

## **Important Bird Areas Program**

### **Bird Blitz 2009: Southern Dorchester County IBA**

One of the largest critical sites for birds in Maryland, Southern Dorchester County is notable for having one of the largest contiguous areas of tidal marsh in the northeastern United States, with vast expanses of both brackish marsh and salt marsh. In order to assess the possibility of this area qualifying as a critical site at the global scale based on its population of the globally vulnerable Saltmarsh Sparrow, one birder conducted one survey covering 9.7 km along Elliot Island Road during 1.5 survey hours (Table 1).

The results of these surveys are summarized below in Table 2. 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). Two at-risk species were recorded, including a total of 24 Saltmarsh Sparrow. Although this count falls below the global IBA threshold for this species, it does indicate its populations could exceed the global threshold for the entire IBA, given the small area surveyed. In 2010, Bird Blitz will target this site with more widespread survey coverage to obtain counts of Saltmarsh Sparrow which will better assist in reviewing the global status of this IBA.

Many thanks to Lynn Davidson who volunteered her time to conduct a Bird Blitz survey at this site.

**Table 1.** Bird Blitz 2009 survey effort for Southern Dorchester County IBA.

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Surveys</b>	<b>Distance (km)</b>	<b>Time (hr)</b>
1	1	9.7	1.5

**Table 2.** Bird Blitz 2009 survey results for Southern Dorchester County IBA.

<b>At-risk Species</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Assemblage</b>
Saltmarsh Sparrow	24	Salt Marsh
Seaside Sparrow	78	Salt Marsh

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