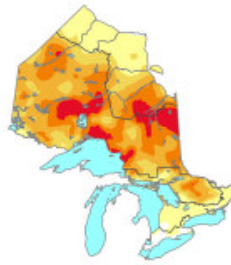


Winter Wren Factsheet

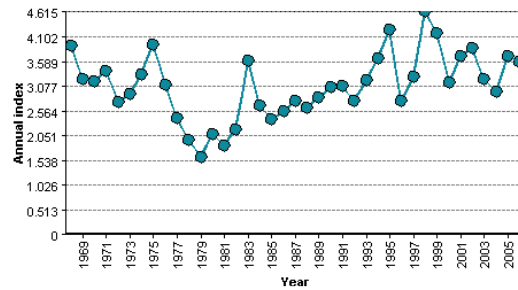
Boreal Bird Toolkit



Winter Wren



Relative Abundance



Breeding Bird Survey Index Trend 1968-2006 (Canada)

Description and biology: The Winter Wren is a tiny bird species (10-11cm) with uniform reddish-brown upperparts and dark barring on the wings, tail, and flanks. It has a pale chin, throat, and eyebrow, a short thin bill, and a short, stubby tail held distinctly upright. It is often found creeping in the understorey where there is an abundance of tangles, snags, stumps, and fallen trees.

Habitat requirements: This wren is found in coniferous woodlands, bogs and swamps, particularly those with a dense, dark, understorey and a moist forest floor. Older-growth and mature coniferous forests represent perfect Winter Wren habitat and the species is abundant in such forests. The presence of snags, downed woody debris and logs, as well as large caliper trees are important forest characteristics.

Natural history: This is the only wren species found outside of the Americas, occurring in Europe, Asia, and northern Africa. While the species is a fairly reclusive, older-growth forest specialist in North America, in Europe it inhabits human-altered habitats and is even common in yards and gardens.

Conservation status: The estimated Winter Wren population in Ontario is 6 million birds, principally within the boreal forest and taiga regions. Breeding Bird Surveys reveal that the Winter Wren increased significantly by 3.5% per year in Ontario between 1968 and 2006, and nonsignificantly by 0.7 % per year over the same period across Canada. Results from the second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (2001-2005) also show the species has increased by a significant 23% over twenty years in the Northern Shield region and by a significant 21% in the adjacent Southern Shield. The continental population, however, is likely well below historical levels. Partners in Flight suggest this species would benefit from stewardship.

Environmental threats: Commercial forestry activities, notably clearcutting practices, are the main threat to the Winter Wren since mature and old-growth forests represent its prime habitat. Forest fragmentation is a related problem, and wren numbers decrease as the amount of edge habitat increases.

Conservation opportunities: Protection of large, intact older-growth forest habitat is required for the protection and stewardship of this interesting wren species. This is particularly important on the breeding grounds, but may also be important in wintering areas in North America. The importance of existing protected areas, such as Lake Superior and Wabakimi Provincial Parks, and Pukaskwa National Park, is clearly evident in the species' relative abundance map, as are frontier-forest areas in northern Ontario. Protection of intact, non-fragmented older-growth forests will benefit this and other species. Similarly, retention of downed woody debris, understorey vegetation, root tip-ups, and mixed-age forest stands would also be expected to benefit the Winter Wren.

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: © Tim Stewart. See toolkit for literature cited.