



Audubon MARYLAND-DC

Important Bird Areas Program

Bird Blitz 2009: Monocacy Grasslands IBA

The Monocacy Grasslands IBA was identified in 2008 for its significant populations of Red-headed Woodpecker, Dickcissel, and Grasshopper Sparrow, and for its high diversity of grassland species. This extensive IBA includes grasslands between US Route 15 in Frederick County and MD Route 97 in Carroll County. In 2009, Bird Blitz surveys were conducted in areas south of the southern boundary along MD Route 550, Middleburg Rd., and Uniontown Rd. to determine whether this area warranted inclusion. Five birders conducted 6 surveys which covered 365.4 km of driving transects during 21.3 survey hours (Table 1).

The results of these surveys are summarized below in Table 2, with highlighted species representing those with count totals that exceeded their state-level IBA thresholds. Remember that Bird Blitz survey totals represent minimum population estimates of breeding pairs. Actual populations are higher because not all available habitat was covered and because some birds along a route may not be counted (if they were silent and/or hidden while observers passed by). Seven at-risk species were recorded, including 3 species with counts which indicate significant state-level populations. These included 10 Dickcissel and 139 Grasshopper Sparrow, both exceeding their IBA thresholds, and a significant count of 11 Red-headed Woodpecker (Table 2). In addition, the area surveyed supports a high diversity of grassland species with 7 recorded out of 9 possible in Maryland's Piedmont region, BCR 29 (Table 2).

Many thanks to all the volunteers who conducted Bird Blitz surveys at this site: Barbara Gearhart, David Smith, Mike Welch, Carol Wilkinson, and Jim Wilkinson. These data have already been used to determine that grassland areas south of MD Route 550, Middleburg Rd., and Uniontown Rd. do support significant populations of at-risk species and high grassland bird diversity (Table 2). Thanks to these surveys, the Monocacy Grasslands IBA boundary has been expanded to include these additional areas of important grassland habitat in Frederick and Carroll Counties.

Table 1. Bird Blitz 2009 survey effort for Monocacy Grasslands IBA.

Participants	Surveys	Distance (km)	Time (hr)
5	6	365.4	21.3

Table 2. Bird Blitz 2009 survey results for the Monocacy Grasslands IBA.

At-risk Species¹	Total	Assemblage
Red-headed Woodpecker	11	--
Willow Flycatcher	3	Shrubland
Wood Thrush	8	FIDS
Louisiana Waterthrush	1	FIDS
Prairie Warbler	1	Shrubland
Dickcissel	10	Grassland
Grasshopper Sparrow	139	Grassland
Secondary Target Species		Assemblage
American Kestrel	3	Grassland
Brown Thrasher	4	Shrubland
Yellow-breasted Chat	1	Shrubland
Savannah Sparrow	2	Grassland
Eastern Towhee	1	Shrubland
Vesper Sparrow	12	Grassland
Field Sparrow	5	Shrubland
Bobolink	5	Grassland
Eastern Meadowlark	47	Grassland

¹Species highlighted in red had counts which indicate significant state-level populations exceeding IBA thresholds.

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