse
Veery
White-breasted Nuthatch
White-throated Sparrow
Willow Flycatcher
Winter Wren
Wood Thrush
Yellow Warbler
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker



Species Spotlight: Belted Kingfisher



The Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) is a large, conspicuous water kingfisher, the only member of that group commonly found in the northern United States and Canada. Its Latin name refers to a Greek myth in which the gods turned the sea-tossed queen

Alcyone and her husband into kingfishers and afterward stilled the winds for two weeks around the winter solstice each year - a time still known as halcyon days - so that they could build a floating nest of fish bones. The Belted Kingfisher's nest is not fish bones, but a long tunnel made in a river bank or sand bank and excavated by both parents. It often slopes uphill with the possible reason being in the case of flooding the chicks will be able to survive in an air pocket formed by the elevated end of the tunnel. The female lays five to eight eggs in the nest, which both adults incubate and then feed the young hatchlings.

Their breeding habitat is near inland bodies of waters or coasts across most of Canada, Alaska and the United States. They migrate from the northern parts of their range to the southern United States, Mexico, Central America, the West Indies and northern South America in winter. During migration it may stray far from land; the species is recorded as an accidental visitor on oceanic islands such as Clarion, and has occurred as an extremely rare vagrant in Iceland, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

The Belted Kingfisher is often seen perched prominently on trees, posts, or other suitable "watchpoints" close to water before plunging in head first after its fish prey. Their over-sized bills are designed to absorb the impact of hitting the water beak first at high speeds. They also eat amphibians, small crustaceans, insects, small mammals and reptiles.

Kevin Cole photo

More Information

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



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