

# Recent Records of Rarer Birds at Hutcheson Memorial Forest

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**Abstract.** Observations are recorded for seven species not previously reported from Hutcheson Memorial Forest. New information on the status of seven other rare birds is also reported. At least four of these are currently expanding their breeding ranges within New Jersey: the Acadian Flycatcher, Cerulean Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and Blue Grosbeak. The cumulative list of birds known from the property has increased as follows: 110 species by 1962, 136 by 1971, 153 by 1975, and 163 species today. We are approaching saturation (a plateau) in the sampling curve for the avifauna.

## Species List of Records

Within the following list an asterisk (\*) precedes those species not previously reported for Hutcheson Memorial Forest (HMF) in the literature.

\* Common Pintail (*Anas acuta*)—a new species for the area, albeit only as a flock (six birds) overhead on 7 October 1976 (C. Leck). Lakes created at nearby Colonial Park (Somerset Co.) are attracting numerous waterfowl, many of which regularly pass over the HMF property.

American Woodcock (*Philohela minor*)—one flushed and banded within the forest on 16 June 1980 (B. Murray and C. Leck). Previously it was suspected that summer birds might imply HMF nesting, but it now seems that these scarce visitors are simply on post-breeding dispersal.

\* Common Snipe (*Capella gallinago*)—the only HMF record is of a migrant flushed from a path in the fields on 10 October 1976 (C. Leck).

Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)—a small flock visited younger fields on 14 August 1979 (C. Leck). The species was widely distributed in central New Jersey in 1979. The only previous HMF record was ten years earlier (May 1969; J. Kricher).

\* Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)—a single HMF record; one appeared along the forest edge on 21 November 1977 (E. Stiles). It is a rare but regular fall migrant to the New Jersey coast, coming from western states.

Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax vireescens*)—there are very few records here since 1961. B. Murray noted one 11 June 1978, and since this southern species is currently extending its range in northern states we may expect more sightings in the future. (The species has bred as nearby as Princeton.)

\* Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*)—previously unpublished records (14 May 1966 and 24 May 1967) from J. Swinebroad's banding program

provide the first HMF records. It is generally a rare migrant in the region.

\* Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*)—also new for HMF. One called for several days in late June 1980 (B. Murray) from tall trees near the property entrance. This vireo is a common breeder nearby and is generally restricted to nesting quite close to rivers or canals.

Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorus*)—there were some HMF records in the early 1960's, and a pair may have nested here in 1961 (Swinebroad 1962). Although there have been some recent records (e.g. B. Murray in June 1980), the species requires extensive areas of continuous forest (Robbins 1980) and is unlikely to become a regular summer resident at HMF.

\* Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*)—although the species must be a regular, but rare, migrant at HMF there are only a few reports. I observed singing males in the forest on 16 August 1979, and 6 May 1980. Since this species is expanding its breeding range in New Jersey we should encounter it more frequently in the future.

Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*)—in May and June of 1980 a bird persistently sang (territorial?) from an old field, near the forest edge (B. Murray and C. Leck). This warbler is also expanding its breeding range in the State and might colonize HMF old fields in the future.

Louisiana Waterthrush (*Seiurus motacilla*)—a rare transient along the brook, usually as an early spring migrant (e.g. 13 April). One present for several days in August 1979 was banded (C. Leck) by setting a mist-net across the stream, where the bird regularly foraged.

\* Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*)—a new species for HMF. One was seen in low shrubbery along the forest path on 21 September 1980 (C. Leck). Central New Jersey had a substantial flight of this otherwise rare fall migrant in 1980.

Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*)—there are some recent summer records from HMF. The species has bred in nearby Middlebush (Swinebroad 1962) and is currently extending its range northward through the State. It may well breed at HMF in the future, in brushy areas of the old field/forest edge.

## Literature Cited

- Robbins, C. S. 1980. Effect of forest fragmentation on breeding bird populations in the piedmont of the mid-Atlantic region. *Atlantic Naturalist*, 33: 31-36.  
Swinebroad, J. 1962. An annotated list of the birds of Hutcheson Forest. *Bull. N. J. Acad. Sci.*, 7: 1-6.