



Whitman Mission National Historic Site

Background

Birds are useful indicators of ecological change because they are highly mobile and generally conspicuous. As climate in a particular place changes, suitability may worsen for some species and improve for others. These changes in climate may create the potential for local extirpation or new colonization. **This brief summarizes projected changes in climate suitability by mid-century for birds at Whitman Mission National Historic Site (hereafter, the Site) under two climate change scenarios (see Wu et al. 2018 for full results, and Langham et al. 2015 for more information regarding how climate suitability is characterized).** The high-emissions pathway (RCP8.5) represents a future in which little action is taken to reduce global emissions of greenhouse gases. The low-emissions pathway (RCP2.6) is a best-case scenario of aggressive efforts to reduce emissions. These emissions pathways are globally standardized and established by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for projecting future climate change. The findings below are model-based projections of how species distributions may change in response to climate change. A 10-km buffer was applied to each park to match the spatial resolution of the species distribution models (10 x 10 km), and climate suitability was taken as the average of all cells encompassed by the park and buffer.

Results

Climate change is expected to alter the bird community at the Site, with greater impacts under the high-emissions pathway than under the low-emissions pathway (Figure 1). Among the species likely to be found at the Site today, climate suitability in summer under the high-emissions pathway is projected to improve for 3, remain stable for 18, and worsen for 14 species. Suitable climate ceases to occur for 12 species in summer, potentially resulting in extirpation of those species from the Site (e.g., Figure 2). Climate is projected to become suitable in summer for 23 species not found at the Site today, potentially resulting in local colonization. Climate suitability in winter under the high-emissions pathway is projected to improve for 7, remain stable for 18, and worsen for 5 species. Suitable climate ceases to occur for 5 species in winter, potentially resulting in extirpation from the Site. Climate is projected to become suitable in winter for 42 species not found at the Site today, potentially resulting in local colonization.

IMPORTANT

This study focuses exclusively on changing climatic conditions for birds over time. But projected changes in climate suitability are not definitive predictions of future species ranges or abundances. Numerous other factors affect where species occur, including habitat quality, food abundance, species adaptability, and the availability of microclimates (see Caveats). Therefore, managers should consider changes in climate suitability alongside these other important influences.

We report trends in climate suitability for all species identified as currently present at the Site based on both NPS Inventory & Monitoring Program data and eBird observation data (2016), plus those species for which climate at the Site is projected to become suitable in the future (Figure 1 & Table 1). This brief provides park-specific projections whereas Wu et al. (2018), which did not incorporate park-specific species data and thus may differ from this brief, provides system-wide comparison and conclusions.

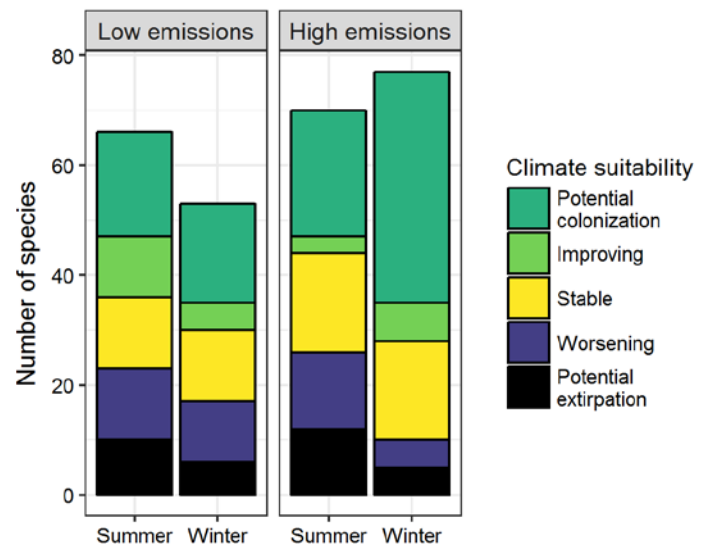


Figure 1. Projected changes in climate suitability for birds at the Site, by emissions pathway and season.

Results (continued)

Potential Turnover Index

Potential bird species turnover for the Site between the present and 2050 is 0.23 in summer (38th percentile across all national parks) and 0.19 in winter (25th percentile) under the high-emissions pathway. Potential species turnover declines to 0.21 in summer and 0.13 in winter under the low-emissions pathway. Turnover index was calculated based on the theoretical proportions of potential extirpations and potential colonizations by 2050 relative to today (as reported in Wu et al. 2018), and therefore assumes that all potential extirpations and colonizations are realized. According to this index, no change would be represented as 0, whereas a complete change in the bird community would be represented as 1.

Climate Sensitive Species

The Site is or may become home to 6 species that are highly sensitive to climate change across their range (i.e., they are projected to lose climate suitability in over 50% of their current range in North America in summer and/or winter by 2050; Table 1; Langham et al. 2015). While the Site may serve as an important refuge for 5 of these

Management Implications

Parks differ in potential colonization and extirpation rates, and therefore different climate change adaptation strategies may apply. **Under the high-emissions pathway, Whitman Mission National Historic Site falls within the intermediate change group.** Parks anticipating intermediate change can best support landscape-scale bird conservation by emphasizing habitat restoration, maintaining natural disturbance regimes, and

Caveats

The species distribution models included in this study are based solely on climate variables (i.e., a combination of annual and seasonal measures of temperature and precipitation), which means there are limits on their interpretation. Significant changes in climate suitability, as measured here, will not always result in a species response, and all projections should be interpreted as potential trends. Multiple other factors mediate responses to climate change, including habitat availability, ecological processes

climate-sensitive species, one, the Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*), might be extirpated from the Site in summer by 2050.



Figure 2. Although currently found at the Site, suitable climate for the Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) may cease to occur here in summer by 2050, potentially resulting in local seasonal extirpation. Photo by Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren/Flickr (CC BY 2.0).

reducing other stressors. Furthermore, park managers have an opportunity to focus on supporting the 5 species that are highly sensitive to climate change across their range (Table 1; Langham et al. 2015) but for which the park is a potential refuge. Monitoring to identify changes in bird communities will inform the selection of appropriate management responses.

that affect demography, biotic interactions that inhibit and facilitate species' colonization or extirpation, dispersal capacity, species' evolutionary adaptive capacity, and phenotypic plasticity (e.g., behavioral adjustments). Ultimately, models can tell us where to focus our concern and which species are most likely to be affected, but monitoring is the only way to validate these projections and should inform any on-the-ground conservation action.

More Information

For more information, including details on the methods, please see the scientific publication ([Wu et al. 2018](#)) and the [project overview brief](#), and visit the [NPS Climate Change Response Program website](#).

References

eBird Basic Dataset (2016) Version: ebd_relAug-2016. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York.

Langham et al. (2015) Conservation Status of North American Birds in the Face of Future Climate Change. PLOS ONE.

Wu et al. (2018) Projected avifaunal responses to climate change across the U.S. National Park System. PLOS ONE.

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Species Projections

Table 1. Climate suitability projections by 2050 under the high-emissions pathway for all birds currently present at the Site based on both NPS Inventory & Monitoring Program data and eBird observation data, plus those species for which climate at the Site is projected to become suitable in the future. "Potential colonization" indicates that climate is projected to become suitable for the species, whereas "potential extirpation" indicates that climate is suitable today but projected to become unsuitable. Omitted species were either not modeled due to data deficiency or were absent from the I&M and eBird datasets. Observations of late-season migrants may result in these species appearing as present in the park when they may only migrate through. Species are ordered according to taxonomic groups, denoted by alternating background shading.

* Species in top and bottom 10th percentile of absolute change

^ Species that are highly climate sensitive

- Species not found or found only occasionally, and not projected to colonize by 2050

x Species not modeled in this season

| Common Name | Summer Trend | Winter Trend |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Cackling/Canada Goose | x | Stable |
| Wood Duck | x | Stable |
| Mallard | Worsening [^] | Improving |
| Lesser Scaup | x | Stable |
| California Quail | Worsening* | Worsening* |
| Gambel's Quail | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| Northern Bobwhite | - | Potential colonization |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | Worsening* | Worsening* |
| Wild Turkey | x | Improving |
| Clark's Grebe | - | Potential colonization |
| Great Blue Heron | Stable | Stable |
| Cattle Egret | Potential colonization | - |
| Green Heron | - | Potential colonization |
| Yellow-crowned Night-Heron | Potential colonization | - |

| Common Name | Summer Trend | Winter Trend |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Turkey Vulture | - | Potential colonization |
| Mississippi Kite | Potential colonization | - |
| Northern Harrier | Worsening [^] | Stable |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | - | Stable |
| Cooper's Hawk | - | Stable |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | - | Potential colonization |
| Swainson's Hawk | Worsening [^] | - |
| Red-tailed Hawk | Stable | Improving |
| Ferruginous Hawk | - | Potential colonization |
| Killdeer | Stable | - |
| Spotted Sandpiper | - | Potential colonization |
| Bonaparte's Gull | - | Potential colonization |
| Ring-billed Gull | Worsening [^] | - |
| Rock Pigeon | - | Stable |

| Common Name | Summer Trend | Winter Trend |
|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Mourning Dove | Stable | Improving |
| Inca Dove | - | Potential colonization |
| Greater Roadrunner | Potential colonization | - |
| Lesser Nighthawk | Potential colonization | - |
| Common Nighthawk | Stable | - |
| Chuck-will's-widow | Potential colonization | - |
| White-throated Swift | - | Potential colonization |
| Anna's Hummingbird | - | Potential colonization |
| Costa's Hummingbird | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| Belted Kingfisher | Stable | Stable |
| Gila Woodpecker | - | Potential colonization |
| Golden-fronted Woodpecker | - | Potential colonization |
| Red-naped Sapsucker | - | Potential colonization |
| Ladder-backed Woodpecker | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| Downy Woodpecker | Improving | Potential extirpation |
| Northern Flicker | Worsening | Worsening |
| Gilded Flicker | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| American Kestrel | x | Stable |
| Western Wood-Pewee | Worsening [^] | - |
| Pacific-slope Flycatcher | Stable | - |
| Black Phoebe | - | Potential colonization |
| Ash-throated Flycatcher | Potential colonization | - |
| Western Kingbird | Worsening | - |
| Eastern Kingbird | Potential extirpation | - |

| Common Name | Summer Trend | Winter Trend |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Warbling Vireo | Potential extirpation | - |
| California/Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (Western Scrub-Jay) | - | Potential colonization |
| Black-billed Magpie | Potential extirpation [^] | Potential extirpation |
| American Crow | Stable | Potential extirpation |
| Common Raven | Potential extirpation | Worsening* |
| Northern Rough-winged Swallow | Worsening | - |
| Violet-green Swallow | Stable | Potential colonization |
| Barn Swallow | Worsening | - |
| Cliff Swallow | Stable | - |
| Black-capped Chickadee | Potential extirpation | Potential extirpation |
| Verdin | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| Bushtit | - | Potential colonization |
| House Wren | Potential extirpation | Potential colonization |
| Bewick's Wren | Improving* | Stable |
| Cactus Wren | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | - | Potential colonization |
| Black-tailed Gnatcatcher | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | Improving | Worsening* |
| American Robin | Potential extirpation | Stable |
| Curve-billed Thrasher | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| Crissal Thrasher | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| Northern Mockingbird | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| European Starling | Worsening | Improving |
| Cedar Waxwing | Stable | - |

| Common Name | Summer Trend | Winter Trend |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Chestnut-collared Longspur | - | Potential colonization |
| Yellow Warbler | Potential extirpation | - |
| Spotted Towhee | Potential extirpation | x |
| Eastern Towhee | Stable | x |
| Rufous-crowned Sparrow | - | Potential colonization |
| Canyon Towhee | - | Potential colonization |
| Abert's Towhee | - | Potential colonization |
| Cassin's Sparrow | Potential colonization | - |
| Chipping Sparrow | - | Potential colonization |
| Brewer's Sparrow | - | Potential colonization |
| Field Sparrow | - | Potential colonization |
| Vesper Sparrow | - | Potential colonization |
| Lark Sparrow | - | Potential colonization |
| Black-throated Sparrow | Potential colonization | Potential colonization |
| Lark Bunting | - | Potential colonization |
| Grasshopper Sparrow | Stable | - |

| Common Name | Summer Trend | Winter Trend |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| LeConte's Sparrow | - | Potential colonization |
| Song Sparrow | Potential extirpation | Stable |
| White-crowned Sparrow | Stable | Stable |
| Dark-eyed Junco | x | Stable |
| Black-headed Grosbeak | Worsening | - |
| Blue Grosbeak | Potential colonization | - |
| Painted Bunting | Potential colonization | - |
| Red-winged Blackbird | Potential extirpation | Improving |
| Western Meadowlark | - | Stable |
| Brewer's Blackbird | Worsening* | - |
| Brown-headed Cowbird | Stable | - |
| Hooded Oriole | Potential colonization | - |
| Bullock's Oriole | Stable | - |
| Baltimore Oriole | Stable | - |
| Scott's Oriole | Potential colonization | - |
| House Finch | Stable | Stable |
| American Goldfinch | Potential extirpation | Stable |
| Evening Grosbeak | - | Potential extirpation |
| House Sparrow | x | Improving |