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Dear David, Marc and Sandra,

Here is our 2017 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. 2017'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 20<sup>th</sup> year of CHEP and the 20<sup>th</sup> year of our participation in the FBMP. For the last five years VCE biologist Steve Faccio has been undertaking 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. 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. I have accompanied her for moral support and to contribute my two cents' worth on identification of the birds I can hear. Barry would like to continue. She would appreciate the participation of another birder when I'm not able to fill that role. We invited Chris Runcie of Starksboro to join us again this year, but Chris was

traveling during the period of our monitoring. Although Chris enjoyed the experience two years ago and would like to continue her participation when possible, she was unwilling make a more permanent commitment.

As we have all years since the first two, 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 2017 monitoring were 14 June and 25 June, within the recommended two-week window. Both days were cool and clear with little wind, if any. The 2017 dates were 11 and 10 days later than the 2016 monitoring dates. The late rainy spring and tight schedules delayed the start, but the birds were late in starting, too, so it all worked out well.

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. We had 22 species in 2014, 21 in 2013 and 22 in 2012, all except this and last years slightly below the 20-year average of 23.1. A few more species are seen on the first session than on the second session as a rule.

We recorded one species new to the study this year, so the total for the transect is now 49 species. The new species, Chestnut-sided Warbler, was heard at point 1. Chestnut-sided Warblers are usually observed in shrubby more open woodland. We had a Wild Turkey and a Black-and-white Warbler, both for the second time, and both recorded most recently last year. Both Black-and-white Warblers were recorded from point 1.

Six species have been recorded at least once every year of the study: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Wood Pewee, Veery, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-throated Blue Warbler and Ovenbird. Rose-breasted Grosbeak dropped from the "every year" ranks in 2013 and again in 2016. The VCE study shows a 1.8 percent annual decline in this species, 35.8 percent over 25 years. Eastern Wood Pewee has shown a 34.6 percent loss over 25 years, but that decline has not affected our transect yet. We had it this year at four points, all but point 1. Similarly, Veery has shown a 40.5 percent statewide 25-year loss, but our numbers stay steady.

We had one Scarlet Tanager, which is usual, and it was at point 5, which is also usual, except in the sense that it is the only species that is most frequently seen at point 5.

Other species still fairly regular in our study but showing a steady and statistically significant statewide decline include Downy Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatcher, Blue Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Winter Wren. Two strongly declining species, Canada Warbler and White-throated Sparrow, were both

present regularly at point 1, the point closest to the Guthrie-Bancroft fields. The former was last seen in 2008, the latter in 2011. Brown Creeper was last seen in 2008, but the statewide decline, while moderate, was not statistically significant.

I continue to be puzzled as to how the three woodland thrushes, Veery, Hermit Thrush and Wood Thrush, minimize competition with each other. Comparing all the records of the three thrushes over a 20-year period, we have records of 80 Veeries, 60 Hermit Thrushes and 82 Wood Thrushes. Veery has been recorded most (27 of 80) at point 3, Hermit Thrush has been recorded most (20 of 60) at point 1, and Wood Thrush has been recorded most at points 2 (20 times), 3 (21 times) and 4 (18 times). It seems that the years 2005 to 2011 had more thrushes of all three species than any other 7-year period. Perhaps in another ten years a more coherent pattern will develop. All three are declining statewide, but only Veery is declining significantly. The other two are nearly holding their own.

Among those species that increased statewide, Ovenbird, Red-eyed Vireo and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker have been recorded every year on our transect. The fourth, Black-throated Green Warbler, has only been missed twice, including in 2016. Among the decliners are Eastern Wood Pewee and Great Crested Flycatcher, both members of the aerial insectivore guild that is one of the ecological groups that have declined significantly. A third aerial insectivore, Least Flycatcher, was seen last year but not this year. It is too soon to count it out. It has declined statewide, but not at a statistically significant rate. Because it is adapted to younger to middle-aged forest interior, I had been anticipating its loss, but it hasn't happened yet.

Glad to be able to continue the work for which Lester and Monique provided the inspiration. We're looking forward to bird monitoring in 2018.

Best regards,

*Warren*

Warren King

Cc: Chris Runcie

## Colby Hill Ecological Project

## Bird Monitoring Data 2017

<u>Point</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>06-14-2017</u>	<u>06-25-2017</u>
1	Hairy Woodpecker		1
	Blue Jay	1	
	American Crow	1	
	Red-breasted Nuthatch		1
	Hermit Thrush	1	
	American Robin	1	
	Red-eyed Vireo	1	2
	Black-throated Blue Warbler		1
	Ovenbird	3	2
Black-and-white Warbler	2		
2	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	
	Downy Woodpecker		1
	Eastern Wood Pewee	1	1
	Blue Jay	1	
	Winter Wren	1	1
	Veery		1
	Hermit Thrush	1	
	Wood Thrush	2	
	American Robin	1	1
	Red-eyed Vireo	1	2
	Black-throated Green Warbler	2	1
	Black-throated Blue Warbler	1	1
	Ovenbird	1	3
3	Wild Turkey	1	
	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		1
	Eastern Wood Pewee	1	1
	Great Crested Flycatcher		1
	White-breasted Nuthatch	1	
	Veery	1	2
	Wood Thrush		1
	American Robin	2	1
	Red-eyed Vireo	2	1
	Black-throated Green Warbler	1	
	American Redstart	1	
Ovenbird	1	2	
4	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	

Pileated Woodpecker	1	
Eastern Wood Pewee		3
Veery		1
Wood Thrush		1
American Robin	1	1
Red-eyed Vireo	2	2
Chestnut-sided Warbler		1
American Redstart		2
Ovenbird	3	2
Scarlet Tanager	1	1

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Great Crested Flycatcher		1
Eastern Wood Pewee	1	
Black-capped Chickadee	1	
Veery	1	
Wood Thrush		1
Red-eyed Vireo	1	3
Black-throated Blue Warbler		1
Ovenbird	2	1

4  
 Eastern Wood Pewee  
 Great Crested Flycatcher  
 Black-capped Chickadee  
 Veery  
 Wood Thrush  
 American Robin  
 Red-eyed Vireo  
 Black-throated Blue Warbler  
 American Redstart  
 Ovenbird  
 Scarlet Tanager