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A most important part of the
International Rusty Blackbird Technical Group



Rusty Blackbirds: A really long-term decline?

Common Birds Go Extinct

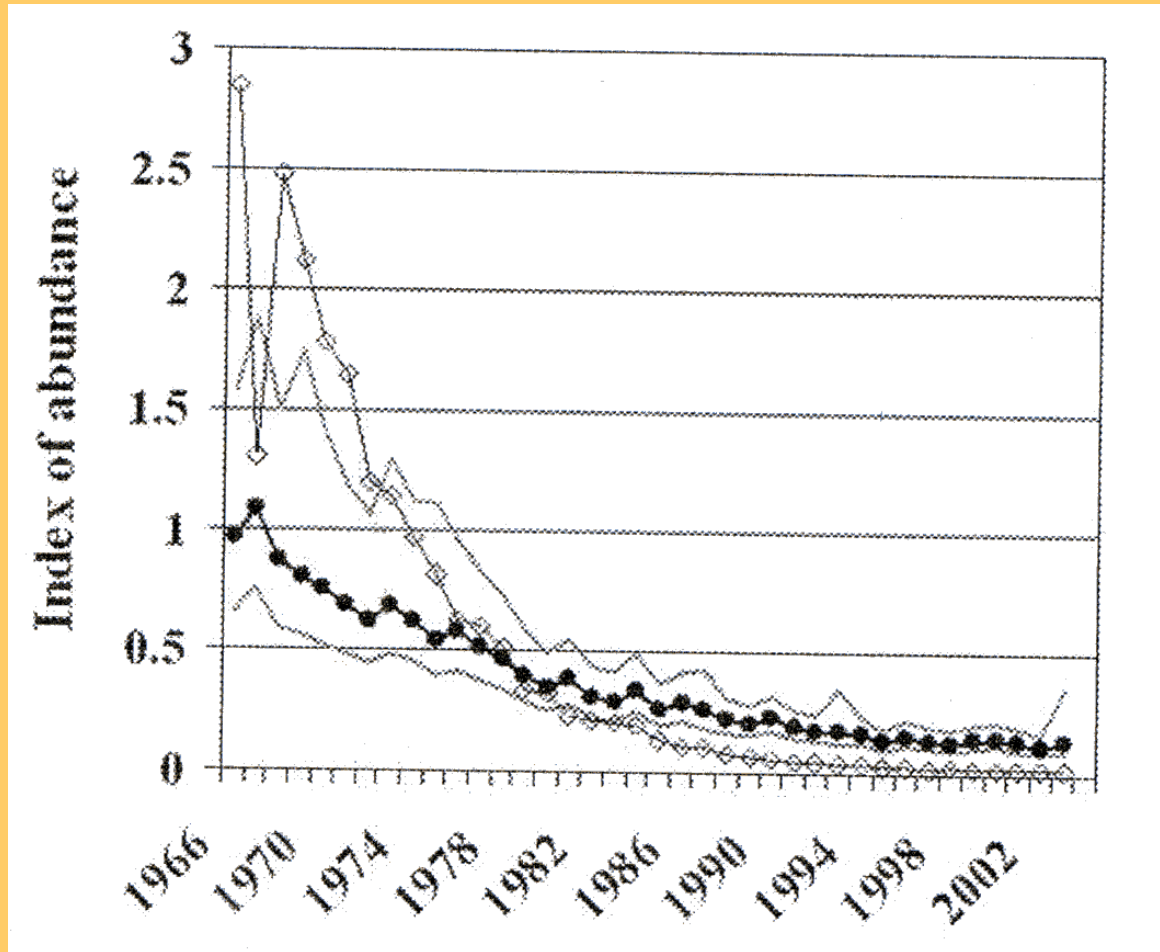




**“The time to protect a bird is
when it is still common”**

**Willard Van Name coined and
Rosalie Edge popularized**

Rusty Blackbird: The decline as we think we know it



“On the first day of May 1880, as I stood on an iron bridge crossing a sluggish stream of Tonwanda Swamp, I saw the Rusty Grakles constantly trooping by in immense numbers...The sombre wave, this constantly rolling on, must have carried hundreds of thousands over this highway in a day....on being alarmed, either in the fields or in the bushes, these Grakles would rise in a dense, black cloud, and with a rumbling sound like that of distant thunder”

J. H. Langille

As quoted in Beadslee and Mitchell (1965) Birds of the Niagara Frontier region

One of the most familiar sights to the New England schoolboy, and one which assures him that spring is really at hand, is a tree full of blackbirds, all facing the same way and each one singing at the top of its voice. These are rusty blackbirds

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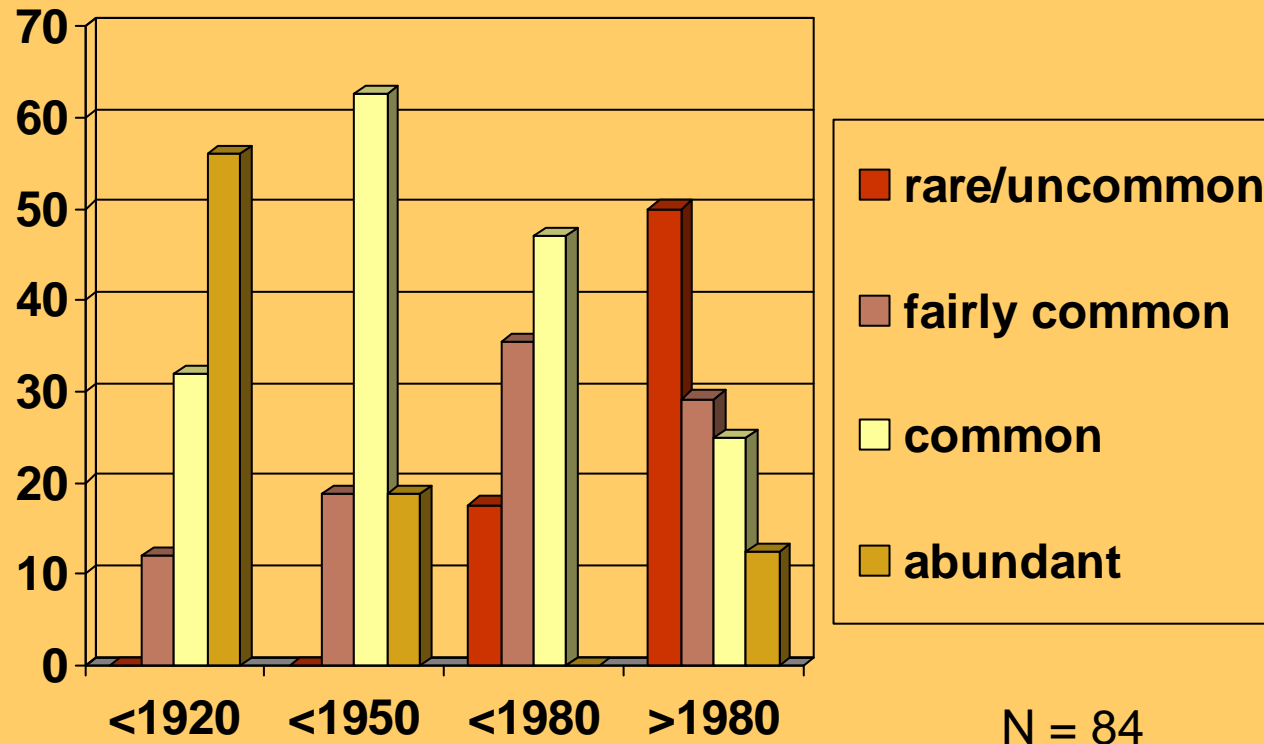
In their migration they are seen in immense numbers, especially in the Mississippi Valley.

F. E. Beal (1890). Food of the bobolink, blackbirds and grackles.

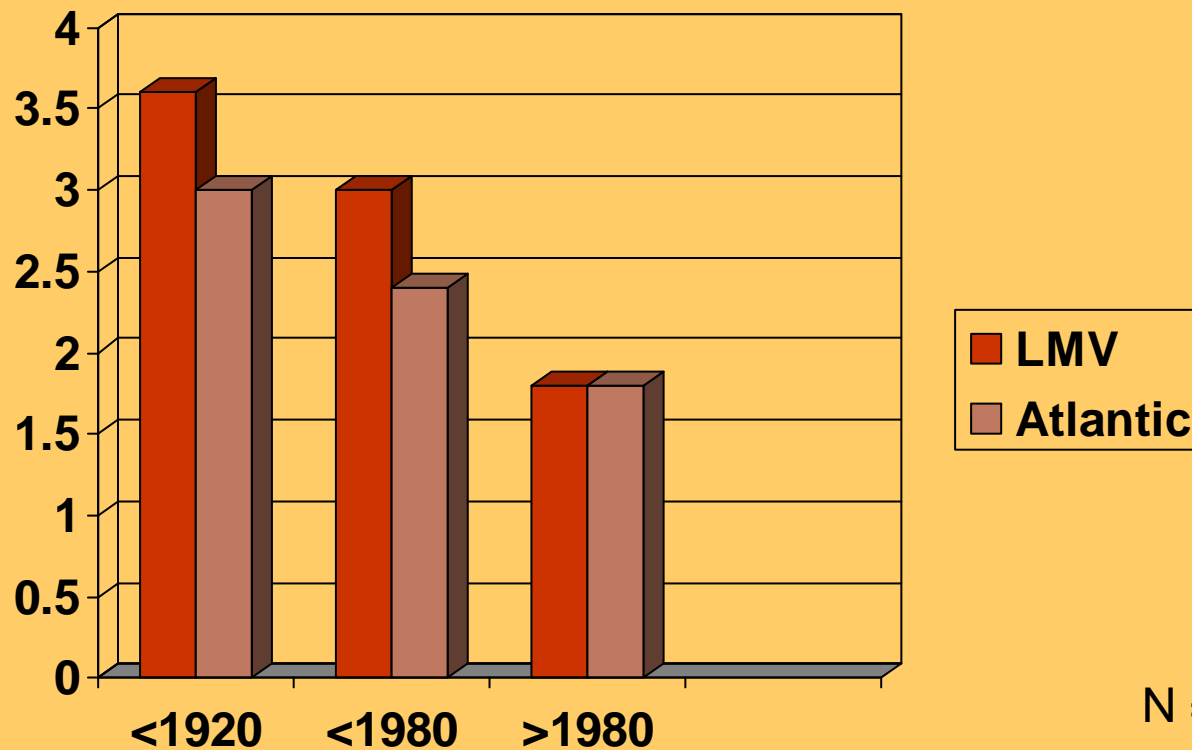
An enormously abundant migrant...The thousands of Grackles have been increased to tens of thousands. They blacken the fields and cloud the air. The bare trees on which they alight are foliated by them. Their incessant jingling songs drown the music of the Meadow Larks and produce, dreamy, far-away-effect, as of myriads of distant sleigh bells

E.E. Thompson (1891) Birds of Manitoba

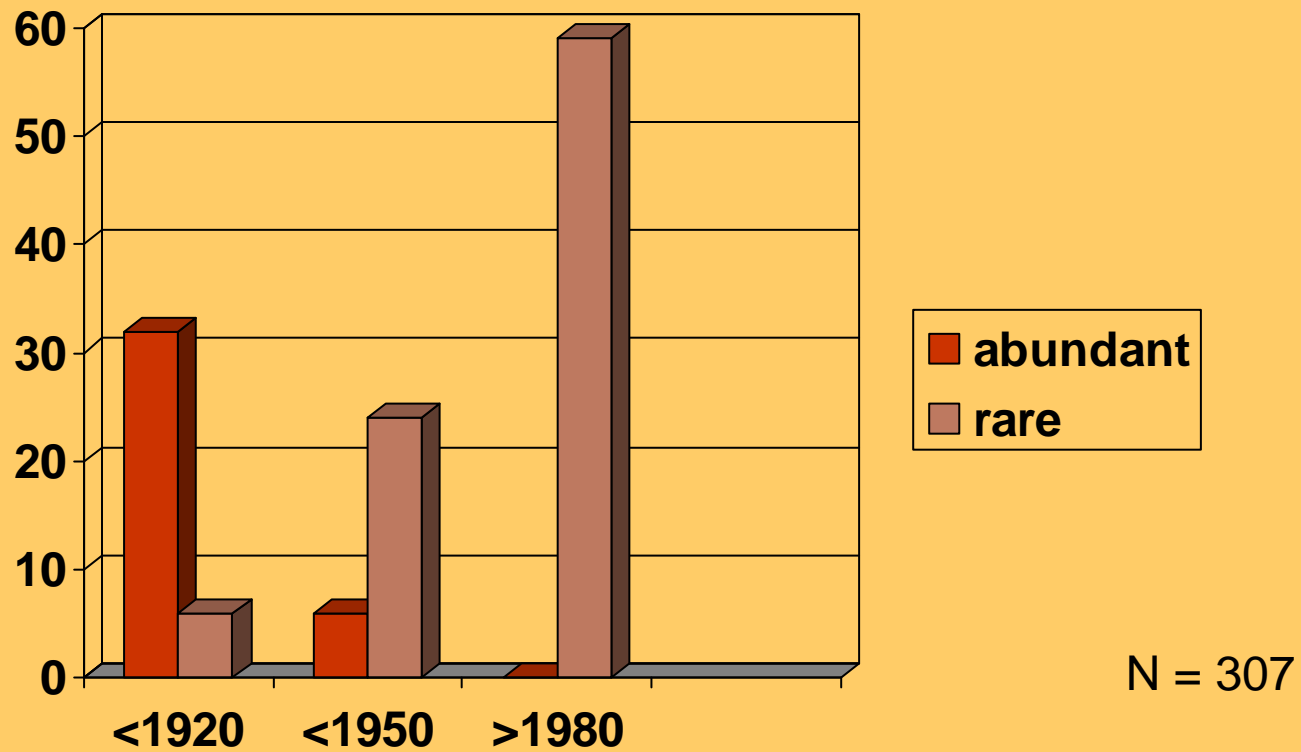
Change in Abundance Class State Accounts



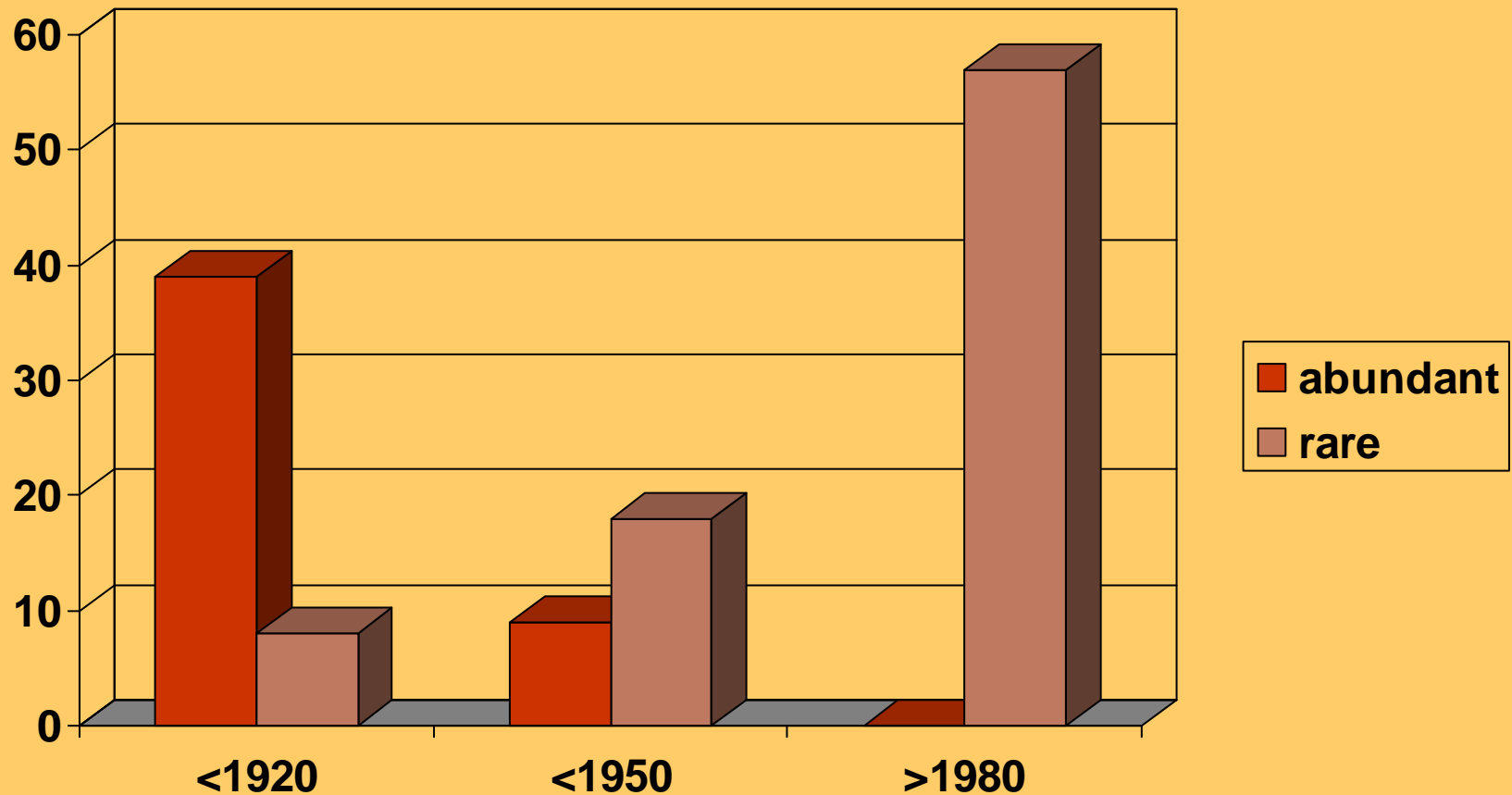
Geography of Long-term Winter Declines



Spring Migration Checklists



Autumn Migration Checklists



N = 307

Possible Causes for Trends

Really Long Term

- Loss of Winter Habitat

Pretty Long Term

- Degradation of Breeding Habitat
- Blackbird Control
- Industrial Contamination
- Loss of Winter Habitat

Take Home Message

By the beginning of the 80-90% decline estimated by BBS and BBC, the Rusty Grackle had apparently already gone from abundant to uncommon in most areas