

FOREWORD

This atlas gives an up-to-date account of every wild bird species that nests in the state of Maryland and the District of Columbia. Each species account includes a color photograph, dates of seasonal occurrence and nesting, maps of current distribution and change during the past two decades, and a graph of trend in abundance. The accounts also describe habitat requirements, threats, and conservation needs. This book is based on five years of intensive fieldwork by professional and amateur observers who searched every 5×5 -km (3×3 -mi) tract of land in Maryland and the District. Through comparison with the results of a similar survey 20 years ago, it shows where changes in bird populations are occurring, how these changes are related to ongoing changes in the environment, and what steps are needed to prevent further loss of nesting species.

This breeding bird atlas is unique in its multiscale approach, which permits comparisons by county, by physiographic regions, and for Maryland as a whole. Thanks to the North American Breeding Bird Survey it also allows comparison with eastern North America and the entire continent. All modern grid-based atlases map the distribution of each species during a specified period (generally five years), and most use a grid of about 5 or 10 km (3 or 6 mi) on a side. A few (including this one) incorporate special techniques to estimate changes in abundance as well as changes in distribution. As in the previous atlas, the Baltimore-Washington corridor was subdivided into quarterblocks (2.5×2.5 km [1.5×1.5 mi]) to increase the ability to detect changes in bird distribution in the counties experiencing the most change in human activities. The southernmost county and the northwestern-most were also quarterblocked to facilitate the detection of bird distribution changes that might result from global climate change.

The basic fieldwork was conducted by amateur and professional observers who first explored the 5×5 -km (3×3 -mi) block in which they lived, searching for breeding evidence of each species they found. As the fieldwork progressed, many workers shifted their activities into other blocks that had not been as well sampled. In the final years the Atlas Committee solicited help from experts to visit undercovered blocks in order to attain adequate coverage of every block in Maryland and the District of Columbia.

In addition to the original observers who provided basic coverage, expert birders were trained to run 15-stop mini-routes in alternate 5-km (3-mi) blocks throughout the state for comparison with results from mini-routes run during the previous atlas. Special efforts were also made to detect nocturnal and crepuscular birds.

The Atlas Committee met almost monthly from February 2002 to June 2009, planning coverage, tracking results, planning illustrations, solving coverage problems, and tracking progress with the text and illustrations.

Nearly one-fifth of Maryland's breeding bird species were confirmed in fewer than 10 atlas blocks, raising concerns that some of them might disappear before the next atlas survey is conducted. In recent decades we have observed how natural catastrophes have caused sudden declines in certain species: nesting Purple Martins that starved during the prolonged heavy rains from Hurricane Agnes in June 1972, migrating Chimney Swifts swept into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean by Hurricane Wilma in late October 2005, sleeping Northern Bobwhites trapped under an impenetrable crust of ice in the winter of 1977, House Finches infected with conjunctivitis since January 1994, and several species affected by West Nile virus in the present decade.

We have also observed how increases in human popula-

tion and changes in people's lifestyle are taking a greater and greater toll on bird populations every year. Maryland leads the nation in passing legislation to protect prime nesting habitat of forest interior-dependent species from fragmentation. It is now the responsibility of every citizen to seek ways to further reduce our cumulative impact on avian populations. For example, more Maryland counties should enact cats indoors legislation. U.S. cities should follow the Toronto City Council's lead in mandating bird-friendliness in the construction of new high-rise and nonresidential low-rise buildings and reduction of nighttime glare and light trespass. And we must all strive to reduce the avian casualties at clear and reflective glass windows, which are estimated to take the

lives of a billion birds annually in our country. We must drastically reduce the hazards that we construct along migratory corridors. We should all slow down when driving on narrow rural roads in the early morning. Every landscaper and home owner should plant native trees and shrubs that are preferred by our native birds rather than exotic species that are of little use to them. And finally, we must wean ourselves away from the vast biological wastelands called lawns that are now the major crop in our suburban counties; they provide neither food nor shelter for any of the birds we would like to protect.

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