

Important Bird Areas Program

Bird Blitz 2009: South Mountain

South Mountain is the northernmost portion of the Blue Ridge range which extends into Maryland and Pennsylvania. In Maryland, the mountain stretches north to south for about 40 miles in Washington and Frederick Counties. South Mountain's elevation changes from about 1,200 ft near the Potomac River in the south to about 2,150 ft at Quirauk Mountain in the north. This narrow forested ridge is rich in American history and offers many recreational opportunities. In addition to the Appalachian Trail (AT) following the ridgeline through Maryland, there are four state parks located on South Mountain, including Greenbrier, Gathland, Washington Monument, and South Mountain State Parks. Volunteers utilized the AT, access through state parks, and a number of mountain roads to conduct Bird Blitz surveys in 2009. Adding to 2008 Bird Blitz efforts, South Mountain received great survey coverage in 2009 as 3 volunteers conducted 10 surveys. All totaled, more than 62 km of transects were surveyed during more than 33 survey hours (Table 1).

The results are summarized below in Table 2. 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 2009. Even though none of the counts for these species exceeded IBA thresholds, several species did have high counts which indicate their populations could exceed thresholds for the larger area of South Mountain. At-risk species with high counts that were below IBA thresholds were Wood Thrush, Worm-eating Warbler, and Louisiana Waterthrush (Table 2). These results also demonstrate that the area supports a number of Forest Interior-Dwelling Species (FIDS) with 18 FIDS recorded out of 26 possible in the Ridge and Valley (and Blue Ridge) portion of Maryland's Appalachian Mountains (Table 2).

Thanks go out to the volunteers who conducted Bird Blitz surveys at this site: Mary Ann Beverly, Dave Weesner, and Beth Zang. These data will greatly assist our review of this area as a potential IBA later this year.

Table 1. Bird Blitz 2009 survey effort for the South Mountain candidate IBA.

Volunteers	Surveys	Distance (km)	Time (hr)
3	10	62.1	33.25

Table 2. Bird Blitz 2009 results for the South Mountain candidate IBA.

Primary Targets – At-risk Species	Total	Assemblage
American Woodcock	1	SHRUB
Red-headed Woodpecker	4	--
Wood Thrush	114	FIDS
Cerulean Warbler	2	FIDS
Blue-winged Warbler	1	SHRUB
Worm-eating Warbler	22	FIDS
Louisiana Waterthrush	22	FIDS
Kentucky Warbler	8	FIDS
Secondary Target Species	Total	Assemblage
Broad-winged Hawk	2	FIDS
Barred Owl	4	FIDS
Hairy Woodpecker	6	FIDS
Pileated Woodpecker	25	FIDS
Acadian Flycatcher*	x	FIDS
White-eyed Vireo	2	SHRUB
Red-eyed Vireo*	x	FIDS
Yellow-throated Vireo	22	FIDS
Brown Thrasher	13	SHRUB
Black-throated Blue Warbler	1	FIDS
Black-and-white Warbler	7	FIDS
American Redstart	14	FIDS
Ovenbird*	x	FIDS
Hooded Warbler	11	FIDS
Scarlet Tanager*	x	FIDS
Eastern Towhee	68	SHRUB
Field Sparrow	22	SHRUB

*Species present, but not targeted by Bird Blitz due to their wide distribution across Maryland.

Prepared by:

David Yeany II

IBA Program Coordinator, Audubon MD-DC

2437 Eastern Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21224

Phone: 814-221-4361 Email: dyeany@audubon.org