

Are You More Likely to See a Spotted Towhee if the Cloud Cover is Above 50%?

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Purpose

For my bird report I asked the question: am I more likely to see a Spotted Towhee if the cloud cover is above 50%? I think that if the cloud cover is above 50%, then you are more likely to see a Spotted Towhee. However, researchers say that birds tend to not like precipitation or being out when it is rainy. I wonder if the cloud cover even affects the Spotted Towhee, or birds in general. I have not noticed cloud cover to have much of an effect from just briefly looking, but with further investigation that will be challenged.

Male Spotted Towhees have a black tail, a white breast with burnt orange side stripes, a black beak, a black back with white spots, and a black head. However, their most striking field mark to me is their red eyes. They are usually found in a habitat consisting of open space with shrubs and thick undergrowth, but they can also be seen in backyards and forest edges like most other commonly seen birds.

Procedure

When I went to the bird blind to collect data for my report I needed the following materials:

- Pencil
- Bird binder
- Binoculars

I collected data on the birds we saw at the bird blind at our school. We usually go there once or twice a week. I also gathered weather data

such as the temperature, cloud cover, dew point and wet bulb from the WeatherBug weather station on top of our school. During our bird counts, I recorded the number of Spotted Towhees at the bird blind. I kept an eye on what the cloud cover was, and how it is affecting the amount of Spotted Towhees seen, and how they are acting. These two variables seem to have an effect on each other. I compared the counts I got with the counts of my classmates.

Data Table and Graph

Date	Cloud Cover Percentage	Spotted Towhees seen
11/30/2011	100	4
12/06/2011	100	3
12/08/2011	0	2
12/14/2011	95	2
01/02/2012	75	1
01/10/2012	100	1
01/17/2012	100	2
01/23/2012	100	2
02/02/2012	25	2
02/08/2012	100	0
02/14/2012	45	1
02/16/2012	100	2

Results and Analysis

From making my graph and data table I can see that the cloud cover doesn't really affect the amount of Spotted Towhees seen as much as migration. The amount of Spotted Towhees seen fluctuates, but mainly declines as the season goes on.

The peak date was the very first one recorded, at four birds with 100% cloud cover. Seven out of twelve times the cloud cover was 100%. Also, the cloud cover stayed above 50% all but three times it dropped to 25%, 0%, and 45%. With this said, the number of Spotted Towhees seen in one day ranges from four to zero (the highest and lowest numbers seen). Over all there is no correlation to be seen between the two factors.

Conclusion

I conclude from my data that the cloud cover percentage does not affect the amount of Spotted Towhees seen. Therefore, my hypothesis has been proven incorrect, and my problem statement answered. I feel that if we would have gone out to the bird blind more often to watch the birds and record their appearances and activity, then I would have had clearer results to base my conclusion on. Also, if we would have looked along Downy Creek, the stream along the bird blinds banks, we might have seen more birds to add to our lists.

My data randomly fluctuates and has no pattern whatsoever. To find more reasons as to why the cloud cover did not affect the amount of Spotted Towhees seen, one could change other contributing variables, such as the bird feed. Maybe the birds, specifically Spotted Towhees, are attracted more to one bird feed over another.



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