

Response of Forest Birds to Changes in Woodland Habitat in Northeast Iowa

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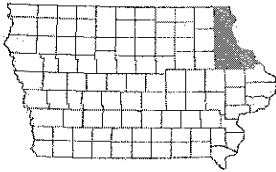
Forest habitat has greatly declined in the Upper Midwest and now only covers about 14% of the region. Despite this, there are still small pockets of forested landscape in places like the Driftless Region of northeast Iowa where upland plateaus and deep cut valleys prevented extensive tree clearing. Here, conservationists have established bird conservation areas to preserve forest species that are being threatened by habitat loss.



Northeast Iowa Driftless Region—Photo Credit Katy Reeder

Quick Facts:

- ◆ Study Dates: 2006-2007
- ◆ Study Location:



Red-headed Woodpecker

Photo credit Tyler Harms

Project Goals

- ◆ Assess forest habitat changes in northeast Iowa since 1997
- ◆ Provide better understanding of woodland bird distribution in this region with specific focus on Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)

Results

- ◆ Overall, forests in the region had fewer canopy openings
- ◆ These historically oak dominated forests had shifted towards maple dominance
- ◆ Thorny understory plants had become more common
- ◆ The invasive species garlic mustard was present in the area
- ◆ Species associated with open canopy or edge areas responded negatively to the habitat change:
 - ◇ Blue-winged warbler, Cerulean Warbler and Eastern Towhee were recorded at fewer points than in the previous study
 - ◇ Red-headed Woodpeckers were no longer present and the Baltimore Oriole population declined.
- ◆ Species associated with the sub-canopy and understory such as the Acadian Flycatcher and the Veery became more widely distributed

Management Response

Land managers have since implemented the Open Woodland SWG-C project, and are now adding open woodland as a stand type in Forest Wildlife Stewardship Plans. By the year 2013 Cerulean Warbler populations in this area had increased enough to designate one of the study locations as a Globally Important Bird Area

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