



Audubon MARYLAND-DC

Important Bird Areas Program

Bird Blitz 2010: Susquehanna River

The Susquehanna River delineates the boundary between Cecil and Harford Counties in northeastern Maryland before it empties into the Chesapeake Bay. Midway down the Maryland stretch of the river is the Conowingo Dam hydroelectric power plant operated by Exelon Power. This stretch of river has historically supported a large breeding colony of Great Blue Heron, as well as large numbers of Bald Eagles throughout the year. Both the east and west banks of the river hold oak-hickory forests with a sizeable block protected on the west side as Susquehanna River State Park. Data from past surveys in the State Park indicate a substantial population of Cerulean Warbler, a globally vulnerable Audubon/American Bird Conservancy Watchlist species (Category Yellow). During June 2010, Bird Blitz surveys targeted the Susquehanna River's forested corridor, concentrating efforts on the less-explored eastern bank with the objective of finding additional Cerulean Warblers. All totaled, 8 surveys were conducted by 3 volunteers and Audubon staff covering a distance of approximately 30 km of transects during nearly 18 survey hours (Table 1).

The results of these surveys are summarized below in Table 2, with highlighted species representing those which matched or exceeded their state-level IBA thresholds. It is important to note 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). There were 8 at-risk species recorded in the Susquehanna River area, with two species exceeding state-level IBA thresholds. Bald Eagle exceeded its state-level threshold of 10 pairs while Cerulean Warbler also exceeded its state-level threshold of 10 pairs. Moreover, this count of Cerulean Warbler (Table 2) indicates that the Susquehanna River site likely has significance for Cerulean Warbler at the global scale with a Global IBA threshold of 15 pairs. The site also has a moderately diverse Forest Interior-Dwelling Species (FIDS) community for Maryland's Coastal Plain region with a total of 17 FIDS recorded during Bird Blitz.

Thanks to all the volunteers who conducted Bird Blitz surveys at this site: Ross Geredien, Leslie Starr, and Joe Turner. These data will greatly assist our review of this area as a potential IBA later this year.

Table 1. Bird Blitz 2010 survey effort for the Susquehanna River candidate IBA.

Participants	Surveys	Distance (km)	Time (hr)
5	8	29.5	18

Table 2. Bird Blitz 2010 results for the Susquehanna River candidate IBA.

Primary Targets – At-risk Species	Total	Assemblage
Bald Eagle	50	--
Wood Thrush	71	FIDS
Prairie Warbler	2	Shrubland
Cerulean Warbler	13	FIDS
Prothonotary Warbler	2	FIDS
Worm-eating Warbler	11	FIDS
Louisiana Waterthrush	8	FIDS
Kentucky Warbler	10	FIDS
Secondary Target Species	Total	Assemblage
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	FIDS
Hairy Woodpecker	7	FIDS
Pileated Woodpecker	3	FIDS
Acadian Flycatcher	37	FIDS
Brown Thrasher	1	Shrubland
White-eyed Vireo	6	Shrubland
Yellow-throated Vireo	9	FIDS
Red-eyed Vireo	43	FIDS
Northern Parula	19	FIDS
American Redstart	13	FIDS
Ovenbird	17	FIDS
Yellow-breasted Chat	2	Shrubland
Scarlet Tanager	17	FIDS
Eastern Towhee	6	Shrubland

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