



Bird Community Monitoring at Pea Ridge National Military Park, Arkansas

Importance: *An important component of the park ecosystem*

Birds intrigue and excite visitors, having become an important part of park interpretive programs. Beyond the pleasure that birds provide, they are a significant component of park ecosystems. Their high metabolism and position in the food web make them indicators of change in an ecosystem – the canary in the coal mine, so to speak. Preserving habitat for the wellbeing of bird populations preserves entire ecosystems for the benefit of all species.

Long Term Monitoring: *Assessing change*¹

The Heartland Inventory and Monitoring Network monitors change in bird community composition and bird abundance to determine the health of bird communities. They accomplish this by surveying seasonal and year round resident birds in the park during the breeding season, and measuring habitat structure and composition to assess habitat integrity. Together, these data contribute to assessing responses of bird communities to changes in their habitat. Trends in bird communities across the larger Central Hardwoods Bird Conservation Region are reported so that local trends can be compared to regional trends. Since 2008, surveys provide data on populations and breeding habitat of birds in the park.



Figure 1. Tufted Titmouse and Northern Cardinal; two of the most commonly occurring species at Pea Ridge National Military Park.

Status and Trends: *A reference point for evaluating management actions*

Scientists recorded 105 bird species during May-June site visits in the nine years after initiating monitoring. Eighty-eight of those species are considered breeding birds because they are permanent or summer residents to the park. Eight breeding species are considered *species of concern* for the Central Hardwoods Bird Conservation Region, the North American Bird Conservation Initiative's region in which the park is located - Bewick's Wren, Blue-winged Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, Whip-poor-will, Wood Thrush, and Worm-eating Warbler. The most commonly recorded species at the monument include Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Indigo Bunting, Northern Cardinal, and Tufted Titmouse. Additionally, scientists have found that:

- The Henslow's Sparrow, although a transient species to the park, is the ninth *species of concern* for the Central Hardwoods Bird Conservation Region.

More Information

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¹ Peitz, D. G. 2017. Bird community monitoring at Pea Ridge National Military Park, Arkansas: Status report. Natural Resource Data Series NPS/HTLN/NRDS—2017/1088. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.