

NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY LANDBIRDS

NORTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION

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Neotropical migratory landbirds spend their summers nesting and breeding in North America and then migrate to Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and South America for the winter. Neotropical migrants include many well-known birds such as the ruby-throated hummingbird, white-eyed vireo, summer tanager and hooded warbler. Approximately 67 species of neotropical migrants nest in North Carolina and many more pass through the state while migrating.

In 1993, the N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission initiated the formation of the N. C. Partners in Flight (NC PIF) program to promote the conservation of migratory bird species and their habitats in our state. This program is part of the International Partners in Flight Initiative to form partnerships among conservation agencies, industry, academia and concerned individuals. All of these partners have a common goal: protecting migratory bird stopover, nesting and wintering habitats across North America to further the conservation of Neotropical migrants. The primary goal of the North Carolina program is to improve communication, cooperation and collaboration among its partners. PIF works to determine which bird species and habitats need conservation attention. That information is the basis for “bird-friendly” projects.

SONGBIRD SURVEYS

As land development has increased in North Carolina, some species of Neotropical migrants have shown significant population declines. NC PIF coordinates the Breeding Bird Survey in North Carolina which provides insight into bird population trends. Each year hundreds of experienced biologists and volunteer birders survey along thousands of miles of secondary roads across the state for songbird species. During the survey, they identify all birds by sight and sound. The federal government collects



Breeding Bird Survey data from across the country to gauge bird population trends at national, regional and local levels.

BIRD BANDING AND MONITORING

The Institute for Bird Populations created the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship



(MAPS) study in 1989 to study the population demographics of landbird species in North America. This study provides a long-term and large-scale cooperative network of bird banding programs across the continent to determine the nesting success and survival rates of landbirds. Over 500 banding stations spread across North America operate during the breeding season (May to August) to record vital information from individual birds. North Carolina has MAPS stations spread out across the state reaching from the Coastal Plain to the Mountain region. Since 1990, the Commission has participated in the MAPS study by providing personnel to man banding stations and by allowing access to public lands to set up stations, and by encouraging others across the state to join in the effort. The number of juvenile birds captured released each year helps biologists to determine the reproductive rates of songbird populations in a particular area. And the number of adult birds recaptured is used to determine the survival rates of each species from year to year. MAPS stations help determine actual bird productivity in certain areas, which is information that can be used to help form management and conservation strategies.

FINDING THE CURE FOR SONGBIRDS

Commission biologists also monitor songbird populations on Commission-owned game lands and on private property in conjunction with the Cooperative Upland-habitat Restoration and Enhancement (CURE) Program. The CURE Program began in 2000 when the Commission approved a wildlife management plan

for the state's upland game bird resources. Under this plan, both public and private properties are being managed for early-successional habitat, such as field borders and grassy meadows. Both upland game birds and several species of Neotropical migrants use this kind of habitat. Through the CURE program, the Commission forms partnerships with private landowners and thus creates large amounts of suitable habitat to encourage early-successional songbird population growth in North Carolina.



Wildlife Biologists routinely survey for birds on public and private lands.

EDUCATION

One of the most important ways to help conserve songbirds is through education. The Wildlife Commission staff involved in N. C. Partners in Flight coordinate and conduct bird identification workshops and presentations throughout the state every year. The Commission and NC PIF also produce publications, posters and other educational materials that describe ways the general public can help conserve songbirds and habitat just by managing their own backyards. And each year since 1993, NC PIF has coordinated International Migratory Bird Day events throughout the state to provide fun-filled bird activities and programs for the citizens of North Carolina. Events include guided birding tours, crafts programs and activities for families and kids, bird-banding demonstrations and much more. Volunteers are always needed!



yellow-rumped warbler



black-throated blue warbler

HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Grow native plants that produce fruits or seeds to provide food for migrating and nesting birds.
2. Seek options to pesticides whenever possible in backyards.
3. Keep cats indoors.
4. Leave old or dead trees on your property whenever possible.
5. Keep a constant supply of clean water available so birds can bathe and drink.
6. Install predator guards on all bird boxes.
7. Attend or volunteer at annual International Migratory Bird Day events.
8. Join conservation organizations to stay informed about current conservation efforts.
9. Educate yourself and others about migratory birds.
10. Visit the NC PIF website at: www.faculty.ncwc.edu/mbrooks/pif/
11. Donate to the N. C. Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Fund.

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