

BIRD CONSERVATION

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LONG-TERM CHANGES IN FOREST BIRD DISTRIBUTIONS



The Common Raven, once an uncommon inhabitant of the East's remote core forests, has become widespread and common in multiple habitats.

As we have demonstrated in several of our most recent studies (https://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/NECT_forest_birds_publication.pdf, <https://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/>

[Yale_Forest.pdf](#)), southern New England's forest bird communities are not static but dynamic associations of species. Indeed, over 20 years there was a nearly 30% turnover in species composition. What drives long-term changes in these communities

appears to be a complicated issue.

Some species appear to have changed their distributions in response to phenomena like climate change. In fact, in our study covering 15,000 ha

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FOREST BIRDS

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Extensive, unbroken core forests like this one in Maine were once among the only places in the Northeast where Common Ravens could be found.

“26% of species present ... had population ... trends consistent with predicted effects of climate change.”

in northeastern Connecticut, species at their southern range limit undergoing population declines and species at their northern range limit undergoing population increases accounted for 26% of species present. The four species showing the strongest population shifts had trends consistent with predicted effects of climate change.

The maturing forests of the study area also appeared to be related to a substantial proportion of community change, with forest interior species undergoing population increases and edge/successional species undergoing

declines accounting for 36% of species present. Moreover, increases were greater than decreases among forest interior populations. Furthermore, far more edge/successional species were declining than increasing.

However, these factors did not explain many of the observed changes in species composition or population densities. Most populations undergoing changes were not associated with range limits. Moreover, 43% of species had population trends opposite to those predicted by a habitat hypothesis. Species like

the Common Raven, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush and Magnolia Warbler, in the Northeast traditionally associated with more northern forests, had expanded their populations south in the face of a warming climate. Evidence suggested that species like these were adapting to use a greater range of habitats.

PACIFIC ISLAND BIRDS: LIFE HISTORIES



The Micronesian Myzomela of Saipan in the Mariana Islands will be the subject of an upcoming life history study.

Five life history studies of the largely unstudied birds of tropical Pacific islands are now complete and additional studies are underway. To date, we have focused on birds of the Mariana Islands and published studies of the Rota White-eye (<https://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/rotawhite-eyebirdsoftheworld.pdf>), Saipan Reed-warbler (<https://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/reed-warblerBNA.pdf>) and Golden White-eye (<https://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/goldenwhite-eye.pdf>). Two more studies, of the Bridled White-eye (<https://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/bridledwhite-eye.pdf>) and Micronesian Rufous Fantail (https://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/rufous_fantail.pdf) are presently in editorial review, although preprints of these accounts are available for review.

The last of the Mariana Island small songbirds is the Micronesian Myzomela—a member of Australasia's honeyeater family (Meliphagidae). This species will be the subject of an upcoming life history study, although the life history of a large species of “songbird”, the Mariana Crow, is the one presently in preparation. This bird is the second

most endangered crow in the world, behind the Hawaiian Crow, with its populations plummeting to only about 200 individuals on the single Mariana Island of Rota.

“Five life history studies of the largely unstudied birds of tropical Pacific islands are now complete.”

FIELD STATION HABITATS

“Two principal habitats are present: 1) a woodland border with a largely native tree canopy and 2) a former lawn that has been allowed to return to an early old field stage.”



This American Holly seedling, transplanted from a naturally-occurring population along the lower Connecticut River, has successfully settled into its new home at the field station.

Management of our new field station's natural habitats, the subject of a recent educational lab handout (https://www.birdconservationresearch.org/pdf/Habitat_management_Hadlyme.pdf), has involved inventorying species present in the existing communities, removal of invasive alien plants, planting native species that are absent and allowing some areas to revert to

a natural state. Two principal habitats are present: 1) a woodland border with a largely native tree canopy and 2) a former lawn that has been allowed to return to an early old field stage.

The woodland border is characterized by such native canopy trees as Sugar Maple, Eastern White Pine, Eastern Redcedar, Eastern Hemlock, Black Cherry Shagbark Hickory, Pignut Hickory and Black

Birch. Once freed from competition with aliens, the understory has been left with such native sapling, seedling and vine species as Tulip Poplar, White Ash, American Beech, Black Oak, Flowering Dogwood, Sassafras, Virginia Creeper, Riverbank Grape, Fox Grape and Spicebush. This existing community is being supplemented with such native small trees as Maple-leaved Viburnum, Mountain Laurel,

HABITAT

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The old field portion of the field station was formerly lawn but with suspension of mowing it is now being invaded by native grasses such as Little Bluestem. The canopy of the invasive hybrid Butternut is being removed, as may be seen in this photo.

American Holly and Witch Hazel.

The former lawn with scattered invasive hybrid butternuts is already reverting to an early successional old field. To date, however, the only broadleaf herbaceous species to invade it is Daisy Fleabane, which is an annual pioneer species. A small stand of the perennial native grass Little Bluestem also has established itself. As the photo shows, the butternuts are being removed. We have, however, left a

grove of Eastern Redcedars, as they are important old field trees, particularly in southern Connecticut.

After an early spring mowing, seeds and seedlings of broad-leaved herbaceous species (often termed forbs by wildlife managers) will be introduced into the field. To date, we have collected seeds from nearby populations of New York Ironweed, Common Milkweed, Joe-pye-weed and Rough-stemmed Goldenrod.

Such old field-associated bird species as American Woodcocks, Common Yellowthroats, American Goldfinches, Baltimore Orioles, Yellow Warblers, Eastern Towhees, Gray Catbirds and White-eyed Vireos are already frequenting this area, so we hope that our management will encourage additional species to colonize.

“After an early spring mowing, seeds and seedlings of broad-leaved herbaceous species (often termed forbs by wildlife managers) will be introduced into the field.”

The Newsletter of
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The Dark-eyed Junco has declined as a Connecticut breeder but it is a common winter resident in forest edge and shrub habitats.

MEMBERSHIP

It is time to renew your membership for 2025. If you have not yet become a member, you may do so online through GoFundMe ([https://](https://www.gofundme.com/f/1nqlss)

www.gofundme.com/f/1nqlss). Memberships remain one of our principal means of funding the projects that we conduct, so please consider joining us.

Membership applications and contribution options are also available on our web site: <https://www.birdconservationresearch.org/membership.php>.