

BOOK REVIEW

Population Demography of Northern Spotted Owls, by Eric D. Forsman, Robert G. Anthony, Katie M. Dugger, Elizabeth M. Glenn, Alan B. Franklin, Gary C. White, Carl J. Schwarz, Kenneth P. Burnham, David R. Anderson, James D. Nichols, James E. Hines, Joseph B. Lint, Raymond J. Davis, Steven H. Ackers, Lawrence S. Andrews, Brian L. Biswell, Peter C. Carlson, Lowell V. Diller, Scott A. Gremel, Janice A. Reid, Jeremy Rockweit, James P. Schaberl, Thomas J. Snetsinger, and Stan G. Sovern (2011). *Studies in Avian Biology* 40. Cooper Ornithological Society and University of California Press; 106 pages including approximately 41 pages of tables and figures. Hardback, \$39.95. ISBN 978-0-520-27008-4.

The Northern Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), listed as a threatened subspecies in 1990, has been at the center of forest-management controversies in the Pacific Northwest for more than three decades. The political battles fought over the conservation of the owl and its habitat, and the effects of those battles on the regional economy, are a familiar story. Those battles are barely mentioned in "Population Demography of Northern Spotted Owls," the new monograph in the Cooper Ornithological Society's *Studies in Avian Biology* series. The authors instead present the results of their analyses of demographic data from throughout the range of the subspecies, information that is certain to figure heavily once again in the scientific and political debates.

This monograph presents the results of a meta-analysis of demographic data from 11 study areas across Oregon, Washington, and northern California from 1985 to 2008, as well as summaries of analyses from the individual study areas. This dataset, in various forms, has been analyzed in four previous workshops since the early 1990s, with results published in *Studies in Avian Biology* 17 and in *Wildlife Monographs*. The authors' stated purpose in this edition is to re-examine the Northern Spotted Owl's vital demographic rates to see if declines in survival and population size previously reported have continued since the last meta-analysis. The authors also incorporate into their analyses additional factors related to weather and climate, as well as the influence of an invasive competitor, the Barred Owl. This is also the first time that Pradel models have been applied in analyzing population change in the Northern Spotted Owl, reducing negative bias due to juveniles' emigration.

Beginning with a brief description of the scientific and political context within which their studies were initiated, the authors then devote the bulk of the monograph to detailed descriptions of their analytical methods, spending considerable time explaining the challenges they faced incorporating new hypotheses into such a long-established dataset and analyzing it in new ways. Results from individual study areas are tabulated, with discussions in the text. For their rangewide meta-analysis, the authors used a 16-year subset of data, consistent for all 11 study areas.

These 11 areas make up an estimated 9% of the range of the subspecies and span a representative range of latitudes and ecoregions, from far northern Washington to northwestern California, and including wet zones along the coast and dryer areas farther inland. Results varied over this wide range, and the owls responded differently to various factors in different study areas, although there were some general trends. Rangewide declines in fecundity, survival, and population sizes are evident, continuing the long-term trends previously reported. Declines of 5 to 15% were seen in the more stable populations, while in four of the study areas the population declined from 40 to 60%, all in the 16 years from 1990 to 2006.

Because nearly all of the study areas were on public lands where the habitat is protected to varying degrees, the authors suggest that their results are likely to underestimate declines. They attribute the rangewide decline to a combination of reduced recruitment and, primarily, reduced survival. A number of potential causes

BOOK REVIEW

are discussed. The authors also report continued and increasing negative effects of the Barred Owl and recommend further study, including more focused studies of the ways in which the two species interact.

The monograph is structured in the familiar format of a scientific paper, making it easy to find information, but its readability is limited. This is not a book to take on vacation as a casual diversion. Rather, it is a serious attempt to present the current status of the species and the statistical methods used to detect changes. Although the background information and discussions are well written and engaging, readers unfamiliar with the language used to describe statistical methods will likely find themselves over their heads in the lengthy explanations of analytical methods and results. Those looking for information on the life history and ecology of the species will be better served elsewhere. This monograph will be of interest primarily to land managers responsible for Northern Spotted Owl habitat and to those with a specific interest in analyzing large, long-term datasets.

Mike McDonald

WFO establishes the Harry S. Swarth Award in Western Field Ornithology

WFO's Board of Directors has decided to establish the *Harry S. Swarth Award in Western Field Ornithology*, to honor a body of work that significantly advances field ornithology in the West. Subjects could include status and distribution, life history, identification, behavior, or other important aspects of the study of western North America's birds.

The award's name commemorates Harry S. Swarth (1878–1935), a giant of field ornithology who worked in much of western North America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and who contributed more than 200 publications to the literature. His publications included surveys of the birds and mammals of sizable regions, taxonomic revisions, treatises on the identification of troublesome species, descriptions of new taxa, and, for the *Condor*, dozens of short reviews or summaries of current publications. Swarth's career was memorialized in the *Condor* 38(4):155–168 (1936) and in the *Auk* 54(2):127–134 (1937).

The Harry S. Swarth Award will be presented from time to time at WFO's annual conference. Honoring the work of individual living ornithologists, whether professional or nonprofessional, is the focus of the award, but consideration will also be given to long-time collaborators.

Members who wish to nominate a potential recipient of the award are invited to contact the Awards Committee Chairman, currently Dave Quady (davequady@att.net; 39 The Crescent, Berkeley, CA 94708), for guidance on how to do so. Please submit nominations by 1 April 2012.