

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO

(*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*)

Guidance for Conservation

The Black-billed Cuckoo is an uncommon and declining breeder in woodlands in the Hudson River Valley.

Conservation Status

This cuckoo is considered a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in New York. Partners in Flight lists it as a Species of Regional Responsibility in Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 13 and as a Species of Regional Concern in BCRs 13, 14, 28 and 30. Breeding Bird Survey data indicate that its population has declined in NY since 1966. NY Breeding Bird Atlas shows a decline in its range in the Hudson River Valley over the past twenty years.



Identification

This bird is brown above and white below with a narrow red eye ring. It has a long, dark, slightly downturned bill, and a long tail that has white spots underneath. The song is a series of soft mellow “cu-cu-cu-cu” notes in groups of 2-5 all on the same pitch.

Habitat

This bird is found in edges and clearings of young deciduous and mixed deciduous-coniferous woods with low, dense shrubs, near abandoned farmland, brushy hillsides and pastures, roadsides, fencerows, orchards, berry patches, and hawthorn thickets. It also frequents wet areas, often in willows near edges of bogs and marshes, or on lake and river shores. The maturation of second growth deciduous and evergreen forests may enhance habitat quality and increase habitat availability.

Food

It feeds primarily by gleaning insects from leaves of trees and shrubs by making short flights or running and hopping to capture prey items. It eats mainly caterpillars, especially forest tent caterpillars, but also katydids, saw-flies, grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, and spiders. In fall migration it will eat berries and other fruit.

Nesting

Black-billed Cuckoos nest in groves of trees, forest edges, moist thickets, overgrown pastures, or in deciduous and evergreen trees or shrubs. The nest is an open cup well concealed by leaves, branches and viney tangles usually placed between low horizontal branches or sometimes in a crotch against the main trunk.

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Threats

- Habitat fragmentation due to suburban development.
- Degradation of riparian habitats.
- Reduction of prey base due to overuse of insecticides.

Management Recommendations

- Manage for diverse habitats that include large trees, wildlife corridors, hedgerows, and woodlots.
- Maintain prey base by reduction of chemical or other control of “undesirable” insect species or related plants.

Adapted from Hughes 2001 and NatureServe 2008.

For additional information, see the following references:

Deeble, B. Species Management Abstract: Black-billed Cuckoo. Nature Conservancy, Arlington, VA. <http://conserveonline.org/docs/2001/03/bbcu.doc>

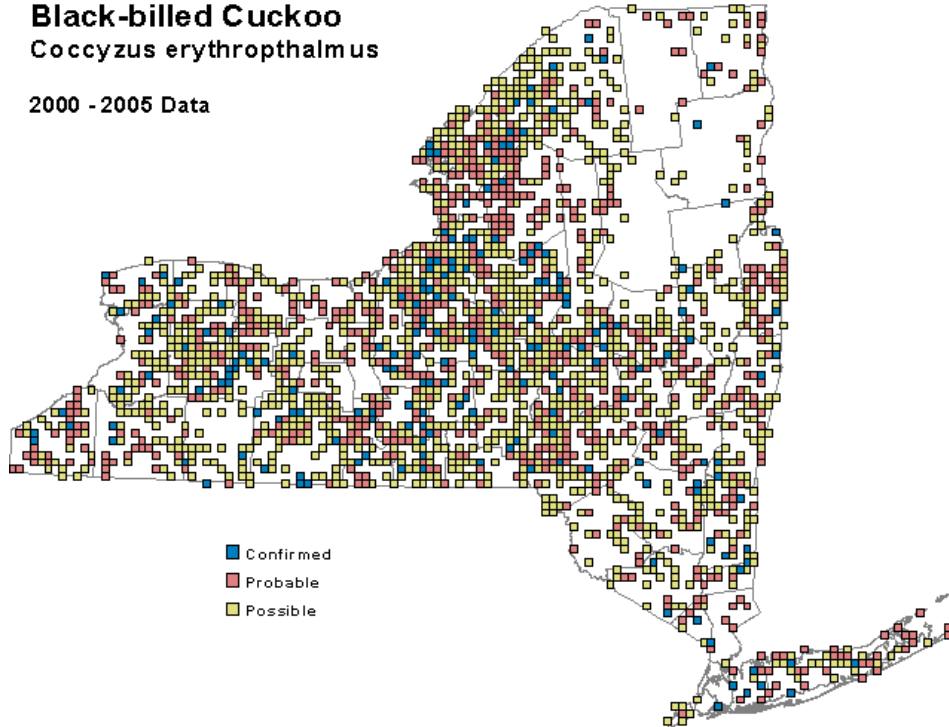
Hughes, J. M. 2001. Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 587 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.

NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.0. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: April 12, 2008).

NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

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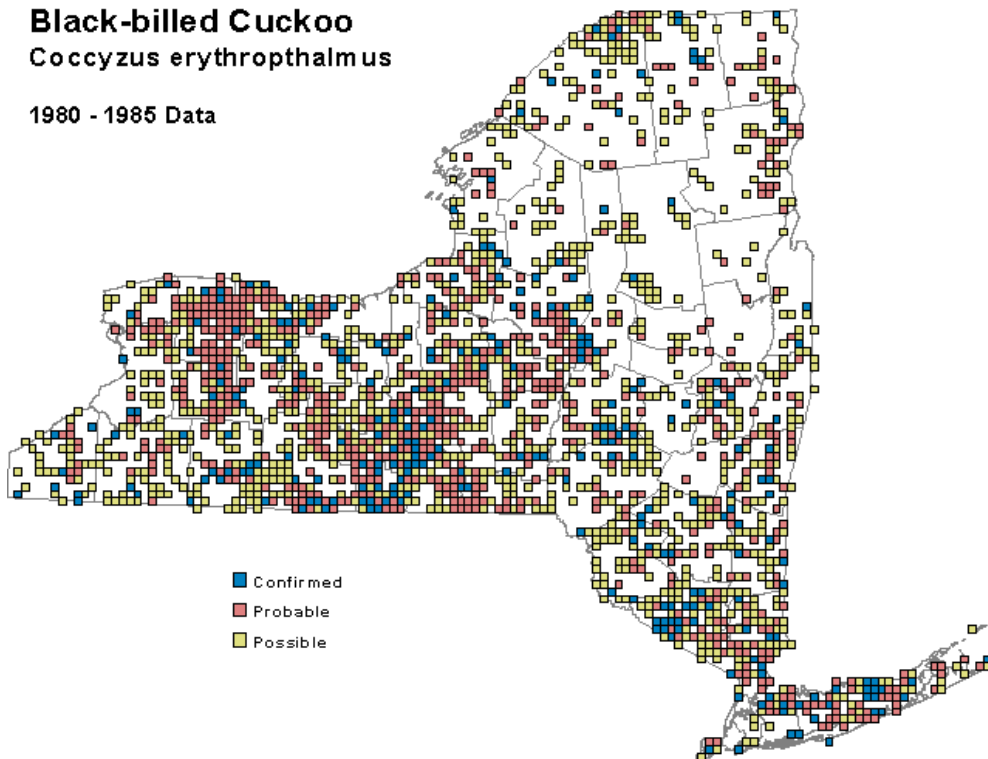
2000 - 2005 Data



■ Confirmed
■ Probable
■ Possible

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1980 - 1985 Data



■ Confirmed
■ Probable
■ Possible