



Audubon MARYLAND-DC

Important Bird Areas

St. Mary's River IBA

Date of Site Account: May 2016

County: St. Mary's

Status: Recognized

Area: 13,936 acres (5,640 ha)

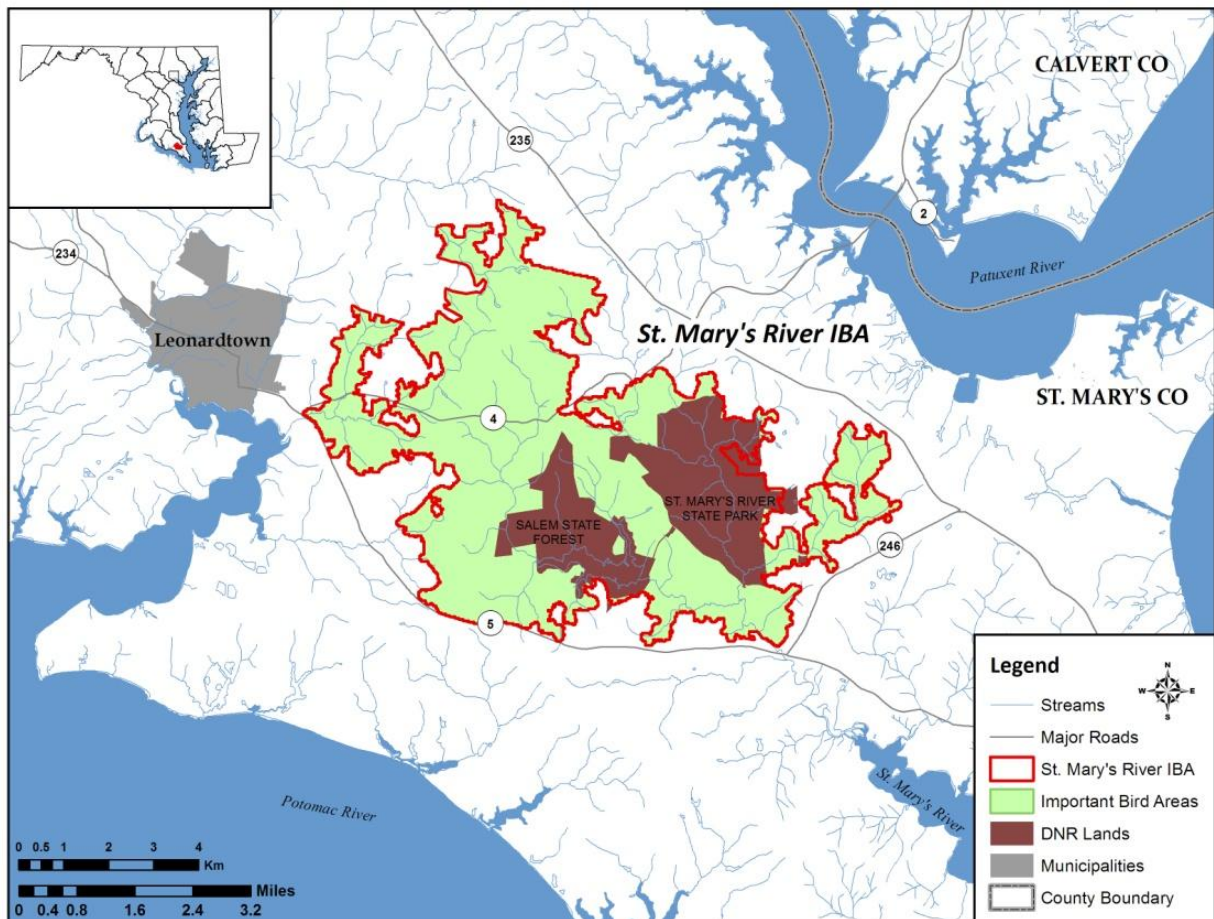
Priority: State



Prairie Warbler

Site Description:

The St. Mary's River IBA includes a large forested block comprising 13,936 acres southeast of Leonardtown in St. Mary's county. The area primarily includes lands within the St. Mary's River watershed and is dominated by oak-hickory forest, accounting for about 50% of the area. Mixed conifer forest (loblolly-shortleaf-pine) represents nearly 24% of the area, and mixed forest (oak-pine) makes up about 4% of the IBA. Approximately 3,459 acres of the IBA are owned and managed by Maryland DNR as the St. Mary's River State Park and the Maryland Forest Service's Salem Tract. The remaining lands in the IBA are privately owned.



Birds:

Bird Blitz surveys conducted by the Audubon in 2009 yielded population estimates exceeding IBA thresholds for three at-risk species (Wood Thrush, Worm-eating Warbler, and Prairie Warbler). In St. Mary's River IBA, 21 species of FIDS breed regularly, out of 24 potential breeding species on Maryland's Coastal Plain. Wood Thrush inhabit a wide variety of forest types but have declined steadily across their range in recent decades. Worm-eating Warbler is the only Maryland bird that tends to specialize in hunting prey in hanging clusters of dead leaves. Prairie Warbler populations have dropped throughout the state of Maryland.

Table 1. Qualifying Criteria¹: Category MD-DC (D1), Category MD-DC 2 (D3)

IBA Criterion	Species	Data	Season
Category 1: <i>At-risk species</i>	Wood Thrush	253 pairs estimated ² ; 4 of 4 atlas blocks ³	Breeding
Category 1: <i>At-risk species</i>	Worm-Eating Warbler	65 pairs estimated ² ; 3 of 4 atlas blocks ³	Breeding
Category 1: <i>At-risk species</i>	Prairie Warbler	137 pairs estimated ² ; 1 of 4 atlas blocks ³	Breeding
Category 2: <i>Species Assemblages</i>	Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS): Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, Whip-poor-will, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Brown Creeper, Wood Thrush, Northern Parula, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Oven Bird, Louisiana Water Thrush, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager	21 FIDS breed regularly out of 24 species potentially regular in Coastal Plain; Mean FIDS per Atlas block = 18.5; represents the 95.2 nd percentile for Coastal Plain forest ³	Breeding

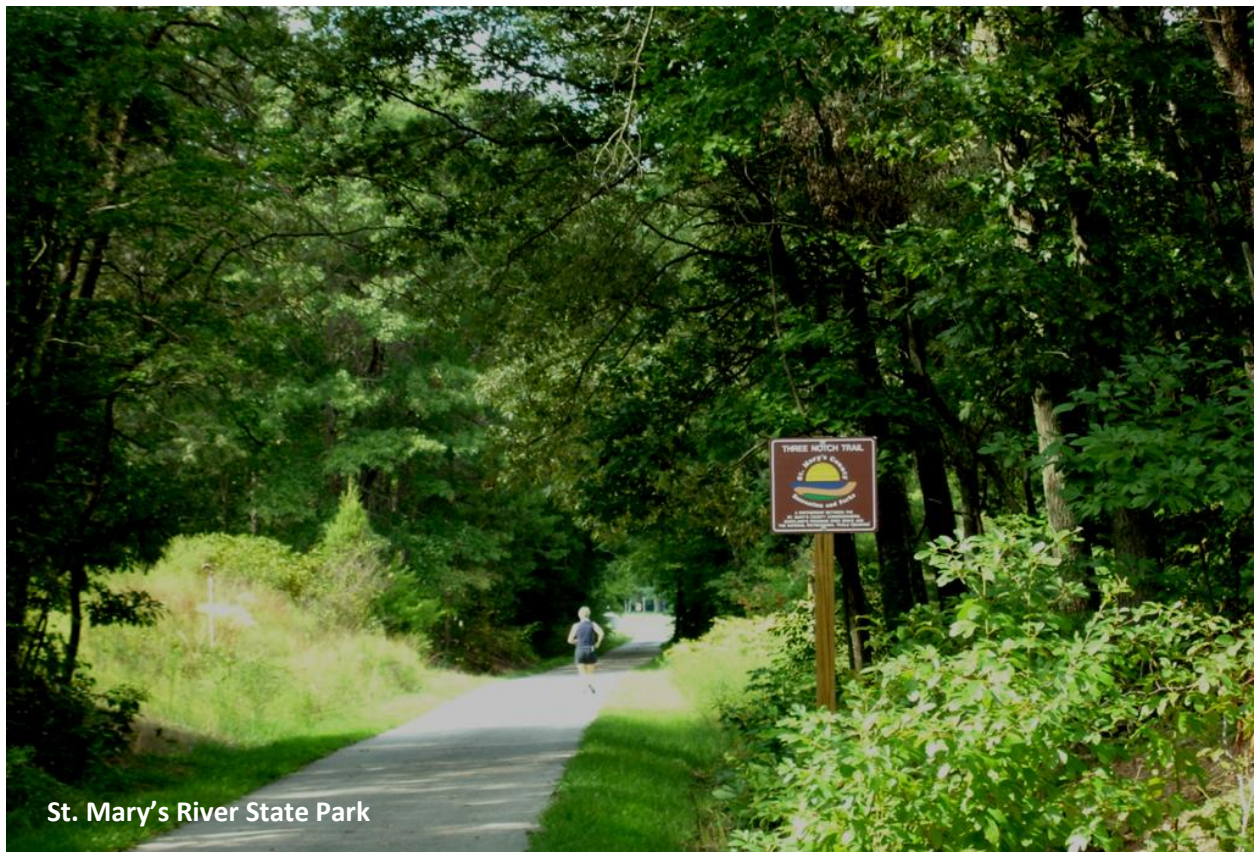
1. Audubon Maryland-DC. 2011. Important Bird Areas Program criteria for site selection. Available online: <http://md.audubon.org/important-bird-areas-2>.
2. Audubon Maryland-DC. 2009. Bird Blitz survey data and population estimates. Unpublished data.
3. Ellison, W.G., editor. 2010. Second atlas of the breeding birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia. China: Johns Hopkins University Press. 494

Conservation and Management Units:

The 10,477 acres of land in the St. Mary's River IBA that are not managed by Maryland DNR remain privately owned. In the public portion, the Salem Tract is open to hunting, hiking, and horseback riding. No motorized vehicle use is allowed. Some 345 acres of the Salem Tract were harvested by the clear cut method in 2000, prior to MD DNR acquiring the property. About 108 of the 345 acres were treated with herbicides to control hardwood regeneration and then replanted with loblolly pine. The remaining acres are naturally regenerating mixed pine/hardwood. One of the long-term objectives for the IBA is for less plantation-style loblolly planting and more bird friendly mixed forest of varying ages.

Threat and Conservation:

The main threat to this IBA is the continuing loss and fragmentation of forest habitat and degradation of aquatic habitats resulting from the urbanization within the IBA and surrounding areas. Additionally ATV trespass has been an ongoing problem for the IBA. The acquisition of lands adjacent to the Salem Tract is being pursued in an effort to address these threats.



St. Mary's River State Park

For more information about this and other Important Bird Areas, visit Audubon Maryland-DC online at: <http://md.audubon.org/conservation/important-bird-areas>

This IBA site account was produced with a generous grant from Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust.

