

7 December 2018

Dear David, Marc, and Sandra,

Here is our 2018 Colby Hill Ecological Project letter. It summarizes the data on bird abundance and distribution from the transect that runs along the old road northwesterly from the northwestern end of the large Guthrie-Bancroft field through mixed northern hardwoods to Route 17. 2018's data are attached.

Barry and I continue to use the 10-minute point count protocol adopted by the Vermont Center for Ecostudies (VCE) for their Forest Bird Monitoring Program (FBMP). This was our 21st year of CHEP and the 21st year of our participation in the FBMP. For five years VCE biologist Steve Faccio undertook an intensive analysis of 18 to 25 years of data from the 31 protected forest tracts in the FBMP across Vermont as a complement to the national Breeding Bird Survey and other bird population assessments which capture abundance close to roads but not forest interiors. The citation is Faccio, S.D., J.D. Lambert, and J.D. Lloyd. 2017. *The status of Vermont forest birds: A quarter century of monitoring*. Vermont Center for Ecostudies, Norwich VT. 32 pages. I asked Steve Faccio to send you a copy of the publication when it came out last year. Do you recall receiving it? My comments here will reflect or contrast with, where appropriate, some of Steve's data and conclusions. The final year included in the publication was 2012. Sixteen years of CHEP data were included.

Barry has been doing the identifying and mapping for over a decade. Until the second session of 2018 I accompanied her for moral support. Barry, Peter Meyer and I monitored on the first session. On an interim basis Tom Moran, a close Ripton friend, and a long time monitor of a FBMP transect on Chandler Ridge in Salisbury, joined Barry on the second session. Peter Meyer has expressed interest in continuing the monitoring, to be assisted by Glenn Lower. Peter was unable to join Barry on the date of the second session, but he did a practice session with Barry and me several days after the second session that followed all the required criteria. He has agreed to take on the monitoring role starting in 2019. Barry will accompany him at least once to make sure he is comfortable with the monitoring procedures. I have informed Steve Faccio of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, who appreciated not having to find a replacement. We hope that Peter will participate in other CHEP activities, especially those that call for bird identification.

As we have all years since 2000 we started at point 5, the lowest point, not point 1, the highest. Start time has continued to be 5 am, give or take ten minutes. We return to the car by about 7 am.

The dates of our 2018 monitoring were 3 June and 16 June, within the recommended two-week window. Both days were cool and clear with little or no

wind. The 2018 dates were 11 and 9 days earlier than the 2017 monitoring dates, which were delayed by a late rainy spring and tight schedules.

We recorded 23 species in 2018, 19 in the first session, 16 in the second, 12 in both. We recorded 25 species in 2017, 20 in the first session, 16 in the second, 11 in both. We recorded 24 species in 2016, 21 in the first session, 19 in the second, 16 in both sessions. We recorded 23 species in 2015, 19 in the first session, 16 in the second, 12 in both sessions. A few more species are seen on the first session than on the second session as a rule.

We recorded 2 species new to the transect in 2018, Barred Owl on the earlier date and Great Horned Owl on the later date. We have now recorded 50 species on the transect and 16 additional species at other seasons or not on point counts. The list is an appendix to the CHEP summary 1998-2018, also attached. As I look over the list, I see that some of the entries on the species list are unlikely species in interior forest, but more common in wetlands, open land, or forest edge. Other species were listed in the early years as likely guesses, but time has shown them to be quite unlikely in the Bancroft Forest. I have deleted two species from the list that fit this latter situation, Yellow-throated Vireo and Warbling Vireo.

Here is a list of species recorded once or twice and a brief assessment of the likelihood of the identification.

Ruffed Grouse: recorded once at point 2 in 2002, but also heard drumming several times while we moved between points. Certain.

Wild Turkey: Seen twice in 2017, a small flock flushed noisily in each session from its overnight roost. Certain.

Black-billed Cuckoo: A single easily recognizable vocal identification in 2006, not known for occurring in interior forest. Certain.

Great Horned Owl: One record of this loud-voiced owl in 2018. Hunts in open land but roosts in woods. Certain.

Barred Owl: One record in 2018, but heard several times during movement between points. Certain.

Yellow-shafted Flicker: Sightings in 2008 and 2012 of this woodpecker of open land and forest patches. Certain.

Yellow-throated Vireo: Occurs in more open woods in warmer parts of the state. Recorded once in 1998. Unlikely.

Warbling Vireo: One record from 1999. Occurs in wooded riparian settings, not interior forest. Unlikely.

Common Raven: Records in 2006 and 2012 of this wide ranging species with a loud unmistakable voice. Certain.

Tufted Titmouse: Records in 2007 and 2013 of this bird of the suburbs and forest fragments. Certain.

Cedar Waxwing: Recorded once in 2011. Species of riparian woods and wetlands. Certain.

Common Yellowthroat: A distinctive species of shrubby wetlands. Seen in 1999 and 2000 at point 1, also 2009 and 2010 at point 1, which is close to a wetland. Certain.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: One record of this forest-edge species in 2017. Certain.

Canada Warbler: Observed regularly but only at point 1 and only until 2008. The 2017 VCE Status of VT Forest Birds showed the species declining 5.1% annually. Certain.

White-throated Sparrow: Occurred regularly but only at point 1, and only until 2011. Status of VT Forest Birds documented an annual decline in interior forests of 4%.

Common Grackle: A single bird in 2013. Not an interior forest species. Certain.

Brown-headed Cowbird: One record in 2007 of this grassland and forest edge species. Certain.

Purple Finch: Records of this species of coniferous forests in 2007 and 2015. Certain.

American Goldfinch: A single sighting in 2003. Normally a common species of open land. Certain.

We miss the inspiration that Lester and Monique endowed CHEP with, but we are pleased to be able to pass the bird baton to Peter Meyer and assisted by Glenn Lower, the next CHEP bird monitors. It's been a pleasure to be able to participate in CHEP from its outset. We hope to be able to participate in appropriate CHEP activities in the future.

Warren and Barry King

Cc: Peter Meyer

