



STUDY GUIDE: ENHANCE BIRDING BY EAR SKILLS TO IDENTIFY THE SHRUBLAND NESTING BIRDS IN THE BCN DATABASE

THE STATISTICS UNDERLYING THE BCN POPULATION TRENDS DATA FROM 1999-2020

Trend : Average annual population change (up or down) over the 22 year study period

% Error : When this # is larger than the Trend average #, the latter is uncertain

Points : # of individual points where the species was recorded at least once

Records : Total # of birds of a specific species, seen across all survey points

Frequency : % of survey points where a species was seen at least once; assesses overall abundance - more common species show approx 30-50% frequency

Credibility : Informed method of assessing the accuracy of the population Trend #; Higher % error reduces Credibility of the Trend value

The links to species songs and calls are from xeno-canto.org

In most cases, the recordings are from Illinois or nearby states, to avoid 'dialects' (many species songs vary with geography). Be sure to read the [terms of use](#) and the [FAQs](#). Click on [advanced search](#) and type in a species name should you want to explore the available recordings for a particular species

Cautionary Note: The almost 30 species contained in this study guide breed primarily in shrublands, yet likely will be observed in other habitats (notably woodland and grasslands) while monitoring. This will be also true for species that primarily nest in other habitat types. Why? Many species have adapted, breeding in different habitats, Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Yellowthroats, for example. Shrubland species also will widely forage for food for their nestlings during the breeding season. Non-native plants in shrubland habitat tend to be 'insect poor', so shrubland nesters must extend their search. Various studies have shown that 'insect poor' habitats reduce nesting success.

The other factor influencing occupancy overlap: Fragmentation of habitat types – aka edge effects. BCN monitoring counts birds at points within 'natural areas' (approx 10% of the land area across the CW region) there is a significant edge effect – shrubland birds heard/seen from a woodland point, for example.

Regular (and rare) BCN shrublandland breeding birds - in alphabetical order



Species	Trend	% Error	Credibility	Points	Records	Frequency	Trend Status	
Alder Flycatcher			Poor	19	23	1%	Poorly Known	compare Willow Flycatcher
American Goldfinch	-2.96%	0.56%	Good	1602	13791	65%	Moderate Decline	
American Redstart	-8.14%	5.54%	Mod	34	57	1%	Moderate Decline	
Bell's Vireo			Poor	26	87	1%	Poorly Known	
Black-billed Cuckoo	-1.70%	4.26%	Good	58	66	2%	Uncertain	
Blue Grosbeak			Poor	14	20	1%	Poorly Known	
Blue Jay	3.68%	0.62%	Good	1261	7386	51%	Moderate Increase	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1.61%	1.22%	Good	585	2016	24%	Moderate Increase	soft, high pitched
Blue-winged Warbler	0.10%	3.70%	Good	69	144	3%	Stable	
Brown Thrasher	0.32%	1.25%	Good	536	1360	22%	Stable	
Cedar Waxwing	-0.29%	1.25%	Good	665	3476	27%	Stable	
Chestnut-sided Warbler	2.12%	4.70%	Good	53	95	2%	Uncertain	
Chipping Sparrow	-0.67%	3.01%	Good	152	247	6%	Stable	compare Pine Warbler
Common Grackle	-0.31%	0.88%	Good	1108	8196	45%	Stable	
Eastern Towhee	4.42%	0.97%	Good	622	3038	25%	Moderate Increase	
Gray Catbird	0.84%	0.64%	Good	1111	6907	45%	Moderate Increase	listen for the meow
Loggerhead Shrike			Poor	15	22	1%	Poorly Known	highly variable
Northern Cardinal	0.39%	0.49%	Good	1496	8461	61%	Stable	
Orchard Oriole	3.45%	1.79%	Good	328	828	13%	Moderate Increase	
Prairie Warbler	may appear; breeding further N							
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	6.40%	2.90%	Good	157	260	6%	Moderate Increase	
Warbling Vireo	5.40%	1.35%	Good	407	1527	17%	Moderate Increase	
White-eyed Vireo	1.30%	5.57%	Mod	40	62	2%	Uncertain	
Willow Flycatcher	-3.43%	0.93%	Good	507	3045	21%	Moderate Decline	compare Alder Flycatcher
Yellow Warbler	-0.75%	0.93%	Good	679	4285	28%	Stable	
Yellow-breasted Chat	0.52%	3.00%	Good	95	293	4%	Stable	

Regular (and rare) BCN shrubland birds - ranked by abundance



Species	Trend	% Error	Credibility	Points	Records	Frequency	Trend Status	
American Goldfinch	-3.0%	0.56%	Good	1602	13791	65%	Moderate Decline	
Northern Cardinal	0.4%	0.49%	Good	1496	8461	61%	Stable	
Common Grackle	-0.3%	0.88%	Good	1108	8196	45%	Stable	
Blue Jay	3.7%	0.62%	Good	1261	7386	51%	Moderate Increase	
Gray Catbird	0.8%	0.64%	Good	1111	6907	45%	Moderate Increase	listen for the meow
Yellow Warbler	-0.8%	0.93%	Good	679	4285	28%	Stable	
Cedar Waxwing	-0.3%	1.25%	Good	665	3476	27%	Stable	
Willow Flycatcher	-3.4%	0.93%	Good	507	3045	21%	Moderate Decline	compare Alder Flycatcher
Eastern Towhee	4.4%	0.97%	Good	622	3038	25%	Moderate Increase	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1.6%	1.22%	Good	585	2016	24%	Moderate Increase	soft, high pitched
Warbling Vireo	5.4%	1.35%	Good	407	1527	17%	Moderate Increase	
Brown Thrasher	0.3%	1.25%	Good	536	1360	22%	Stable	
Orchard Oriole	3.5%	1.79%	Good	328	828	13%	Moderate Increase	
Yellow-breasted Chat	0.5%	3.00%	Good	95	293	4%	Stable	
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	6.4%	2.90%	Good	157	260	6%	Moderate Increase	mostly silent; twitters
Chipping Sparrow	-0.7%	3.01%	Good	152	247	6%	Stable	compare Pine Warbler
Blue-winged Warbler	0.1%	3.70%	Good	69	144	3%	Stable	
Chestnut-sided Warbler	2.1%	4.70%	Good	53	95	2%	Uncertain	
Bell's Vireo			Poor	26	87	1%	Poorly Known	
Black-billed Cuckoo	-1.7%	4.26%	Good	58	66	2%	Uncertain	
White-eyed Vireo	1.3%	5.57%	Mod	40	62	2%	Uncertain	
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Alder Flycatcher			Poor	19	23	1%	Poorly Known	compare Willow Flycatcher
Loggerhead Shrike			Poor	15	22	1%	Poorly Known	highly variable
Blue Grosbeak			Poor	14	20	1%	Poorly Known	
Prairie Warbler								may appear; now breeding further N

Shrubland Birds - the 'Regulars' - sounds and mnemonics
notes, pitfalls, other species to consider or rule out



Warbling Vireo 'when I see you I will seize you and I'll squeeze you till you squirt'

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher wheezy high-pitched song and call; song may include partial birdsong of other species

Gray Catbird primary scratchy song, "mew" and "eerie" calls; note also wren-like "ratchet call"

Brown Thrasher primary song is paired phrases; note Churr call; be aware whistle resembles **Red-winged Blackbird**

Willow Flycatcher RITZbew song and "whit" call

Cedar Waxwing trilled single notes; alarm call is similar to **American Robin**

American Goldfinch variable song includes other birds' sounds; note "potato chip" flight call, toowee call and fledgling "feed me" calls

Eastern Towhee 'drink, drink your, drink your teeee', loud chewee call

Orchard Oriole (compare with **Baltimore Oriole**) rich, lively warbling song with a wide pitch range

Yellow Warbler 'sweet sweet you're so sweet' and 'pleased to meet you' (learn both song types, compare with **Chestnut-sided Warbler**)

Northern Cardinal primary song 'purDEE purDEE'; one song variation resembles Carolina Wren

Priority shrubland species of conservation concern

LEVEL 1 - HIGHEST CONCERN

LEVEL 1: Black-billed Cuckoo

LEVEL 2: Brown Thrasher, Field Sparrow, Willow Flycatcher, Northern Bobwhite

LEVEL 3: Blue-winged Warbler, Loggerhead Shrike, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bell's Vireo, Eastern Towhee, Prairie Warbler (rare), Golden-winged Warbler (rare)

For certain species on this list, BCN's monitoring area represents a core/important breeding area, significant for sustaining the individual species' population; other BOC species listed here are currently rare or casual breeders only

