

The Chicago Nighthawk Project: Year One of a Community-Driven Species Recovery Effort

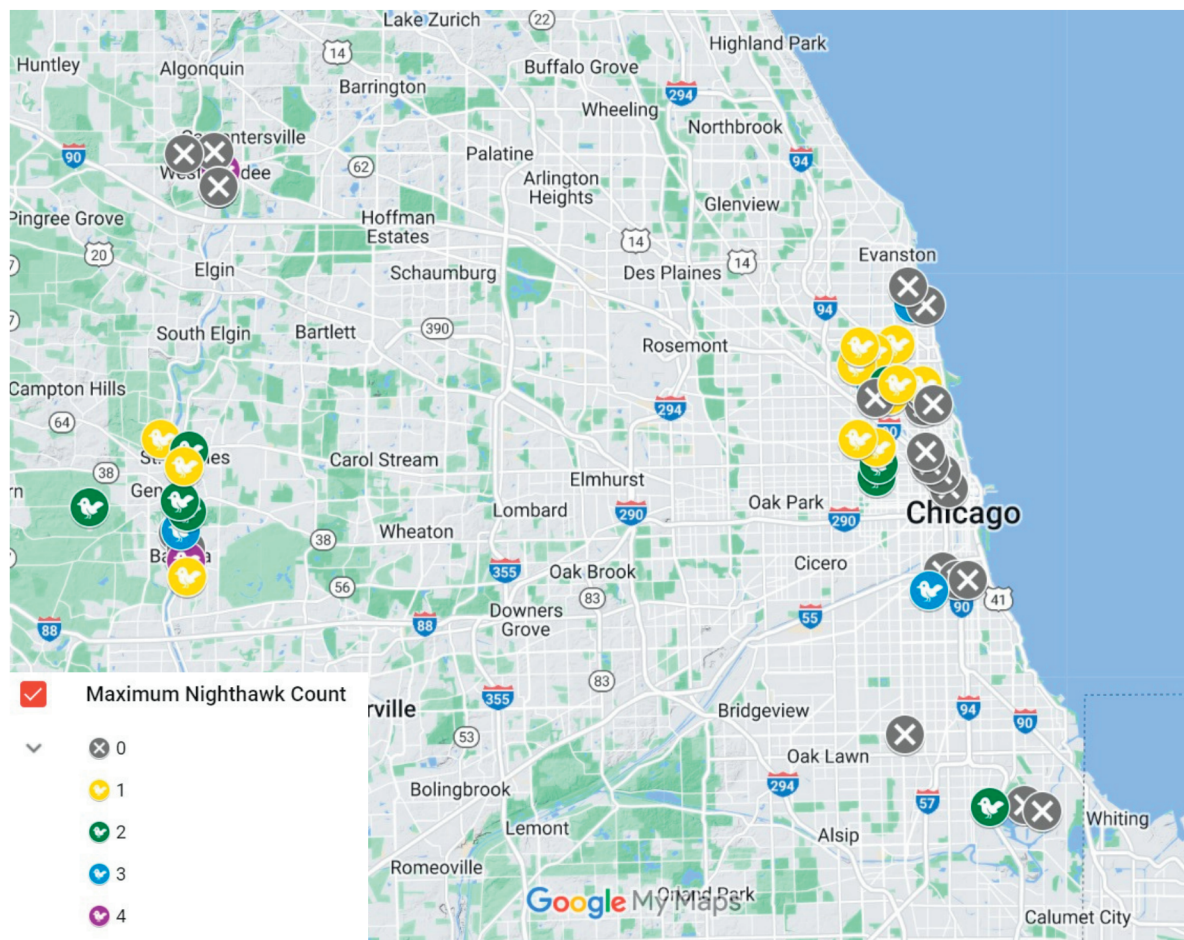


Photo: Scott Judd

An initiative of the Chicago Ornithological Society

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Common Nighthawks are one of the **fastest declining bird species** in North America. Analysis of more than 20 years of data from the Bird Conservation Network show a **similar trend in the Chicago region**. In the summer of 2022, Chicago Ornithological Society **launched a new volunteer monitoring program** to track, study, and conserve Chicago's nighthawk population. The pilot season provided important lessons and insights for how to effectively monitor these birds and assess urban habitat needs.

Methods:

- Volunteer monitors selected 4 points to be monitored through the season
- Points could be at any location but must be at least 0.5 miles apart and away from noise pollution sources
- All 4 points were monitored once during each of 3 monitoring windows: June 12-18, June 19-25, June 26-July 2
- Monitoring was conducted as a 5 minute point count
- Any nighthawks seen or heard were recorded via eBird

Monitoring Numbers:

- 16 volunteer monitors
- 116 checklists submitted via eBird or site visits made
- 48 locations monitored, 26 had nighthawks detected
- 76 nighthawk detections



Photo: Marion Miller

Early Trends Emerging:

- Monitor experience level has little effect on detection rates
- Duration of monitoring past 5 minutes has little effect on detection rates
- Nighthawk presence positively correlates with increasing tree cover (figure 1)
- Nighthawk presence positively correlates with increasing housing density (figure 2)

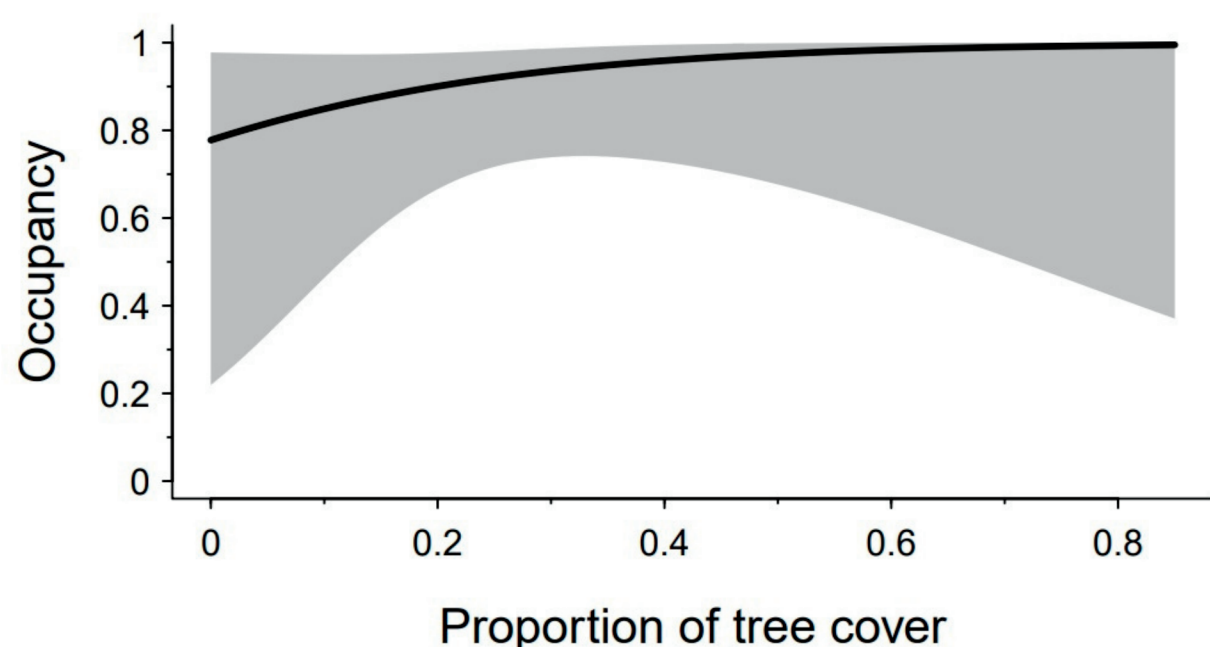


Figure 1: nighthawk occupancy compared to tree cover

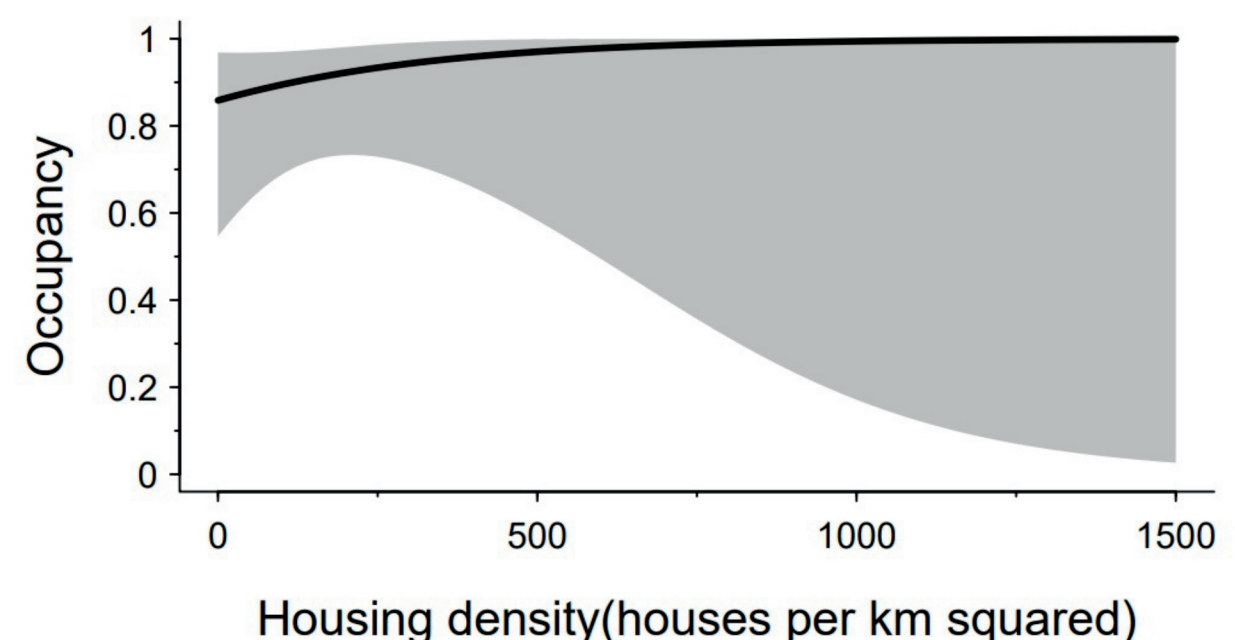


Figure 2: nighthawk occupancy compared to housing density

We would like to thank everyone who contributed expertise and time to ensuring this first year was a success, setting the stage for many more years to come.

A huge thank you to the volunteers who donated their time, birding skills, and local knowledge of nighthawk presences: Alison Anastasio, Timothy Balassie, Robyn Dettlerline, Adriana Garcia, Claire Halpin, Daniella Herrera, Scott Judd, Larry Krutulius, Marion Miller, Lisa Pool, Peggy Sloan, John Sprovieri, Jake Vinsel, and Christine Williamson.

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