

## The Birder's Dozen



### Fact Sheet

The Birder's Dozen represents 12 of the 40 priority forest birds that Mass Audubon's Forest for the Birds Project is particularly working to protect. These 12 species were chosen because they are common breeders in Massachusetts forests, are relatively simple to identify by sight and/or sound, and collectively use a wide range of forest types and conditions for breeding and foraging. They also have a significant portion of their global population breeding in the northeastern U.S., thus making Massachusetts and other New England states especially important for them. Many of these birds are showing a decline in their populations, but through proper management of our forests we hope to facilitate an increase in their populations. For those species that are stable we intend to maintain or even increase their population size by applying the same management practices. We encourage you to get to know the Birder's Dozen and explore your property to find out if any of them are residing there!



#### Black-and-white Warbler

**Habitat:** Partially open mature or second-growth deciduous or mixed deciduous-coniferous woodlands. Uses early-successional habitats for foraging after fledging.

**Trend:** Declining in New England.

**ID Tips:** Boldly streaked with black & white stripes; forages like a nuthatch along trunks & limbs of trees.

**Song:** High repetitive song of *weesa weesa weesa weesa weesa*. Typically lasts 3 seconds.

**Management:** Maintain or create deciduous forest with high density of large trees and a dense understory.



#### Black-throated Blue Warbler

**Habitat:** Interior deciduous and mixed deciduous-coniferous woodlands with dense understory.

**Trend:** Stable

**ID Tips:** Deep blue on top with black mask & throat, white "handkerchief-like" wing-patch

**Song:** A thick & buzzy *I'm-so-la-zeee* with last note rising.

**Management:** Minimize linear openings (i.e., straight roads) and maximize forest interior; needs dense understory for nesting – hobblebush, mountain laurel, and saplings of sugar or striped maple.



#### Black-throated Green Warbler

**Habitat:** Prefers uninterrupted coniferous forests.

**Trend:** Stable; likely increasing in MA

**ID Tips:** Bright yellow face, olive head & back, black throat drips down sides onto white belly, two white wingbars.

**Song:** To attract females, males sing *zee-zee-zee-zoo-zee* (a.k.a. *I'm a black-throated-green*); to defend territory, *zoo-zee-zoo-zoo-zee* (a.k.a. *trees-trees-murmuring-trees*).

**Management:** Maximize interior area of coniferous or mixed conifer-hardwood forests. These forests include a large component of eastern hemlock, pines, spruces, and balsam fir.



#### Canada Warbler

**Habitat:** Mixed forests, cedar swamps, riparian forests. Favors dense shrubby growth.

**Trend:** Declining in MA, New England, and Eastern U.S. region.

**ID Tips:** Necklace of black stripes on bright yellow throat & belly, complete white eye-ring

**Song:** Often has soft introductory chips, then *I'm-IN-here, but-you-CAN'T-SEE-ME*

**Management:** Improve riparian buffers, protect cedar swamps and red-maple/conifer swamps.



### Chestnut-sided Warbler

**Habitat:** Second growth deciduous woods, early successional forest or overgrown fields.

**Trend:** Declining in MA, New England, and Eastern U.S. region.

**ID Tips:** Yellow crown, black moustache stripe & chestnut sides following contour of wings; tail often held cocked above wingtips.

**Song:** Fast *Please-please-pleased-to-meet-cha* with emphatic ending.

**Management:** Retain areas with early successional habitat; use management practices that closely mimic natural disturbances.



### Eastern Towhee

**Habitat:** Early successional open or edge habitats with a dense understory and well-developed litter layer.

**Trend:** Declining in MA, New England, & Eastern U.S. region.

**ID Tips:** Male is bold sooty black above and on throat and chest (female is brown); warm rufous sides and white belly.

**Song:** A loud *drink-your-teeee!* lasting about 1 second. Call is a bold *che-wink*.

**Management:** Maintain young forest habitat with few standing trees and dense brushy understory. Species will benefit from large (>5 acres), more complete cuts.



### Eastern Wood-Pewee

**Habitat:** Deciduous and mixed forests and woodland edges.

**Trend:** Declining in MA, New England, & Eastern U.S. region.

**ID Tips:** Slender, small headed, and grayish-olive above with dull, white wingbars; “sallies” for insects (i.e., flies out from perch and then back again).

**Song:** Plaintive *pee-ahh-weee*.

**Management:** Enhance vertical structure/understory by controlling deer browsing; use single tree or small group cut to improve understory.



### Ruffed Grouse

**Habitat:** Closely associated with quaking aspen; brushy, mixed-age woodlands. Males require “drumming” sites (typically downed trees or logs) in dense deciduous sapling stands.

**Trend:** Likely decreasing in MA.

**ID Tips:** Chicken-sized game bird; intricately patterned with dark bars and spots on either a reddish-brown or grayish background; crested head.

**Song:** In spring, the male produces a low, rhythmic “drumming” sound while perched on a downed tree trunk or log.

**Management:** Maintain or create deciduous and mixed forest matrix with a mix of openings and young forest in early stages of regeneration. Retain downed trunks or logs for drumming.



### Veery

**Habitat:** Damp deciduous woods with dense understory.

**Trend:** Declining in MA and Eastern U.S. region.

**ID Tips:** Tawny-brown above, weakly spotted on breast; least spotted of all the thrushes.

**Song:** Flute-like & ethereal; ball spiraling down a tube; call an emphatic *vreer!*

**Management:** Enhance vertical structure/understory by controlling deer browsing; use single tree or small group cut to improve understory.



### **White-throated Sparrow**

**Habitat:** Coniferous & mixed deciduous-coniferous forests with openings and shrubby, dense undergrowth.

**Trend:** Declining in MA, New England, & Eastern U.S. region.

**ID Tips:** White throat with yellow in front of eyes; white and black or tan and brown stripes on head; gray chest.

**Song:** Clear whistled, *Poor Sam Peabody Peabody Peabody*

**Management:** Soften edges between habitats creating brushy growth especially near conifer stands for cover, foraging and nesting; create brush piles on habitat edges.



### **Wood Thrush**

**Habitat:** Mature, moist deciduous woods with dense understory and heavy layer of leaf litter.

**Trend:** Declining in MA, New England, and Eastern U.S. region.

**ID Tips:** Brown back, heavily spotted on white breast; chunky thrush a little smaller than a Robin.

**Song:** A flute-like *ee-oh-layyy*, ending in a vibrant sound like shattering glass.

**Management:** Improve vertical structure/understory with small canopy gaps.



### **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**

**Habitat:** Mixed deciduous-coniferous woodlands.

**Trend:** Increasing in MA, likely declining in region.

**ID Tips:** Messy barring on back, yellowish wash across belly. Vertical white stripe on side distinguishes it from other woodpeckers.

**Song:** Drum burst of 5 rapid taps followed by gradually slowing double taps; call a *QUEEah*.

**Management:** Retain deadwood, leaving birch and aspen trees for cavity nesting habitat.

*Photos provided courtesy of John Harrison, David Larson, Sheila Carroll, Mark Thorne, and Richard Johnson.*

To learn more about these and other bird species, check out the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2 ([www.massaudubon.org/birdatlas/bba2](http://www.massaudubon.org/birdatlas/bba2)) and Mass Audubon's State of the Birds Reports ([www.massaudubon.org/sotb](http://www.massaudubon.org/sotb)).

This document was adapted for Massachusetts from Audubon Vermont's "Birder's Dozen Fact Sheet" with permission.