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Breeding Bird Survey Newsletter 6

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COVERAGE

Coverage in 1978 was the best ever with 1,829 routes submitted in time for the analysis. Ironically, the number of comparable routes run in both 1977 and 1978 dropped slightly to 1,459. Top states and provinces were California (145 routes), Texas (102 - first time over 100!), New York (91), Pennsylvania (72), Wisconsin (67), Ontario (63) and Illinois (54). Coverage was off most severely in Alberta and British Columbia. The biggest increases were in Georgia, Maine, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Nova Scotia and Texas. A total of 1,513,922 birds were recorded, or an average of 828 per route.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Our primary concern is, as in past years, that too many observers procrastinate in submitting their results. This in turn delays analysis of the data. Please make a concerted effort to meet the deadline--this includes returning packets from routes not run.

For participants not accustomed to computer forms we wish to emphasize that on the summary sheet, each block in the heading is to have only one letter or number (except the long block for the observer's first name). The observer's last name is to start in the left block (27). The first digit of month and of starting time will always be zero.

Field sheets as well as summary sheets will be photocopied or microfilmed in this office. Blue ink and hard pencil do not photocopy well, so please use soft pencil or black ink (but not a water-base felt-tip pen, please).

Finally, please remember to document unusual birds. Most observers know very well what is unusual along their routes. Many of the birds printed on the summary and field sheets are more unusual than some of the potential write-ins, so please document all unusual species, whether they are printed on the sheets or not.

METRIC CONVERSION

Canadians are already faced with this problem and we all will be eventually. In cars with metric odometers .8 kilometers is a very close approximation to .5 miles (a difference of only 0.2 km in 24.5 miles, which is less than the average difference between odometers on any two vehicles). One suggestion has been made to go .8 km on all but stops 17 and 34, and go .9 km on them. The important consideration is that each stop should be at the same place from year to year. All 50 stops should be either marked on the map or described on a list of stop descriptions, to facilitate this goal.

NEW COMPUTER PROGRAMS

In addition to analyzing 120 species for changes every year, we have a new program that analyses groups of closely related species and groups of birds of similar habitats. By combining some of the less common species the sample size is increased enough to detect population changes in some of

the groups of rarer species.

There are two other new programs that will be of some interest to many researchers. One program summarizes each route for all years run. We will be sending copies of this listing to all observers and coordinators. The other listing is a summary by species for all years, similar to the State summary which has been sent to all coordinators.

NEW COORDINATORS

In the past few years, several state and provincial coordinators have changed. It seems appropriate to thank the past coordinators and to welcome the new ones. Max Parker has taken over in Arkansas for Edith Halberg, Lee Jones for Jan Tarble in Southern California, William Ginn for Margaret Garrison in Maine, Robert Janssen for Walter Breckenridge in Minnesota and Richard Clawson for Keith Evans in Missouri. In addition, Scott Miller has filled the vacancy in Nevada and Andre Cyr in Quebec. Connecticut is presently the only state lacking a coordinator - volunteers are welcome.

POPULATION TRENDS

The most obvious factor influencing bird populations in 1977 was the severe winter over most of the East. It was felt that the drought in much of the West in 1976 might be reflected on the 1977 Survey, but any increases or decreases that might have resulted were not statistically significant.

Eastern species reflected the results of the harsh winter most clearly and in some cases resulted in significant decreases on a continental level despite minor increases in the Central Region. The highly significant decreases in the Eastern Region were for Bobwhite (12%), Eastern Phoebe (43%), Eastern Meadowlark (18%), Pine Warbler (40%), Carolina Wren (51%), House Wren (21%), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (62%) and Eastern Bluebird (37%). Significant decreases were Field Sparrow (12%), Song Sparrow (14%) and oddly, Baltimore Oriole (15%). Owing to small sample sizes, decreases in certain other species did not test significantly. Because their decreases were supported by general observations I will mention them: Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Killdeer and Ring-necked Pheasant. No species showed a significant increase in the East in 1977, but it is interesting to note that two apparently more hardy species, Mockingbird and Tufted Titmouse, were recorded in larger numbers in most northeastern states, where they continue to expand, despite the severe winter. House Finch also fits in the catagory of too small a sample size to show a statistically significant increase, despite the fact that 77% more were reported in the Eastern Region in 1977.

Significant changes in the Central Region that were not also reflected in the East were a 14% increase in Mourning Dove, a 25% increase in Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and 18% increase in Eastern Kingbird and 21% decrease in Loggerhead Shrike.

On the continental level, Eastern Wood Pewee and Scarlet Tanager showed significant increases of 14% and 22% respectively.

Many thanks to all participants!

Danny Bystrak 9/27/78