

Veery

Catharus fuscescens



The Veery, noted for its habit of singing vigorously at twilight (Bevier et al. 2005), breeds across Canada from Newfoundland to British Columbia. In the United States, its distribution is restricted to the Northeast, Great Lakes, and Rocky Mountains. Vermont lies at the center of the species' distribution in the Northeast, and hosts some of the highest population densities (Sauer et al. 2008).

The Veery is generally considered to be associated with damp, deciduous habitat, but in Vermont it occurs in secondary hardwoods irrespective of hydrologic regime (Kibbe 1985). Because the Veery places its nest on the ground or in low shrubs with dense foliage overhead, it may find secondary forest and forest edges more suitable for nesting than the interior of mature woodlands, which have little understory. Veeries begin arriving in Vermont in early May and commence singing a few days later (Tyler 1949). In New England, the Veery's song period is lengthy, extending from mid-May to mid-July (Bevier et al. 2005). Nest building was observed (N = 5) from 24 May through 28 June. Nests with eggs were found 26 May through 6 July (N = 9). Nests with young proved relatively easy to find (N = 11), with records starting 5 June and ending 23 July. Fledglings were recorded from 13 June through 26 July. As was true for most of the thrushes, fledglings provided the most confirmations (N = 59).

The Veery occurs throughout Vermont, although it appears to be slightly less common in agricultural and urban areas near Lake Champlain. It was found in all but 8 priority blocks. Of those 8, only 3 in the Champlain Valley are probably truly without breeding Veeries; very likely, the species was simply missed in the remaining blocks.

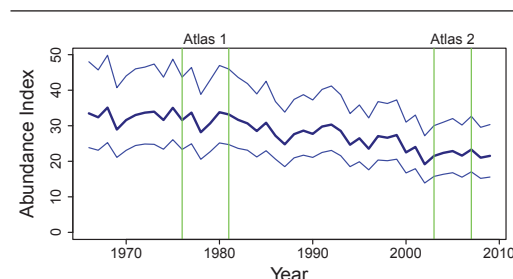
Statewide the Veery was found in only 2 fewer blocks in the second atlas. A slight decrease in occurrence may have occurred along Lake Champlain where urban development has been particularly extensive. Breeding Bird Survey data show a significant 1.2 percent annual decrease in Veery abundance in Vermont from 1982 to 2007 (Sauer et al. 2011). Population declines in Vermont apparently have not been dramatic enough to affect block occurrence of this widespread species.

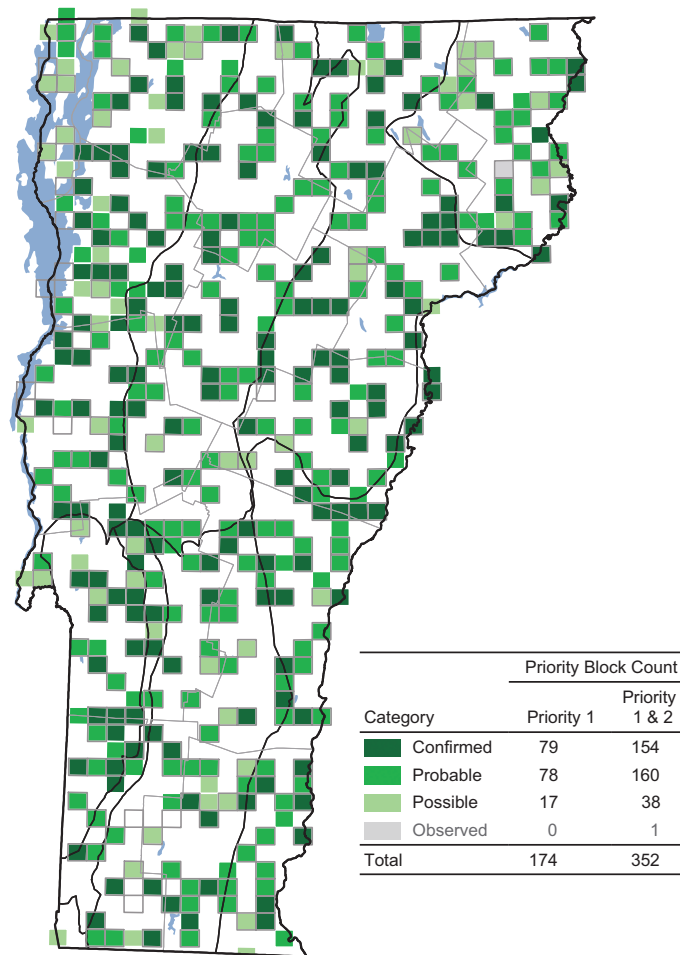
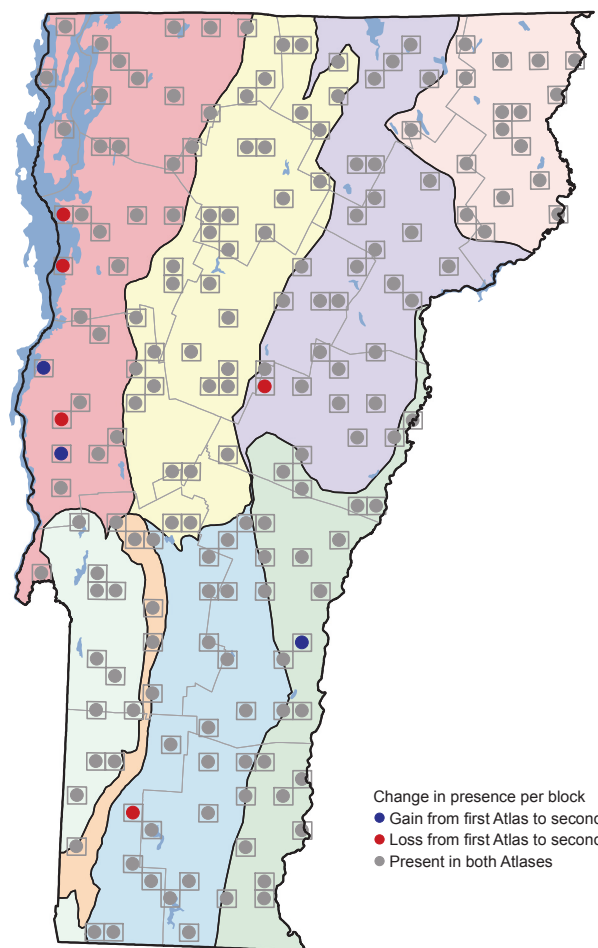
New York's second atlas reported a slight decline in the Veery population of 2 percent, with greater losses in the mature forests of the Adirondack Mountains (Lowe and Hames 2008). The Pennsylvania atlas reported an increase of 10 percent in occurrence (Wilson et al. 2012), while in Maryland a decrease of 5 percent was noted (Ellison 2010). In Ontario, the results of the second atlas show mixed changes. Veery occurrence increased 22 percent in the northern portion of the province but decreased 12 percent in the extreme south. The species continues to be ubiquitous in the center of the province (Friesen 2007), an area which supports the highest Veery densities on the continent (Sauer et al. 2011).

Maturation of Vermont's forests could result in less suitable nesting habitat in interior forest areas. In Ontario and the mid-Atlantic region, the Veery is considered an area-sensitive species, requiring forests greater than 10 to 20 hectares (25 to 49 acres; Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources 2000, Bevier et al. 2005), but in Rhode Island it may occupy much smaller wet swamps (Golet et al. 2001). In the Champlain Valley, scarcity of habitat is unlikely to be limiting populations, except where urban and agricultural development have completely eliminated forests.

The Veery is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need

RELATIVE ABUNDANCE OVER TIME





CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN ATLASES

Biophysical Region	First Atlas	Second Atlas	Change	% Change
Champlain Valley	31	30	- 1	- 3
Northeastern Highlands	17	17	+ 0	+ 0
Northern Green Mountains	35	35	+ 0	+ 0
Northern Vermont Piedmont	30	29	- 1	- 3
Southern Green Mountains	27	26	- 1	- 4
Southern Vermont Piedmont	20	21	+ 1	+ 5
Taconic Mountains	11	11	+ 0	+ 0
Vermont Valley	5	5	+ 0	+ 0
Totals	176	174	- 2	- 1

DISTRIBUTION IN CURRENT ATLAS

Biophysical Region	% of region species occupies	% of all records for this species found in region
Champlain Valley	89	18
Northeastern Highlands	97	10
Northern Green Mountains	100	18
Northern Vermont Piedmont	98	18
Southern Green Mountains	94	15
Southern Vermont Piedmont	100	11
Taconic Mountains	100	6
Vermont Valley	100	2

in Vermont, based on declining Breeding Bird Survey trends in the state and nationwide, and also because it is an important indicator of the health of floodplain forests. Because the Veery prefers early successional forest, a regional decrease in abundance is not surprising in Vermont, where forested lands have been allowed to mature in recent decades. The species is clearly still widespread, however, and populations are under no known immediate threats.

DOUGLAS P. KIBBE