

HISTORY & FACTS of the MAY CENSUS

MAY	14-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS							
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
86 / 1,202	90 / 763	86 / 786	83 / 1,018	104 / 1,150	81 / 808	82 / 1,014	89 / 1,213	97 / 1,040
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023				
102 / 1,171	85 / 933	98 / 1,146	103 / 1,014	82 / 867				

Most Species seen in May : 104 on 05/09/2014.

Most Total Birds seen in May : 1,213 on 05/12/2017.

Fewest Species seen in May : 81 on 05/09/2015.

Fewest Total Birds seen in May : 763 on 05/07/2011.

Species Average in May : 90.6 Species.

Total Birds Average in May : 1,008.9 Individuals.

Lowest Temperature on May Census : 34-degrees F on 05/07/2020.

Highest Temperature on May Census : 89-degrees F on 05/07/2011.

Longest Time Afield on May Census : 12 hours & 10 minutes on 05/07/2020.

Shortest Time Afield on May Census : 7 hours & 15 minutes on 05/08/2010.

LAST MAY'S FIELD REPORT

05/05/23	TOTAL SPECIES:	82	START / END TIME:	6:20am - 4:05pm		
	TOTAL BIRDS:	867	TIME AFIELD:	9:45	FT. MI.:	11.00
ROUTE:	Red Lock Trailhead south to Bath Rd., with a stop at Trail Mix in Peninsula, (census route cut short due to total lack of migrants and birds more commonly found in April than May.)					
TEMP.:	38F ~ 69F ~ 68F	CONDITIONS:	Foggy and chilly early, finally warming up around 11:30am; sunny with blue skies most of the day, turning mostly sunny with light breezes.			
TRAIL CONDITIONS:	Good.					
RIVER CONDITIONS:	Higher than normal due to previous four days of rain.					
OBSERVERS:	John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus.					

TEN YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL

On May 09, 2014 we set a census high with the strikingly beautiful and aptly named, at least for the male, Black-throated Blue Warbler. The female is about as different from the male as any of the other North American spring warbler migrants - and if you've ever seen a female on a late-in-the-season October day when you weren't expecting anything other than a few Yellow-rumped Warblers - then she is by far just as strikingly beautiful! At the time, this was only our third sighting of this species, a species by the way, that no matter how many you observed during spring migration, wasn't nearly enough!

MAY 2024's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*)

DESCRIPTION: Male Black-throated Blue Warblers are strikingly marked in deep blue, black, and white, but this species is the most highly sexually dimorphic of all wood-warblers, and females are quite drab. **MALE:** The striking male is unique; deep bluish on the upperparts and with an extensive black area on the underparts from the auriculars, chin, and throat back along the entire sides. A conspicuous patch of white is located at the base of the primaries; wing bars are completely lacking. There is a flash of white in the corners of the tail. **FEMALE:** Quite different, plain olive-brown above and buffy below, with dusky ear coverts, whitish stripe above the eye, narrow white crescent below eye. Small white wing spot at base of primaries.

LENGTH: 5" to 5.3" **WINGSPAN:** 7" to 8" **WEIGHT:** 9.6 grams to 14.0 grams

VOICE: **SONG:** A lazy series of 3 to 5 buzzy "zweee" notes, even in pitch or slightly descending but concluding with a strong, ascending buzz: "zwee zwee zweeee?" or "zur zurr zreee". Some notes are occasionally clearer and less buzzy. It is a distinctive and easily learned song. **CALL:** A soft "tik," "thik," or "dit," strikingly similar to the call note of the Dark-eyed Junco; this note is often given in a rapid series (when alarmed?). **FLIGHT NOTE:** A distinctive, prolonged "tseet."

HABITS: Often tame and confiding, spending much time foraging low in brush and foliage. Males forage higher than females on average; they spend much time in the subcanopy at 15-45 feet while females usually forage below 15 feet. There is some habitat segregation by the sexes on the wintering grounds, with males more partial to primary forest and canopy feeding and the females occupying younger, lower growth. Foraging involves gleaning of leaves and short sallies for flying insects; often quite deliberate in its movements, but sometimes more active. Frequently holds its wings partly spread, suggestive of an American Redstart. In addition to insects, the diet includes fruits (particularly in fall and winter) and occasionally seeds. In fall, often seen feeding at sapsucker drillings. Late fall and winter birds in the East often feed on suet and peanut butter at feeding stations.

NESTING: **NEST:** Built close to the ground in dense undergrowth in fork of rhododendrons, laurels, yews, small firs, hemlocks, spruces, raspberry and blueberry bushes, 1- to 4-feet above ground (rarely to 20-feet); made of strips of birch bark, straws, ferns, dry leaves, lined with black rootlets, horsehair, skunk fur and mosses, bound together with spider webs. **EGGS:** 3 to 5 eggs, usually 4 eggs, white or cream-white, speckled or blotched with browns and grays. **INCUBATION:** By female; adults extraordinarily fearless of persons at nest when pair feeding young; incubation 12 days, female broods young, both parents feed them; young first fly 10 days after hatching.

HABITAT: **BREEDING:** In upland deciduous or mixed deciduous-coniferous forests with a dense understory, most characteristically on mountain slopes and ridges. Important trees include maple, beech, birch, oaks, spruce, and hemlock. Undergrowth often consists of thickets of rhododendron (especially in the Appalachians), mountain laurel, hobblebush, yew, and various

(continued...)

saplings. In most areas, pure coniferous forest is shunned, but in West Virginia and elsewhere it may occupy forests dominated by spruces, either in dense young stands or in mature stands where edges or clearings permit a dense understory to grow; oak-pine woodlands and hemlock-dominated ravines are inhabited in some parts of the Appalachians. Deciduous woods of birch, beech, and especially maple are important in the northwestern part of the breeding range. Breeding elevations are generally about 2,100 feet (usually above 2,400 feet) in the southern Appalachians, but down to about 600 feet (usually 1,200 feet) in Pennsylvania and even lower in New England. Summering males found below optimal elevations and in more fragmented forests are usually second-year birds and probably only rarely find mates.

WINTERING: Birds inhabit wet and dry forests, forest edges and undergrowth, mangroves, and shade-coffee farms; wintering elevations range from sea level to the highest portions of the Greater Antilles, but on most islands this species is more numerous at higher elevations.

MIGRATION: Most often found in woodland or woodland edge habitats, but are often found in scrubby deciduous growth. They are frequently seen in the company of Canada Warblers.

RANGE: **BREEDS:** From northeast Minnesota (scarce), northern Wisconsin, northern Michigan (mainly Upper Peninsula), south-central Ontario (west along the northern shore of Lake Superior), east through southern Quebec to the Canadian Maritimes. Breeds south in New England to Connecticut, and southward through the Appalachian Mountains and adjacent highlands from New York to northern Georgia, including highland areas of northern New Jersey. In the Great Lakes region it formerly bred south to southern Michigan and northeast Ohio. There are records of summering birds west to Saskatchewan (nesting proven) and Manitoba. There are also summer records for Anticosti Island and the Madeleine Island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The greatest breeding densities are found in the central Appalachians from New York to western North Carolina.

WINTERS: Mainly in the Bahamas and the Greater Antilles, including the Cayman Islands. It is less numerous on the Virgin Islands and islands of the western Caribbean, but still regular. It winters casually on Bermuda and in the Lesser Antilles (recorded in St. Martin, Guadeloupe, Antigua, and Dominica). Small numbers winter (regularly?) along the Caribbean coast from southern Veracruz and eastern Yucatan Peninsula south to Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, and northernmost South America (Colombia and Venezuela). Within the U.S. a very few winter annually in south Florida, and it is casual elsewhere in the southern states. Most birds recorded in early winter do not remain (or survive) through the entire winter.

STATUS: There has undoubtedly been considerable reduction in range and numbers with the extensive cutting and fragmentation of eastern deciduous forests. Some recovery has occurred, particularly in New England, with the regrowth of forests. Breeding Bird Survey data show no strong population trends since 1966.

DID YOU KNOW?: I can't stress enough about how fragile the requirements are for a species such as the Black-throated Blue Warbler. If you must, re-read the environments this bird passes through, to winter, migrate north, breed, migrate south, and winter again - Minnesota, Quebec, Ontario, the Appalachian Mountains, the Caribbean - it really is truly amazing! It's doing a "time-share" twice a year, beach to mountains, and through Ohio and other states just to get there and back, and the perils involved (weather, predators, man-made obstacles, etc.)

Abundance Codes on the graphs below indicate the best time of year to find the Black-throated Blue Warbler in N.E. Ohio.

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
			* ooorrr	uuCCCuuu	rrrr
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
o	r rrrrrrrrrr	uuuCCCCC	uuurrrroo	ooooooo	oo

- CCCCCCCC** = Common to Abundant. Frequently encountered in this region during this time of year.
- uuuuuuuu** = Uncommon. Occurs regularly during this time of year but not frequently detected.
- rrrrrrrrrr** = Rare. These birds can occur more or less annually but are easily missed in their scant presence in the region.
- ooooooo** = Occasional. Limited history in this region and are not to be expected.
- ******* = Accidental. Few records in the past 60 years. Not expected in this region during this time of year.
- |||||** = Fluctuating Abundance. May occur some years yet absent other years. Irruptive or overwintering birds.

History of the Black-throated Blue Warbler on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
JAN.								
FEB.								
MAR.								
APR.								
MAY		1			3*			
JUN.								
JUL.								
AUG.								
SEP.								
OCT.	1							
NOV.								
DEC.								

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
JAN.							
FEB.							
MAR.							
APR.							
MAY	1	2	1	1	2		
JUN.							DID YOU KNOW?:
JUL.							My first experience with this warbler was not far from our current house? As a budding young birder I came upon a pair of Black-throated Blue
AUG.							
SEP.			1				
OCT.			1				
NOV.							
DEC.							

- *** = HIGHEST COUNT TOTAL ON CENSUS.
- BOLD #** = HIGHEST COUNT FOR THAT YEAR.

Warblers one fine Spring day along the Seneca Trail at the F.A. Seiberling "Naturealm" (as it USED to be spelled!) It was an almost surreal moment for my young eyes, a male and a female, about 4 feet off the ground and a mere eight feet away!



The "Midnight Rider" - with a shade of blue like no other warbler - the male Black-throated Blue Warbler is a species that never fails to delight upon its Spring arrival! The olive coloration of the female is more than welcome, too!

(photo by: Brian Lasenby)

DID YOU KNOW?: At one time, a few Black-throated Blues may have regularly nested in Ashtabula County. L.E. Hicks observed summering birds in Wayne Township in 1928 and 1929 and the former Pymatuning Bog during 1931. Breeding was established at both sites; a nest with eggs was discovered on June 11, 1931, and adults accompanied by dependent young were observed on July 7, 1928. Since then, habitat destruction eliminated these nesting locations and breeding Black-throated Blues have not been observed in the county.

DID YOU KNOW?: Your daily cup (or is it, cups?) of coffee has a significant impact on our "wood-warbler" species such as the beautiful Black-throated Blue Warbler?

COFFEE PLANTATIONS LIMIT NATIVE BIRDS' DIETS

By Andrei Ionescu
Earth.com staff writer

All over the world, forests are being increasingly reduced by human activities to smaller remnants scattered among the agricultural lands that have often replaced them. This has a marked negative impact on the ecosystems previously supported by forests, including a variety of bird populations, with the majority of bird species now struggling to survive in an increasingly human-dominated environment.

According to a recent study led by the University of Utah, for birds which used to inhabit the vast forests of Central America, the massive replacement of forested land with coffee plantations has significantly diminished the amount of their preferred foods, forcing them to change their diets and habitats in order to survive.

To examine changes in their diets, the researchers conducted isotope analyses of the feathers of four bird species (the Orange-billed Nightingale Thrush, the Silver-throated Tanager, the White-throated Thrush, and the Ochre-bellied Flycatcher) living in the land around the Las Cruces Biological Station in Costa Rica, whose previously luxurious forests have been largely replaced in recent years by coffee plantations.

Along with the radio tracking of their movements, the isotope analyses have revealed that birds eat fewer invertebrates in coffee plantations than in forests, suggesting that disruptions in their ecosystem significantly impacts their dietary options.

"Growing human ecological impact on the planet, especially via habitat loss and degradation and climate change, often impacts bird diets negatively as well," said study lead author Cagan H. Sekercioglu, a professor of Ecology and Ornithology at Utah. "These negative changes, including declines in key dietary resources like insects and other invertebrates can lead to reduced survival, especially of rapidly growing young, often leading to population declines and losses of these undernourished birds."

To consume enough invertebrates - which offer them the necessary nutrients to survive - birds living in and around coffee plantations need to forage frequently in the small forest fragments and narrow forest corridors alongside rivers. While more mobile birds, such as the Silver-throated Tanager or the White-throated Thrush move constantly to get their preferred, protein-rich food, less mobile species like the Orange-billed Nightingale Thrush are forced to adapt to the poorer diets they can find in coffee plantations.

However, even for mobile birds, the situation is worse than it used to be. "These birds' shifting their feeding to other places may result in new ecological interactions that can themselves have negative consequences," Sekercioglu explained. "For example, increased competition with birds in these new places or overpredation on a prey species that was formerly not consumed as much."

To help protecting these bird populations, local governments in tropical regions should prioritize the conservation of intact forests, secondary growth forests, and strips of forest alongside rivers to increase the connectivity of forest remnants, while coffee-drinkers all around the world can choose to buy bird-friendly coffee that is grown in plantations with more tree cover and forest remnants, which are beneficial for native birds.

DID YOU KNOW?:

Well, after that depressing news, what can you do? Well, buckaroo's, it's your lucky day! If you are reading this then you certainly are a card-carrying member of "The Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census Society!" So, get out of that twenty-car-deep Charbucks coffee drive-thru line and get ready for your answer! (By the way - I'm a two-cupper myself, can you tell!?)

(Editor's Note: Just a little line I like to inject to see if anyone is really reading!)

THE VIRTUES OF SHADE-GROWN COFFEE
HOW TO CHOOSE A BIRD-FRIENDLY COFFEE

When it comes to caffeinating responsibly, selecting the right brew can be confusing.

This guide should help.

Words by Benji Jones

(published March 06, 2018)

In the age of artisanal toast and asparagus water, choosing even the most basic products can be overwhelming. Coffee is no exception - especially if you care about wildlife. Distinctions like "organic" and "shade-grown" are important for those who want to caffeinate responsibly, but it's difficult to know whether to choose one over the other, and why it might be worth the price premium. Yet the impacts of these choices can be significant. Last year, for example, the world consumed nearly 21 billion pounds of coffee, grown across 27 million acres in the tropical forest belt, a mecca for birds and other wildlife.

For the java junkie, there's good news up top: coffee tends to have a lower impact on birds than most other export commodities grown in biodiversity-rich areas of the tropics, such as palm oil (often used in donuts, coffee's sidekick). "Among the range of land use choices that we face that contribute to our daily lives, coffee is one of those choices that is benign," says Anand Osuri, an ecologist at Columbia University.

But not all coffee farms are created equal. Generally, farms that look like forests, often called "agroforests" for their mix of coffee shrubs and stands of trees, typically house higher bird diversity than monoculture farms that have little or no natural canopy cover. "The more it looks like a forest or feels like a forest, that's the issue," says Robert Rice, a geographer at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. While this idea may be simple, choosing coffee that's good for birds and other wildlife is not so clear cut. Here's what you should consider the next time you're out for caffeine.

LOOK FOR SUSTAINABLE BEANS FIRST - *If you can afford it, opt for beans that are certified shade-grown, which are stamped with seals such as "Rainforest Alliance Certified" or "Bird Friendly." Both certifications require farmers to maintain or restore some level of canopy cover - a proxy for "forest-like" - and prohibit harmful pesticides, which limit prey for birds. The Bird Friendly certification, developed by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, is considered a slightly more rigorous standard from a conservation perspective (its rules related to canopy cover, pesticide use, and product purity are stricter). But both seals point consumers to coffee that maintains some habitat for birds.*

The approach [our standard] takes is to ensure that there's natural habitat on and around farms," says Deanna Newsom, a senior manager for Research and Science Communication at Rainforest Alliance, which certifies products ranging from coffee to office supplies. "And the way we do that is by ensuring that any existing natural habitat is conserved when a farm gets certified." Certified shade-grown coffees make up only a small part of the global market - 5.6 percent for Rainforest Alliance and around 1 percent for Bird Friendly. Often times coffees with sustainable seals also have a seal certifying them as organic (Bird Friendly has to be both). But if you can only find organic, that's still a better option. While organic has no requirement for canopy cover, it bans the use of synthetic pesticides, like Chlorpyrifos, which some farmers apply to thwart insects such as the consumptive coffee berry borer and leaf miner. Pesticides indirectly harm birds by drawing down their source of food (some birds, for example, eat the larvae of the coffee borer).

SUPPORT 'RELATIONSHIP' COFFEE ROASTERS - Without a sustainability seal, it's more difficult to tell if your coffee comes from a farm that's hospitable for birds, but not impossible. Katie Goodall, a scientist and assistant dean at the School for Field Studies, says to look for "relationship" coffee: small roasters in the U.S. who form ties with smallholder coffee communities to develop their product. These communities, she says, produce the majority of sustainably grown beans. "Look on the package for how [the company] purchased their coffee," she says. "They'll tell you about the communities or the farms where they're buying their coffee." According to Goodall, promoting bird conservation hinges on supporting these farmers. "If your goal is to protect birds, then supporting the farmers... is part and parcel with that goal," she says.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ARABICA AND ROBUSTA BEANS - Then there's the question of coffee strain, or species. On a bag of your favorite brew, you might see "100% Arabica Coffee," which means that the beans come from the arabica coffee species. Arabica is most likely the species you know and love - with perceived greater quality and sweeter flavor, it makes up about 60 percent of the market. Robusta, on the other hand, is considered the lower-quality sister, and is often used to make instant coffee. In addition to quality and flavor, the strains are distinguished by their price - and in their ability to support birds. If you know little of the farm in which the coffee was grown, opt for arabica. The species is more commonly grown under at least partial shade, whereas robusta, a more sun and heat tolerant plant, is typically grown in more intensively managed steads with little canopy cover - a worse environment for most wildlife. (If robusta is shade-grown, however, new research shows that it can support a near-equal diversity of birds, relative to arabica.)

AS A LAST RESORT, CONSIDER THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN - If all else fails, look for the country of origin - another, albeit far less reliable, method to screen for sustainably-grown coffee. For example, in Brazil and Vietnam, the two largest global producers, the vast majority of coffee is grown under high-intensity, full-sun conditions - in other words, in farms that don't look like forests. But in other countries, like India, Ecuador, and Peru, the majority of coffee is grown under a canopy. And canopy cover is better for birds. "The reason why Indian coffee is so good for wildlife is that it's shade-grown," says Krithi Karanth, a scientist at the Wildlife Conservation Society, but keep in mind that a country's coffee growing conditions can turn on a dime based on political or economic changes.

So there you have it. If you want to help birds through your personal coffee choices, select a coffee that's certified sustainable or from a relationship roaster - or better yet, choose brews that meet both. Also consider the coffee species and where its grown. For those of you who grab jo on the go, head to smaller roasters or major retailers that serve certified brews, like Caribou Coffee, which now serves 100 percent Rainforest Alliance Certified coffee (visit the website of Rainforest Alliance or Bird Friendly to see where you can buy their products). With these tips in mind, choosing the right beans hopefully won't worsen your caffeine headache.

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MEET THE BIRDS SUPPORTED BY BIRD FRIENDLY COFFEE FARMS

From: Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute

Your coffee is stronger than you think! Help protect birds
and the vital habitats they call home by buying Bird Friendly.

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) - This secretive warbler ("The Towpath Traveler" - 05/2016) is commonly found walking and hopping along the soil of coffee farms in Mexico and Central America where it searches for a wide variety of food among dead leaves and low branches.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) - The threatened Golden-winged Warbler (future "The Towpath Traveler" subject) is found primarily in forests and coffee farms that retain thick vegetation with the characteristic hanging dead leaves that these warblers probe for dead insects. Recent studies show female Golden-winged Warblers are more likely to be found outside of coffee farms while males are more likely to be found within them.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) - This tiny warbler (future "The Towpath Traveler" subject) can be found creeping up the trunks of trees and branches throughout coffee farms, eating insects found hiding in the bark.

TENNESSEE WARBLER (*Leiothlypis peregrina*) - This tiny songbird (future "The Towpath Traveler" subject) feasts on both insects and nectar of shade coffee trees in the winter season. It depends on forest patches near coffee plantations to fuel up for spring migration back to the U.S. and Canada.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) - This characteristic bird ("The Towpath Traveler" - 05/2022) of grasslands and marshes often spends the winter in coffee growing landscapes of Central America and Mexico where its loud chip can be heard among the coffee plants.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) - This small and beautiful warbler (future "The Towpath Traveler" subject) is one of the most common residents of Honduran coffee farms where it searches for insects among the leaves of coffee shade trees and the coffee plants themselves.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) - This small warbler (future "The Towpath Traveler" subject) can be found in mixed-species flocks traveling through the canopy above coffee farms where it searches for insects on the underside of shade tree leaves.

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*) - The characteristic fluting song of the breeding Wood Thrush ("The Towpath Traveler" - 06/2022) is not heard on its wintering range. It is a common but often overlooked bird in coffee understories where it forages among the dead leaves for insects.

SCARLET TANAGER (*Piranga olivacea*) - These brightly colored tanagers ("The Towpath Traveler" - 07/2022) are a favorite among birdwatchers in North America. They change their plumage to yellow and black while migrating to their winter homes among coffee farms of South America, where they eat both insects and wild fruit found in the shade trees above coffee farms.

"Be a part of nature - not apart of nature." ~ D.W. Vogus



USDA ORGANIC

- Focuses on production methods
- Coffee farmers cannot use any USDA-prohibited substances (e.g., fertilizers, pesticides) for at least 3 years prior to harvest
- Most prohibited substances are synthetic, but there are nonsynthetic (natural) as well
- Additional requirements on farming practices



FAIR TRADE

- Fair trade programs primarily focus on raising the income of farmers by setting a price floor
- Fcft: Fair Trade Certified (administered by Fair Trade USA in the US)
- Right: Fairtrade (administered by Fair Trade America, a different org). This is a much newer program.
- Program particulars differ. e.g., Fairtrade America does not certify American farmers; Fair Trade USA certifies American producers and covers a wider range of products (from clothing to seafood)



RAINFORREST ALLIANCE & UTZ

- Include criteria for social, economic, and environmental impacts
- These two programs are merging; new harmonized Sustainable Agriculture Standards are forthcoming (June 2020)
- Pre-merge, the Rainforest Alliance program was updated most recently in 2017 and followed standards set by the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), a coalition of local and grassroots organizations.



BIRD FRIENDLY

- Run by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center
- To be certified, coffee needs to be organic and shade grown, making it one of the more environmentally strict programs
- In my personal experience, this program isn't as widely available, so access may be an issue

Common Coffee Certifications seen in the United States.

(by: Sensible Sustainability)

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