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Breeding Bird Survey Newsletter Number 4

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1975COVERAGE

The number of routes covered in 1975 was the highest ever at 1,771. Unfortunately, the number of comparable routes which were covered in both years was down from 1,455 to 1,395. California led with its highest ever at 150, Texas was next at 95, followed by New York (90), Pennsylvania (77), Wisconsin (67), Ontario (61), and British Columbia (50). Poorest covered states were Alaska (3), Utah (5), Nevada (6)--a state in which we need a coordinator since Mr. Alcorn stepped down--and Idaho (8).

The five most common species recorded were Red-winged Blackbird, Starling, House Sparrow, Common Grackle, and American Robin. Among the most unusual sightings were a California Condor and the first Thick-billed Kingbird.

Dr. Greenberg's coordination of Georgia resulted in 44 routes being covered, more than twice the previous high. Frances Williams helped increase the coverage in West Texas with 9 new routes being covered.

POPULATION TRENDS

The principal objective of the BBS is to provide information on current trends in populations of North American birds. In addition to summarizing the raw data for every species by states and provinces, we have selected 120 species for a more sophisticated statistical analysis that compensates for different densities of coverage within each physiographic stratum of each state and province. We use essentially the same 120 species each year in order to follow long-term trends of these species.

The most spectacular changes continue to be the increase in the House Finch east of the Mississippi River (mean annual increase of 39%), and the Cattle Egret (11% per year in the East and also 11% for the whole Continent). Starling populations in the West have actually decreased for two years in a row after a veritable population explosion between 1968 and 1973.

Species that registered a highly significant ($p < .01$) increase during the period 1968 to 1975 at the Continental level are grouped by average annual rate of increase as follows: 9% per year--Rose-breasted Grosbeak; 7% per year--Carolina Wren; 4 or 5% per year--Killdeer, Northern Parula Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Pine Warbler, and Blue Grosbeak; 3%--Brown-headed Cowbird; and 2%--Western Kingbird, Common Yellowthroat, and Indigo Bunting. Other significant increases noted ($p < .05$) were: 4% per year--Upland Sandpiper; 3%--Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, House Wren, Gray Catbird, Ovenbird, and Scarlet Tanager; and 2%--Red-eyed Vireo and Red-winged Blackbird.

(over)

On the negative side of the ledger, we find that the following species showed a highly significant ($p < .01$) decline at the Continental level during the same period: 9% per year--Black-capped Chickadee, Western Tanager, and Lark Bunting; 5%--Bewick's Wren; and 2 or 3%--Yellow-breasted Chat and Rufous-sided Towhee. Additional species with significant declines ($p < .05$) on the Continent as a whole are as follows: 5 or 6%--Western Pewee, Cedar Waxwing, Orchard Oriole, and American Goldfinch; 4%--Acorn Woodpecker, Eastern Pewee, Black-billed Magpie, Loggerhead Shrike, and Grasshopper Sparrow; and 2 or 3%--Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, and Yellow Warbler.

Last year we mentioned the heavy mortality of Scarlet Tanagers, swallows, and warblers in northern New England during a cold rainy spell that occurred on May 25-26, 1974 during their spring migration. The survivors must have had good nesting success, because all of the species for which we had noted a decline in 1974 showed a substantial increase from 1974 to 1975 in some or all of the northern New England States and Maritime Provinces.

Carolina Wren populations, which had been increasing steadily in the East during a period of mild winters, did not change from 1974 to 1975, but remained abnormally high. Tufted Titmice showed an additional increase. Downy Woodpeckers declined in 1975 in the Central and Western Regions. Other species that decreased in the Central Region in 1975 were the Ring-necked Pheasant and the Common Grackle. A significant decrease in the grackle in states bordering the Mississippi River must be related in part to large-scale control operations at winter roosts in Kentucky and Tennessee early in 1975.

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