

Important Bird Areas Program

Bird Blitz 2010: Catoctin Mountain

This year marked the third year in which Bird Blitz surveys were conducted in the northern half of Catoctin Mountain in western Frederick County. Catoctin Mountain reaches an elevation of 579 m (1,900 ft) at Chimney Rock and is heavily forested with lands protected by the U.S. Park Service as Catoctin Mountain Park and Maryland DNR as Cunningham Falls State Park.

Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas data indicate the globally vulnerable (Audubon Watchlist, Category Yellow) species Cerulean Warbler is widely distributed across Catoctin Mountain. In 2007, volunteers counted 6 Cerulean Warbler in Manahan Rd area of Catoctin Mountain National Park, and in 2008 volunteers counted 4 Cerulean Warbler in the Owens Creek and Thurmont Vista areas. Bird Blitz surveys in 2010 again targeted species at-risk in the state with a focus on Cerulean Warbler, as well as other Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) – those listed by Maryland DNR as requiring large areas of intact forest to breed successfully. Bird Blitz surveyed the area between Harbaugh Valley, Sabillasville Rd, and U.S. Route 15 at the northernmost extent of Catoctin Mountain in Maryland. All totaled, a single transect survey was conducted by 2 volunteers covering a distance of nearly 29 km during 6 survey hours (Table 1).

Bird Blitz survey results are summarized below in Table 2, with highlighted species representing those with Bird Blitz counts suggesting that populations across the entire site likely match or exceed 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 3 at-risk species recorded at Catoctin Mountain, including Wood Thrush, Cerulean Warbler, and Worm-eating Warbler. Although no species had counts exceeding state-level IBA thresholds, a high count was made for Cerulean Warbler that was just below the state-level IBA threshold of 10 pairs. When combined with previous Bird Blitz data from other areas of the site, count data for Cerulean Warbler suggests that a significant state-level population is supported by the site and that this population is also likely globally significant. Bird Blitz also recorded a total of 11 Forest Interior-Dwelling Species (FIDS).

Special thanks to the volunteers who conducted Bird Blitz surveys at this site: MaryAnn Beverly and Beth Zang. These data will greatly assist our review of this site as a potential IBA.

Table 1. Bird Blitz 2010 survey effort for the Catoctin Mountain candidate IBA.

Participants	Surveys	Distance (km)	Time (hr)
2	1	28.5	6

Table 2. Bird Blitz 2010 results for the Catoctin Mountain candidate IBA.

Primary Targets – At-risk Species	Total	Assemblage
Wood Thrush	35	FIDS
Cerulean Warbler	9	FIDS
Worm-eating Warbler	1	FIDS
Secondary Target Species	Total	Assemblage
Acadian Flycatcher	14	FIDS
White-eyed Vireo	3	Shrubland
Red-eyed Vireo	19	FIDS
Yellow-throated Vireo	4	FIDS
Northern Parula	2	FIDS
American Redstart	4	FIDS
Ovenbird	20	FIDS
Hooded Warbler	8	FIDS
Scarlet Tanager	11	FIDS
Eastern Towhee	6	Shrubland

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