

Box I. Surveys of Birds



SAMPLING DESIGN

- Birds were censused at the 40 sites in the Phoenix Area Social Survey (Box II).
- Censuses consisted of 15 minute, open radius, point counts.
- Each site was surveyed by 3 observers in Dec and Mar 2007, for a total of 6 visits per site per year

Bird species richness is summarized here as the total number of species detected in all 6 surveys at each site.

RESULTS IN DETAIL

- Respondent's ratings of their *ideal* variety of birds were not correlated with satisfaction ratings or with actual diversity, though most rated it as having high or moderate desirability (81%).
- Satisfaction with the *existing* variety of birds, however, was significantly correlated with actual bird diversity (Fig. 2).
- Nearly twice as many respondents gave positive satisfaction ratings (93%) of bird diversity in neighborhoods with high actual bird diversity as in neighborhoods with low diversity (47%).

Do People Notice Birds?

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Introduction.

Gradual environmental change is often thought to escape the detection of average citizens until conditions reach critical thresholds. Yet, the question is rarely asked, do people notice small changes in their local environments?

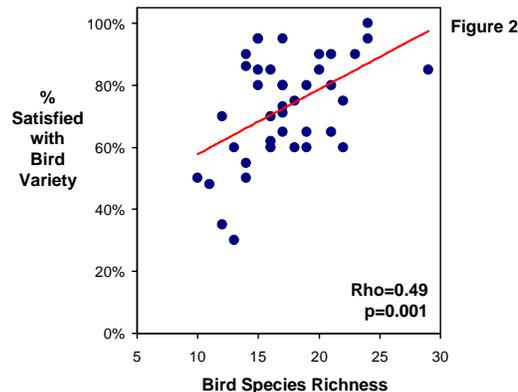
In concurrent studies of bird communities (Box I) and human neighborhood satisfaction (Box II), we asked:

Does variation in actual bird diversity accord with residents' perceptions of local bird diversity?

Local extinctions in animal communities in urban areas are an example of this kind of gradual change. For example, in the years after establishment, suburban housing developments may gradually lose species richness. Human residents of these developments might or might not detect these shifts in the animal communities around them.

Results

High satisfaction with birds = High actual bird diversity



Box II. Surveys of People

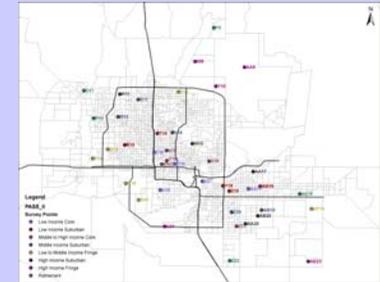


Figure 1. Phoenix Area Social Survey

SAMPLING DESIGN

- A stratified sample of 40 neighborhoods was drawn from 94 residential sites of the CAP LTER Survey 200.
- The sample includes five neighborhoods from each of eight groups (Fig. 1) aiming to represent the variation in ethnic/racial composition, homeowners and renters, and municipalities across the Phoenix metropolitan region.

Survey respondents were asked to rate:

The variety of birds in their *existing* neighborhood

The variety of birds in their *ideal* neighborhood.

- Ratings ranged from highly desirable to highly undesirable.
- We summarized ratings for each of the 40 neighborhoods by calculating the percent of respondents who rated their actual and ideal bird variety as either "highly" or "moderately" satisfactory or desirable (respectively).

Conclusions

Preliminary results suggest that people not only care about biodiversity in their local environs, but they notice its absence.

Respondents' satisfaction with the variety of birds may simply reflect their general neighborhood satisfaction levels. Even if this is so, however, it suggests that neighborhoods that appeal to people also harbor higher biodiversity.

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