

I am getting in touch with all the major bird clubs in the state to encourage participation in the spring Rusty Blackbird Migration Blitz. This monitoring effort begins March 15 in Massachusetts and is heavily reliant on e-bird reports from birders. Please make an announcement alerting birders of this project at your March and April meetings and forward along to a club e-mail list, if that is possible.

The Rusty Blackbird Migration Blitz was initiated in 2014 and was in response to the dramatic and mysterious decline documented for this species over the last several decades. The project is a collaborative, citizen science effort by many individuals and conservation organizations and is coordinated by the Vermont Center for Ecostudies and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The project challenges birders to scour the landscape for Rusty Blackbirds during this species' northward migration. Last year, between 1 March and 15 June, 4750 birders submitted 13,400 checklists containing Rusty Blackbird observations to eBird, a hugely successful first season that has allowed us to start looking at potential Rusty Blackbird migratory hotspots, habitat use, and potential migratory pathways.

We hope you'll consider participating in Year 2 of the Blitz this spring! It's easy- bird as you normally do during the Blitz window (15 March through April for Massachusetts) and submit your data to eBird using the "Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz" observation type. To help you figure out when Rusties might be passing through your area, each region is assigned a set of target dates found here: <http://rustyblackbird.org/outreach/migration-blitz/states-and-dates/> We're collecting Blitz data from anywhere within our target states and provinces, but this year, we'd also like birders to revisit Areas of Interest identified from 2014 data to assess the consistency of Rusty Blackbird habitat use and migratory timing. Check out our map of Areas of Interest for 2015 at <http://rustyblackbird.org/outreach/migration-blitz/2015-areas-of-interest/>

To learn more about Rusty Blackbirds and the Blitz effort, please visit our Migration Blitz website (<http://rustyblackbird.org/outreach/migration-blitz/>), or check out our Blitz Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/rustyblackbirdspringblitz>).

This information will be posted on the MassWildlife facebook page in the coming days. We hope you'll join us to Blitz for Blackbirds this spring!

I am a co-coordinator (with Joan Walsh, MassAudubon) for Massachusetts, so let us know if questions arise regarding the project.

Thanks for your help with this. I am sure people are eager to get out birding this spring! Drew

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