



The Early Bird Gets...Counted!

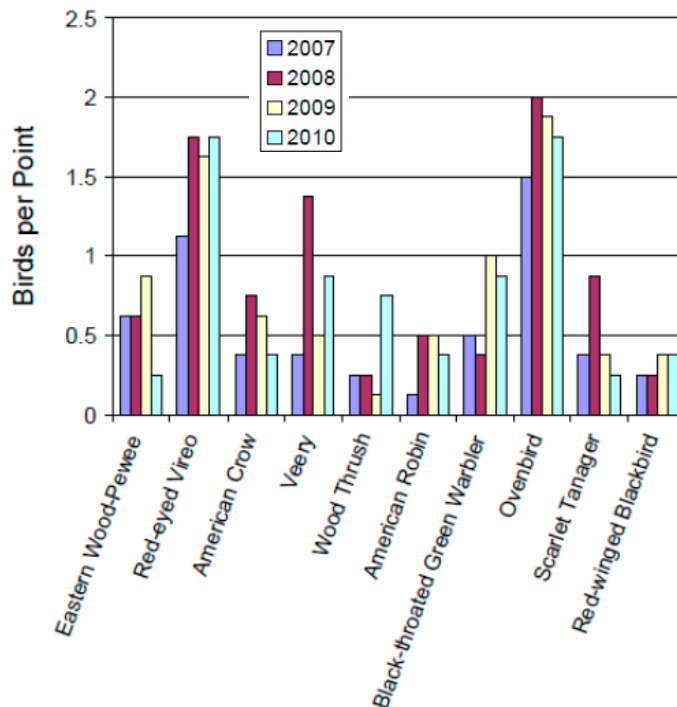
Results from 2010 Breeding Landbird Survey at Saint-Gaudens

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 Saint-Gaudens lying in the Atlantic Northern 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 2007 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 manage for the historical landscape rather



The 10 most common species detected at Saint-Gaudens, 2007 - 2010.

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

Eight point counts in the park have been surveyed annually since 2007. During 2010 surveys, observers detected a total of 215 birds of 39 species, compared to 211 of 33 species in 2009, 181 of 38 species in 2008, and 68 of 25 species in 2007. There were 16 point counts each year, except in 2007 when 8 point counts were conducted. A total of 47 species were recorded during the 4-survey years. Average abundance during the first site survey in 2010 was 11.1 birds per point, an increase from 2009 along with species richness - including the detection of three new species (Wild Turkey, Brown Creeper, and Slate-colored Junco). Three species of regional conservation concern were detected during the surveys: Belted Kingfisher,



American Redstart
Dan Pancamo photo

47 Species at Saint-Gaudens

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
Brown Creeper
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
Slate-colored Junco
Song Sparrow
Tufted Titmouse
Veery
White-breasted Nuthatch
White-throated Sparrow
Wild Turkey
Willow Flycatcher
Winter Wren
Wood Thrush
Yellow Warbler
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Willow Flycatcher, and Wood Thrush.

The park-wide forest avian Ecological Integrity Assessment for all years combined at the park resulted in six categories ranked as “Good,” and six ranked as “Caution,” and one “Significant Concern”. This pattern tends to occur at parks without much understory structure and diversity, and is often associated with white-tailed deer



Species Spotlight: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

With a name that could start a bar-room brawl if hurled at a gunslinger in a wild-west saloon, the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker's name actually does an apt job of describing both its appearance and its habits. Both males and females do indeed have a pale yellow underside, and tree sap constitutes a large portion of the diet. The rare ability to

Beth C. photo



coax sap to flow abundantly from trees makes these birds desirable neighbors for many other sap-slurping birds and mammals. Bats, squirrels, porcupines, and many other birds including warblers, hummingbirds, nuthatches, and other woodpeckers are among the multitude of critters that will eat sap made available by Sapsuckers. Many of these animals will also eat the insects that are attracted to the sap as well.

over-browsing.

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.

Nectar feeding Ruby-throated hummingbirds heavily rely on Sapsucker wells to survive the early springs in their northern territories. Males arrive in northern areas to establish territories before females arrive and before any flowers have bloomed. The tree sap they feed on courtesy of Sapsuckers is similar to flower nectar in the amount of nutrients and sugar it contains.

In the Northeast, the unmistakable sign of a sapsucker's presence in the area is trees with multiple rows of squarish holes bored into the trunks and limbs. Sapsuckers spend hours drilling these holes to get at the sap, which they lap up with their brush-like tongues. In the summer, sapsuckers feed on the “phloem” sap, the sticky fluid that carries the nutrients produced in the leaves downward to other parts of the tree (the sap that people tap in early spring for maple syrup is “xylem” sap, a thin liquid that carries mostly water and little nutrients from the roots upwards to the leaves).

Sapsuckers are selective in using particular trees over others. They are known to feed on as many as 1,000 different species of trees, although they show a preference for certain species within a given area. Birches, sugar maples, and hemlocks are a few common favorites in our area. They often will select trees that are wounded or weakened, such as from insects, disease, lightning, or wind. The reason for this may be that the sap of trees in poor health contains higher levels of amino acids and protein.

In normal circumstances trees have the ability to seal over wounds to prevent precious sap from being lost. Researchers still do not know how sapsuckers manage to overcome a tree's defenses and get the sap to flow so copiously. One theory is that sapsucker saliva may contain a substance that acts as an anticoagulant that prevents sap from clogging up and sealing over the holes the bird creates.

More Information

Brian Mitchell
Program Manager
Northeast Temperate Network

Phone/Email
802-457-3368 ext. 37
brian_mitchellh@nps.gov

Steve Faccio
Conservation Biologist
Vermont Center for Ecostudies

802.649.1431
sfaccio@vtcostudies.org

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



Northeast Temperate Network
54 Elm Street, Woodstock, Vermont 05091
802-457-3368

