

The Northern Flicker is a common, but declining in open woodlands in the Hudson River Valley.

Conservation Status

Partners in Flight regards this bird as a Species of Regional Concern in Bird Conservation Regions 13, 28, and 30. Breeding Bird Survey show a moderate decline in populations statewide since 1966. Breeding Bird Atlas data show a slight reduction in its distribution in the Hudson River Valley, but overall remains very common.

Identification

This medium-large woodpecker is brown overall with barring on the back and wings, off-white underparts with black spots, and a black bib. Its underwings and undertail are yellow. It has a white rump patch that is noticeable when the bird is flying. The male has a black stripe behind the beak. It can be easily identified in flight by a distinctive, undulating flight pattern. Its most-often-heard call is a whinnying sound that somewhat resembles laughter. It also gives a call that is often transcribed as “klee-yer.”



Habitat

Flickers are ground-foraging woodpeckers that nest in tree cavities. It can be found in open deciduous, mixed, and coniferous woodlands, forest edges, riparian woodlands, beaver ponds and other wetlands with standing trees, meadows, parks, as well as urban and suburban areas, and farm woodlots with large trees. It requires cavity nest sites in dead or dying trees along forest edges or in open woodlands. The cavities it excavates can later be used by other hole-nesting birds.

Food

This species most often forages on the ground by probing and hammering in the soil with its bill, where it eats mainly ants, but also beetle larvae, grasshoppers, and wasps. It also eats fruits, berries, and seeds in the winter.

Nesting

The nest is in a cavity excavated by both male and female in a dead or diseased tree trunk or a large branch and is lined with wood chips. It will also use telephone poles or nest boxes. The nest holes are usually 10 to 30 ft. above the ground.

Threats

- Loss of nesting habitat due to reduction in the number of standing dead trees and snags.
- Habitat loss due to development.
- Competition with European Starlings for nest cavities.
- Predation of young birds by snakes, raccoons, and squirrels.
- Predation of adults by raptors, particularly the Northern Goshawk.
- Reduction of prey due to insecticide use on lawns.

Management Recommendations

- Maintain open areas with minimal ground cover for feeding.
- Provide small and large snags and dead limbs on large living trees to provide nesting opportunities.

This species summary is adapted from Moore 1995.

For additional information, see the following references:

Ingold, D. J. 1996. Delayed nesting decreases reproductive success in Northern Flickers: Implications for competition with European Starlings. *Journal of Field Ornithology* 67:321-326. <http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/JFO/v067n02/p0321-p0326.pdf>.

James, R. D. 1984. Habitat Management Guidelines for Cavity-nesting Birds in Ontario. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR_E000521.pdf.

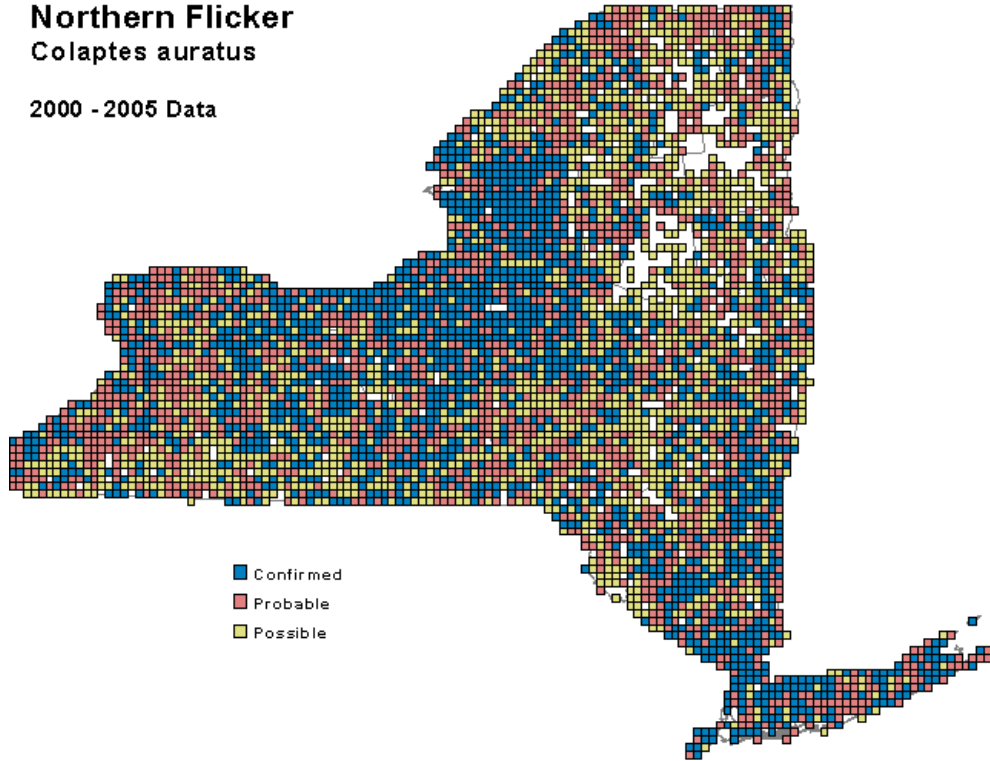
Moore, William S. 1995. Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the *Birds of North America Online*: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bnaproxy.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/166a>.

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NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*

2000 - 2005 Data



Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*

1980 - 1985 Data

