

Impacts on Other Animals

Mineral soil-dwelling and deep-burrowing earthworms can have very large effects on forests. Earthworms can consume the entire leaf litter layer, leaving nothing left for the animals that used the layer before the earthworms' arrival. The loss of the leaf litter layer is harmful for animals that rely on a thick leaf litter layer, including some songbirds, amphibians, and small mammals.

For example, in Wisconsin USA, densities of forest songbirds that nest or feed on the forest floor were forced to leave areas invaded by earthworms. These losses may be the result of less available food or hiding places for nests. These problems appear to affect the ovenbird the most as the species builds nests on the forest floor in the leaf litter layer. These studies have been done in Wisconsin but have yet to be done in Alberta.

However, studies on American robins in Alberta show that earthworms change robin populations in forests across northern Alberta. Robins are more likely to be found in areas where earthworms are present. This is probably because Robins feed on earthworms and so they are following their prey into northern Alberta. What we do not know is if the new presence of Robins results in changes to native songbird or insect populations.

American Robin
Turdus migratorius

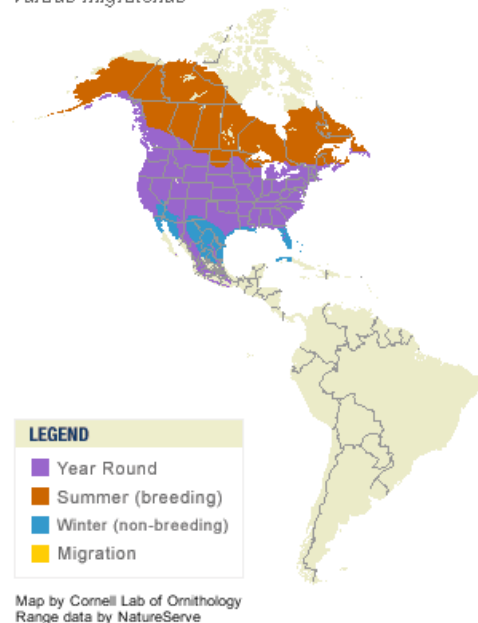


Image from:
http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Robin/lifehistory

Ovenbird
Seiurus aurocapilla



Image from:
<http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/ovenbird/lifehistory>

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