

Birders go to great lengths and climbs to seek Bicknell's in its limited mountaintop habitats in southeastern Canada and the northeastern U.S. The best advice today to those who crave it for their ABA list is to look for one as soon as you can.

Consider the array of threats listed by the International Bicknell's Thrush Conservation Group ([bicknellsthrush.org](http://bicknellsthrush.org)): climate warming (which increasingly limits the species' cool high-elevation balsam-fir forest breeding habitat), acid rain, atmospheric mercury pollution, recreational development, telecommunication towers, wind farms, and industrial forest cutting in Canada's Maritime provinces. Further, in its severely restricted Caribbean winter range, where it occurs only on four islands in the Greater Antilles, the species' essential forested habitat is fast disappearing.

A recent study has pointed to yet another potential problem. In New York's Adirondack Mountains, Swainson's Thrushes are evidently advancing upslope and appear to be aggressively winning a battle for dominance over Bicknell's Thrushes in the Bicknell's mountaintop home range.

Benjamin G. Freeman and Graham Montgomery at Cornell University describe the threat in a 2015 paper in *The Condor: Ornithological Applications* ([tinyurl.com/Thrush-](http://tinyurl.com/Thrush-)

aggression). The authors conducted playback experiments from June 1 to June 13, 2014, in the High Peaks region of the Adirondacks in New York. The results suggest that Swainson's Thrushes may be successfully "pushing" Bicknell's Thrushes upslope, usurping Bicknell's preferred high-elevation habitat—an environment already shrinking due to climate change.

No matter what the degree of aggression by Swainson's in some areas of the breeding grounds, Freeman and Montgomery emphasize that conservation of the Bicknell's Thrush will ultimately depend on protecting Bicknell's dwindling winter habitat on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola.

Chris Rimmer at the Vermont Center for Ecostudies ([vtecostudies.org](http://vtecostudies.org)), a founder and past chair of the International Bicknell's Thrush Conservation Group and a leading researcher of Bicknell's ecology, also emphasizes that crucial need. He tells *Birding*:

"Despite these suggestive findings, there can be little doubt that conserving the vulnerable wet forests of Hispaniola—where 80–90% of the species' global population overwinters—is the single most important effort we can undertake in the short term. These forests, even inside legally protected national parks, are being whittled away

