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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

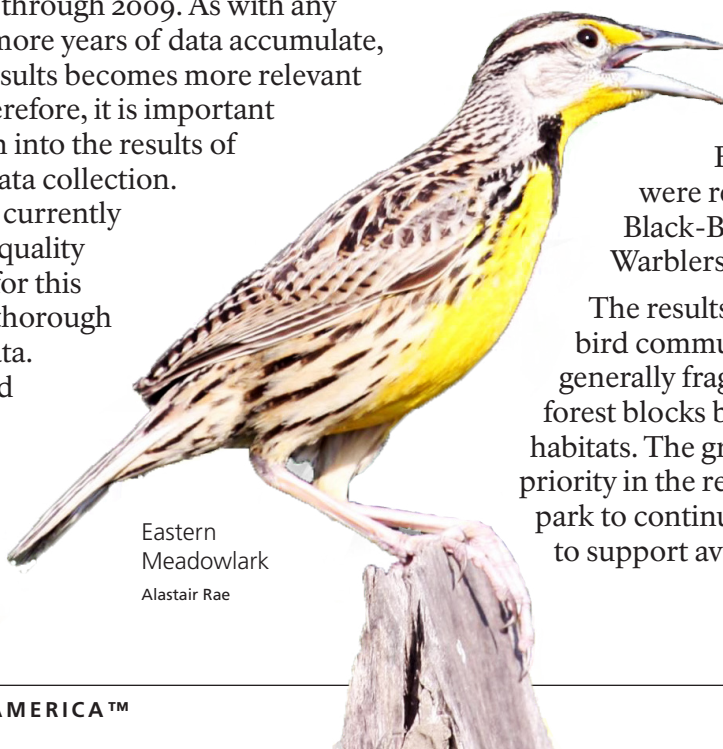
Results of Annual Breeding Landbird Survey

Background

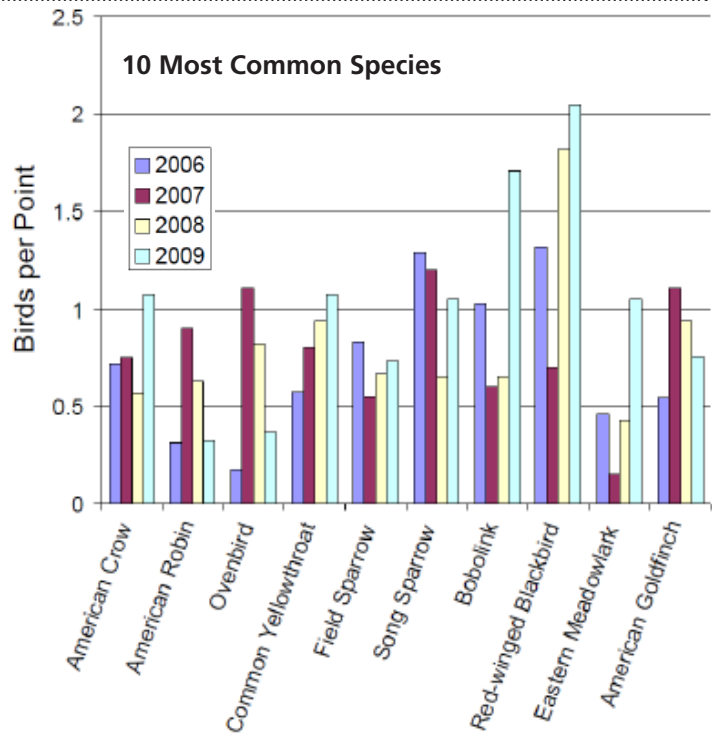
Using volunteer birders, the Northeast Temperate Network (NETN) and the Vermont Center for Ecostudies (VCE) has been monitoring breeding landbirds in most network parks since 2006. On a broad scale, all 11 network parks are located within the temperate deciduous forest biome. At a finer scale, the parks range across four Bird Conservation Regions (Saratoga lies in the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain 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 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, 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.



Eastern
Meadowlark
Alastair Rae



Six study sites consisting of 51 point counts were established in 2006 and 2007 in grassland and forested habitats in the park. In 2008 all sites were sampled and in 2009, 41 points at five sites were surveyed.

Results and Findings

During the four survey years a total of 2,338 individual birds of 82 species have been detected in the park, with an average of about 16 birds per point.

Eight species of conservation concern were recorded during the surveys including Black-Billed Cuckoos and Blue-winged Warblers.

The results of this study indicate that the forest bird community at SARA may be affected by the generally fragmented landscape consisting of small forest blocks broken up by fields and early successional habitats. The grassland community is considered a high priority in the region, and it would be prudent for the park to continue its efforts to manage grassland habitat to support avian diversity.

82 species detected in the park.

Acadian Flycatcher	Northern Cardinal
Alder Flycatcher	Northern Flicker
American Crow	Northern Harrier
American Goldfinch	Northern Mockingbird
American Kestrel	Northern Waterthrush
American Redstart	Orchard Oriole
American Robin	Ovenbird
American Woodcock	Pileated Woodpecker
Baltimore Oriole	Prairie Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler	Purple Finch
Black-billed Cuckoo	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Black-capped Chickadee	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Blue Jay	Red-eyed Vireo
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Red-tailed Hawk
Blue-winged Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Bobolink	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Brown Creeper	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Brown Thrasher	Savannah Sparrow
Brown-headed Cowbird	Scarlet Tanager
Canada Goose	Song Sparrow
Cedar Waxwing	Tree Swallow
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Tufted Titmouse
Chipping Sparrow	Turkey Vulture
Common Grackle	Veery
Common Raven	Vesper Sparrow
Common Yellowthroat	Warbling Vireo
Downy Woodpecker	White-breasted Nuthatch
Eastern Bluebird	Willow Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird	Winter Wren
Eastern Meadowlark	Wood Thrush
Eastern Phoebe	Yellow Warbler
Eastern Towhee	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
European Starling	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Field Sparrow	Yellow-throated Vireo
Golden-winged Warbler	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Gray Catbird	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Great Crested Flycatcher	Yellow-throated Vireo
Hairy Woodpecker	
Hermit Thrush	
House Wren	
Indigo Bunting	
Least Flycatcher	
Louisiana Waterthrush	
Mourning Dove	
Northern Bobwhite	



Species Spotlight:

Bobolink

A distinctive bird of open grasslands, the Bobolink is the only American bird that is black underneath and white on the back. This coloring makes the male stand out while he is performing his displays. After breeding he changes into a drab, camouflaged plumage to spend the rest of the year. Their breeding

habitats are open grassy fields, especially hay fields, across North America. Females lay 5 to 6 eggs in a ground-based, cup-shaped nest that is usually well-hidden in dense vegetation. Both parents feed the young.

Bobolinks migrate in flocks to Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, feeding on cultivated grains and rice, which leads to them being considered a pest by farmers in some areas. Bobolinks forage on, or near the ground, and mainly eat seeds and insects.

Males sing bright, bubbly songs in flight that give the bird its common name and that are sometimes compared to the sounds that *Star Wars* robot R2-D2 makes.

Numbers of Bobolinks are declining due to loss of habitat. Originally, they were found in tall grass prairie and other open areas with dense grass. Although hay fields are suitable nesting habitat, fields which are harvested early, or at multiple times, in a season may not allow sufficient time for young birds to fledge. This species increased in numbers when horses were the primary mode of transportation, requiring larger supplies of hay.

Emily Dickinson penned many poems about the bird, such as:

The Bobolink is gone

The Rowdy of the Meadow

And no one swaggers now but me

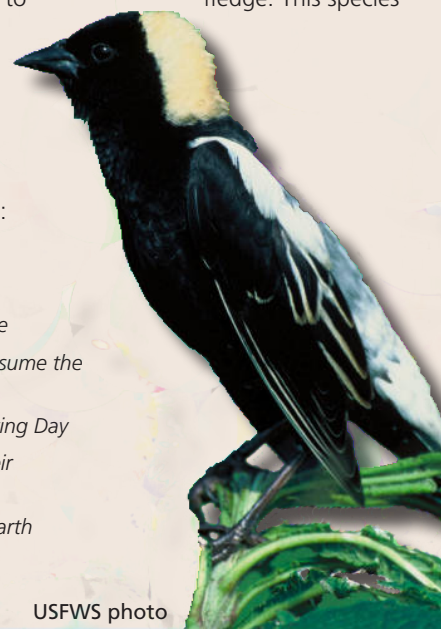
The Presbyterian Birds can now resume the Meeting

He gaily interrupted that overflowing Day

When opening the Sabbath in their afflictive Way

He bowed to Heaven instead of Earth

And shouted Let us pray



USFWS photo

More Information

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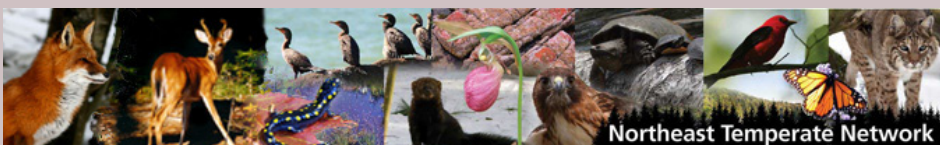
Full Report online at:

<http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/NETN/monitor/monitor.cfm>



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