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Lester and Monique Anderson
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Dear Lester and Monique,

Here are the results of our 2013 forest bird monitoring for the Colby Hill Ecology Project. Barry and I have now completed sixteen years of monitoring along the old road which angles down to Route 17 from the northwest corner of the Guthrie-Bancroft fields. We monitor this transect twice each year in June, about ten days apart. We had two fine days of monitoring this year, cloudless and relatively still, if somewhat chilly (48 and 49 degrees respectively). The monitoring dates were June 5 and 19. A summary of the data is attached.

We identified 21 species on the transect's five points, one less than last year's 22 species, below the 16-year average of 23.2, and well below our record 29 species in 2007.

We recorded one new species this year, Common Grackle, very much out of place deep in the woods. It is most at home around beaver ponds but also occurs in open woods, including wooded suburbs. The total number of bird species identified during our point counts is now 46; the total for the Guthrie-Bancroft property is 62.

One species, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, dropped off the list of species we had recorded every year since 1998. Now only Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Wood Pewee, Veery, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Ovenbird have appeared every year.

We recorded a Tufted Titmouse this year. This species was noted previously on the transect only in 2007. It is one of a group of species that includes Turkey Vulture, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Cardinal and Carolina Wren that has moved into Vermont from farther south. They are now widespread across the state, especially in the Champlain Valley but less so in the forested hills. The proliferation of bird feeders across the state has aided the Tufted Titmouse in becoming a year-round resident.

We identified two bird species along the transect, but not during the 10-minute point counts. We have heard Louisiana Waterthrush several times along the New

Haven River and along the tributary that enters the New Haven River at the bottom of the transect where we park on the shoulder of Route 17, but never during a 10-minute point count. A Black-billed Cuckoo gave its unmistakable coo-coo-coo call between points 4 and 5 on 5 June. We recorded this species once during a point count in 2003, but not otherwise. Black-billed Cuckoos are widespread across Vermont in deciduous woodland edges and thickets. They benefit from outbreaks of hairy-bodied caterpillars, which other caterpillar-eaters often avoid. They stop calling when incubation begins, which can be as early as 7 June, and which may explain why we have recorded it rarely. The species has experienced a statewide decline of about 20 percent between the 1980s and the first decade of this century.

Miscellaneous Notes on Other Species

We recorded a Great Crested Flycatcher, previously found only five times in 15 years, in spite of its vociferous “wheat!” call.

Eastern Wood Pewee has been recorded each of the sixteen years of the study, but only once at point 1.

Red-eyed Vireo, the second most abundant species on the transect, was recorded on all but seven of our 155 point counts in sixteen years, including all but one point count this year.

Magnolia Warbler, while uncommon, has been found at all points except point 2.

Black-throated Blue Warbler has been recorded every year, but only twice at point 4 and three times at point 5.

American Redstart has been recorded only once at point 1, never at point 5, but regularly at points 2,3 and 4.

Canada Warbler, a seriously declining species in Vermont, was last found on the transect in 2008, although it was found fairly regularly prior to 2008.

Scarlet Tanager has been recorded sparingly but in all years except 2001 and 2002.

White-throated Sparrow has only been recorded at point 1, and not since 2011.

The Vermont Center for Ecostudies, which organizes the Forest Bird Monitoring Program, of which our transect studies are a part, has announced its intention to undertake a comprehensive study of the data gathered during the multiyear Forest Bird Monitoring Program. The results, now with greater statistical significance than the last analysis of the data, should shed light on abundance patterns of the interior forest bird species across Vermont.