

Broad-winged Hawk

Buteo platypterus

The Broad-winged Hawk breeds throughout the deciduous and mixed forests of the eastern United States and much of southern Canada from central Alberta to the Maritimes. Endemic subspecies are found on several Caribbean islands, including Cuba and Puerto Rico (Goodrich et al. 1996). Although gregarious en route to and from their Central and South American wintering grounds—tens of thousands may be seen at geographic bottlenecks in Pennsylvania, Texas, and Vera Cruz, Mexico—they are secretive, solitary nesters. An opportunistic hunter, the Broad-winged Hawk may sit quietly in the lower canopy or on the edge of a woodland road and wait for chipmunks, mice, garter snakes, American toads, young birds, or even insects.

Broad-winged Hawks move northward through Vermont beginning in mid-April (Fichtel 1985). Nest sites are generally in undisturbed deciduous or mixed deciduous-coniferous forest, often near water and small natural or man-made clearings. Nest construction, often in the main crotch of a birch or another deciduous canopy tree, is a prolonged process that may take a month (Goodrich et al. 1996). Nest building was reported from 2 June through 1 August (N = 3); later dates may reflect the addition of green sprigs to an active nest, a process that continues throughout the nestling period (Lyons et al. 1986). Incubation of the 2 to 3 eggs takes 4 weeks, and the nestlings fledge 5 to 6 weeks after hatching. Nests with young were found 16 May to 18 July (N = 10). Post-fledging dependence of the young is prolonged, some remaining in the vicinity of the nest for up to 8 weeks (Goodrich et al. 1996); this was the most common means of confirmation.

Broad-winged Hawks are well distributed throughout heavily forested areas of the state, both deciduous and mixed woods. Hilly and mountainous areas have high numbers of occupied blocks. Broad-wings are relatively scarce in the Champlain Valley, which encompasses 20 percent of the state, yet hosts only 10 percent of the occupied blocks.

The Broad-winged Hawk exhibited a modest increase

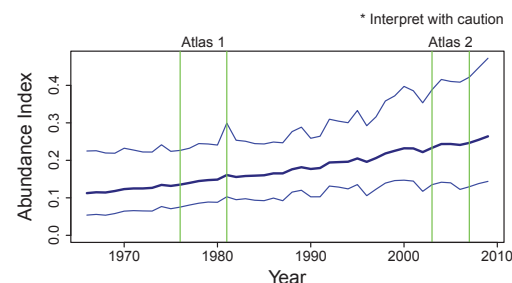


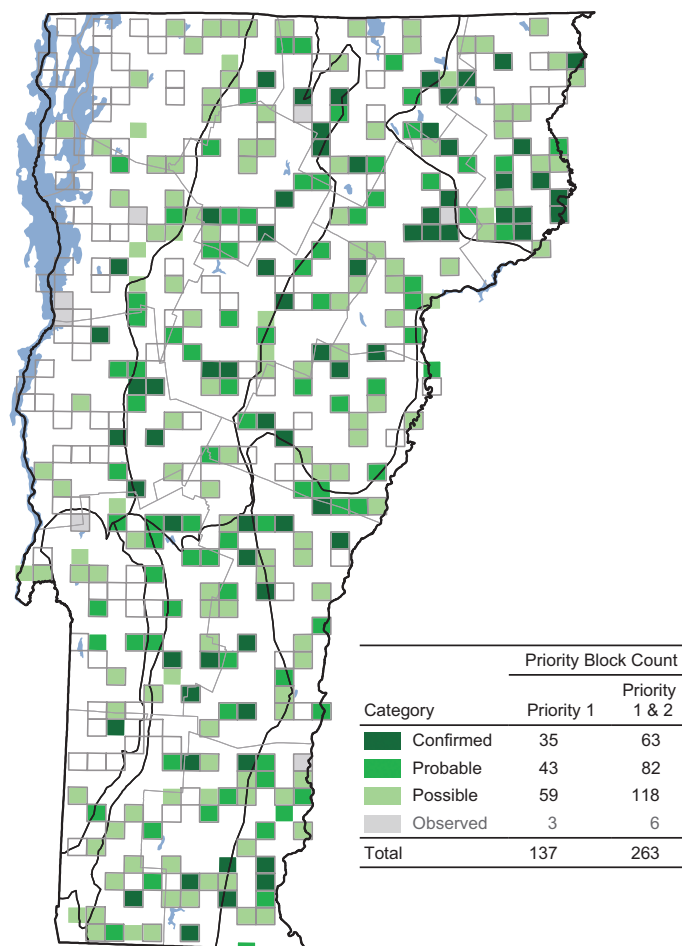
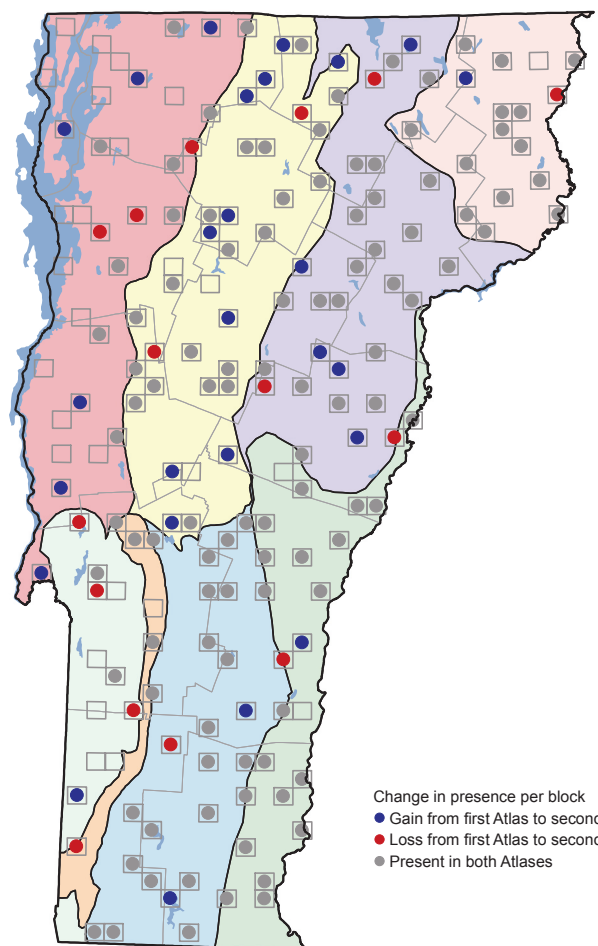
in block occupancy statewide, with the largest increase occurring in the Northern Green Mountains.

Breeding Bird Survey data indicate a significant continental increase for the Broad-winged Hawk from 1982 to 2007 (Sauer et al. 2011). New York's second atlas found little change (an increase of 1 percent) in block occupancy (McGowan and Corwin 2008), while in Pennsylvania a decrease of 16 percent occurred (Wilson et al. 2012). In Maryland the decline was 45 percent (Ellison 2010). In Ontario an increase in the probability of observation occurred throughout the province (Cadman et al. 2007), but the species was quite uncommon in regions in the south where agricultural development is greatest (Szuba 2007).

The Broad-winged Hawk appears to be relatively secure in the Northeast for the immediate future, although concern has been expressed regarding the species' wintering grounds, where habitat loss, shooting, and pesticides continue to take a toll (Goodrich et al. 1996). Vermont may have reached a plateau in terms of its proportion of forested land; it increased by only 1.5 percent during the past fifteen years (see chapter 2). Future urbanization and recreational home development could result in a gradual loss of the large forest tracts that Broad-winged Hawks

RELATIVE ABUNDANCE OVER TIME





CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN ATLASES

Biophysical Region	First Atlas	Second Atlas	Change	% Change
Champlain Valley	12	15	+ 3	+ 25
Northeastern Highlands	15	15	+ 0	+ 0
Northern Green Mountains	22	30	+ 8	+ 36
Northern Vermont Piedmont	25	27	+ 2	+ 8
Southern Green Mountains	25	26	+ 1	+ 4
Southern Vermont Piedmont	18	18	+ 0	+ 0
Taconic Mountains	5	3	- 2	- 40
Vermont Valley	4	3	- 1	- 25
Totals	126	137	+ 11	+ 9

DISTRIBUTION IN CURRENT ATLAS

Biophysical Region	% of region species occupies	% of all records for this species found in region
Champlain Valley	36	10
Northeastern Highlands	86	12
Northern Green Mountains	80	20
Northern Vermont Piedmont	84	21
Southern Green Mountains	92	20
Southern Vermont Piedmont	80	12
Taconic Mountains	33	3
Vermont Valley	75	2

prefer for nesting. Alternatively, if Vermont's human population continues to grow at its current, relatively slow rate (2.8 percent per decade; New York Times 2011), intact forestland should remain one of the state's prominent features for some time.

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