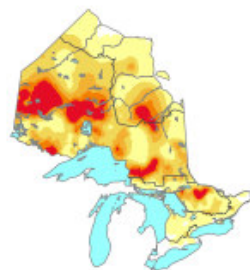


Brown Creeper Factsheet

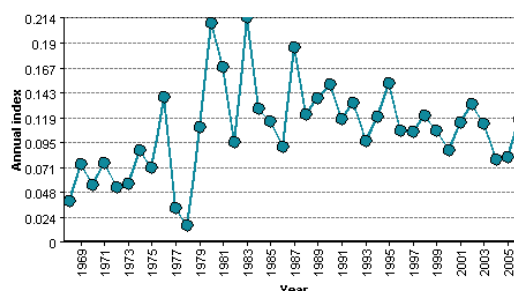
Boreal Bird Toolkit



Brown Creeper



Relative Abundance



Breeding Bird Survey Index Trend 1968-2006 (Canada)

Description and biology: The Brown Creeper is a small, inconspicuous bird (12 -14cm) usually seen creeping up tree trunks searching for small invertebrate prey which it gleans with its thin, down-curved bill. It has brown upperparts streaked with greyish white and buff, white underparts, and a stiff brown tail which it uses to prop itself against tree trunks.

Habitat requirements: During the breeding season, the Brown Creeper is most common in closed-canopy, old-growth coniferous and mixed forests. The Brown Creeper needs an abundance of large live trees for foraging, as well as large dead trees for nesting.

Natural history: The Brown Creeper builds a well-hidden, hammock-shaped nest behind a piece of loose, peeling bark on a dead or dying tree. When foraging, the Brown Creeper climbs vertically, sometimes spiralling up the trunk of the tree before flying to the base of another tree at which time it repeats the whole process.

Conservation status: Despite being widespread, the Brown Creeper is relatively poorly studied and there is concern about its population in western North America and parts of the eastern United States. The estimated Ontario breeding population is 5 million, the majority of which are in the boreal forest. Breeding Bird Surveys show the Brown Creeper increased by 3.5% per year in Ontario between 1968 and 2006, and by 1.8% per year in Canada, although the trends were not statistically significant. Results from the second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (2001-2005) also show the species has increased in the province in the last twenty years. Populations, however, may be greatly reduced compared to historic numbers.

Environmental threats: Loss of suitable breeding and foraging habitat to commercial forestry negatively affects the Brown Creeper, especially where mature and older-growth forests are being logged. Harvesting dead and dying trees also has a negative effect since this is where the creeper builds its nest. The species suffers from collisions with tall buildings in migration, but habitat loss and degradation is seen as the greater threat.

Conservation opportunities: Protection of mature and older-growth forest is required to sustain the Brown Creeper, highlighting the importance of protected areas. Continued efforts to conserve suitable closed-canopy breeding habitat is required, both within and beyond areas currently allocated for industrial activities. The relative abundance map for this species highlights the importance of existing protected areas, such as Algonquin, Lake Superior and Quetico Provincial Parks, as well as areas north of the current limit of commercial forestry.

Boreal Bird Toolkit:

Toolkit and factsheet: © Wildlife Conservation Society Canada and G.G. Beck Ecological Consulting 2008

Breeding Bird Survey: courtesy Canadian Wildlife Service, volunteers & coordinators; www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/mgbc/trends

Abundance map and point count data: courtesy *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario, 2001-2005*; www.birdsontario.org

Photo: © George K. Peck. See toolkit for literature cited.