

## Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas Results

Prepared by Tom Dodd, June 2011

The Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA2) is a 5 year project sponsored by Massachusetts Audubon Society with intermediate data through 2011 (project term: 2007-2011). Mass Audubon also conducted an earlier atlas (BBA1) during the years 1974-1979.

The atlas divides the state into equal sized blocks that consist of 1/6 of a USGS 7.5 minute topographic quad (each approximately 10 square miles). There are 1055 blocks in the state. Volunteers were assigned blocks to survey for breeding birds. The breeding status of each bird species is recorded as Observed, Possible, Probable, or Confirmed using the criteria below:

- Observed (OB) (BBA2 only) Bird has been seen in the block but is not expected to nest because of unsuitable nesting habitat (Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Turkey Vulture)
- Possible (PO) "X"=Present during safe dates (known breeding times)
- Probable (PR) "S"=Singing heard 7 or more days apart at same location  
"C"=Courtship behavior seen
- Confirmed (CO) "FY"=feeding young  
"NY"=nest with young

There are eight blocks that contain a portion of Upton (Milford 4-9, 11, and Uxbridge 7). Of these, two blocks (Milford 8 and 9) contain about 70% of the town's area. A composite table for these two blocks was created using the BBA2 intermediate data from the Upton portions of these blocks.

Some of the more productive areas covered include the main section of the Upton State Forest, Peppercorn Hill, and a majority of the power line ROW. Areas not specifically covered, included Warren Brook and associated wetlands, Glen Ave wetlands, former Stefans Farm, Warren Brook Conservation Area, and the Glen Echo Open Space.

In BBA2, there were 65 bird species recorded as Confirmed breeders, 18 Probable, 12 Possible, and 4 Observed.

The BBA1 results are provided for a rough indication of changes in breeding bird presence over the last 35 years. There was no record of the effort exerted in the BBA1 results, so the coverage may not be equivalent between BBA1 and BBA2 atlases. Also note that the BBA1 results may include breeding records from outside Upton.



There are some notable positive trends in the statewide results between BBA1 and BBA2 that also appear in Upton's results. Birds such as the Wild Turkey, Turkey Vulture, Red-bellied and Pileated Woodpeckers, and Carolina Wren all appear to be on the increase. The state reintroduced Wild Turkeys into the western part of the state in 1972 and translocated them into other towns through 1996. They now are a common part of the town's landscape. All of the other birds have been extending their range north.

If managed well, the power line ROW's that go through Upton, provide good early successional habitat where Rufous-sided Towhee, Brown Thrasher, Field Sparrow, Indigo Bunting, Prairie Warbler, and Blue-winged Warbler can be found. Partners in Flight (PIF), an organization that promotes conserving land birds, lists the Blue-winged Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and American Woodcock as priority bird populations for early successional habitats. Additionally, American Kestrel, which is on the state watch list, recently nested in a nest hole in a power line pole. The hole was excavated by a Pileated Woodpecker and the Kestrel was seen a number of times hunting from the power lines, particularly above a recent beaver pond. Kestrels have also been sighted at Stefans Farm during spring migration.

With the resurgence of beavers in the last 10 years, they have created more wetlands enticing Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, and Belted Kingfisher (though none are known breeders in Upton to date).

Peppercorn Hill property has three of the four birds that PIF lists for mature deciduous forests. These are the Worm-eating Warbler, Wood Thrush, and Louisiana Warbler, with only the Wood Thrush as being a confirmed breeder. The Worm-eating Warbler is not a state-listed bird, but has only been recorded in 13 blocks in BBA2. It is a probable nester here. There are private in-holdings within this conservation area that should be pursued to protect these birds breeding habitat.

Upton is fortunate to have large open space parcels, with Upton State Forest (USF) as its core. The addition of the towns open space parcels helps to limit the forest fragmentation. The USF provides breeding habitat for some uncommon birds in this area such as Winter Wren, Barred Owl, Yellow-rumped Warbler (probable nester), and possibly Raven. Ravens have been seen on two occasions and are a species that has been expanding their range in this state.

As Upton is being built-out, open fields are being developed and others are reverting back to forest. Bobolinks and Meadowlarks require a minimum of 5-20 acre fields that are managed properly for these birds. Upton has few, if any, suitable fields to support these species.

#### **References:**

*Breeding Bird Atlas Explorer (online resource). 2009. U.S. Geological Survey Patuxent Wildlife Research Center & National Biological Information Infrastructure. <11/27/09>. <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bba>. Data compiled from: Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2007-2011. Interim results used with permission.*

Ruth, J.M. 2006. Partners in Flight – U.S. Website. Served by the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland, USA. <http://www.partnersinflight.org>

Table – Upton Breeding Birds

Species	BBA1	BBA2
Canada Goose	CO	CO
Wood Duck	CO	CO
American Black Duck	CO	
Mallard	CO	CO
Hooded Merganser	CO	PR
Ring-necked Pheasant	PO	PO
Ruffed Grouse	PR	PR
Wild Turkey		CO
Double-crested Cormorant		OB
American Bittern	PO	
Great Blue Heron	PO	OB
Green Heron	PO	OB
Turkey Vulture		PO
Osprey		OB
Cooper's Hawk	PR	PO
Northern Goshawk		PR
Red-shouldered Hawk	CO	PO
Broad-winged Hawk	PO	PO
Red-tailed Hawk	PO	CO
American Kestrel	CO	CO
Killdeer	CO	CO
Spotted Sandpiper	PO	
American Woodcock	CO	CO
Rock Pigeon	CO	PO
Mourning Dove	CO	CO
Black-billed Cuckoo		PO
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	PO	PR
Eastern Screech-Owl	CO	PO
Great Horned Owl	PO	CO
Barred Owl	PO	CO
Whip-poor-will	PR	
Chimney Swift	CO	PR
Ruby-throated Hummingbird		PO
Belted Kingfisher	PO	PR
Red-bellied Woodpecker		CO
Downy Woodpecker	CO	CO
Hairy Woodpecker	CO	CO
Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted)	CO	
Northern Flicker		PR
Pileated Woodpecker		CO
Eastern Wood-Pewee		CO
Eastern Phoebe	CO	CO
Great Crested Flycatcher		PR
Eastern Kingbird	CO	CO
Blue-headed Vireo		PR
Warbling Vireo		CO
Red-eyed Vireo	CO	CO
Blue Jay	CO	CO
American Crow	PR	CO
Common Raven		PO
Tree Swallow	CO	CO
Bank Swallow	CO	CO
Barn Swallow	CO	CO
Black-capped Chickadee	CO	CO
Tufted Titmouse	PO	CO

Species	BBA1	BBA2
Red-breasted Nuthatch	PO	PR
White-breasted Nuthatch	CO	CO
Brown Creeper	PO	CO
Carolina Wren		CO
House Wren	PR	CO
Winter Wren		CO
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher		CO
Eastern Bluebird	PR	CO
Veery		PR
Hermit Thrush	PO	CO
Wood Thrush	PO	CO
American Robin	CO	CO
Gray Catbird	CO	CO
Northern Mockingbird	CO	CO
Brown Thrasher	PR	PR
European Starling	CO	CO
Cedar Waxwing	CO	CO
Blue-winged Warbler		CO
Yellow Warbler	PO	CO
Chestnut-sided Warbler		CO
Yellow-rumped Warbler		PR
Black-throated Green Warbler		CO
Pine Warbler		CO
Prairie Warbler	PR	CO
Black-and-white Warbler	PR	PR
American Redstart	PO	PO
Worm-eating Warbler		PR
Ovenbird		CO
Northern Waterthrush		PR
Louisiana Waterthrush		PR
Common Yellowthroat	CO	CO
Scarlet Tanager	PO	CO
Eastern Towhee	CO	CO
Chipping Sparrow	PO	CO
Field Sparrow	CO	CO
Song Sparrow	CO	CO
Swamp Sparrow	PO	PR
Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored)	PO	PO
Northern Cardinal	PO	CO
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	PO	CO
Indigo Bunting	PO	CO
Red-winged Blackbird	PR	CO
Eastern Meadowlark	PR	
Common Grackle	CO	CO
Brown-headed Cowbird	CO	CO
Baltimore Oriole	CO	CO
Purple Finch	PO	
House Finch		CO
Pine Siskin		CO
American Goldfinch	CO	CO
House Sparrow	CO	CO