

Title: Passage Through New York: A Listening Network Tracking Songbird Migration from Boreal to Austral Forests

Investigators and Affiliations

Susan B. Elbin, Ph.D.: Wildlife Trust
Senior Scientist and Director, New York Bioscape Initiative
Wildlife Trust
460 34th St, 17th Floor
New York, NY 10001

Jeff Wells, Ph.D.: Boreal Songbird Initiative
Senior Scientist
Boreal Songbird Initiative
1601 2nd Avenue, Suite 615
Seattle, Washington 98101

BRI General Category: Landuse Change and Conservation AND Education

Abstract: (not to exceed 200 words)

During the spring migration north, up to 3 billion birds fly through the U.S. to their breeding grounds in the Boreal Forest. Each autumn, after a successful breeding season, the number of birds (adults and young of the year) migrating southward ranges in the 5 billions. Forty percent of the birds continue on to the Southern Hemisphere, while sixty percent spend the winter in the U.S. Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-crowned Sparrows, Rusty Blackbirds and Ruby-crowned Kinglets fly through the Hudson Valley on their nocturnal migration, unseen and unnoticed by most people living here. Using a highly sensitive pressure-zone microphone placed on a roof and aimed at the night skies, observers can hear the species-specific flight calls of migrating songbirds and record them for further study and analysis of migration patterns. We propose to establish a 'listening network' in participating local high schools, connecting rural schools of the Upper Hudson Valley with inner city schools of Manhattan. In the long term, this study can provide migration data that may be signaling effects of global warming and deforestation. In the short term, this study makes nocturnal migrants 'visible' and calls attention to the high avian diversity that passes through our skies.