

Important Bird Areas Program

Bird Blitz 2009: St. Mary's River

Bird Blitz surveys in 2009 targeted two large, forested blocks in the St. Mary's River watershed in central St. Mary's County to the north and south of Leonardtown. These forests are a mix of oak-hickory, oak-pine, and loblolly-shortleaf-pine associations. The lands in this area include a number of privately owned parcels, as well as tracts owned and managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). These DNR lands encompass nearly 3,460 acres which make up St. Mary's River State Park on the east side of Indian Bridge Road and the Salem Tract, run by the Forest Service, on the west side. Volunteers utilized DNR trails, service roads, and other roads lending access to the area's forests to achieve coverage of the area this summer. All together, 7 volunteers conducted 8 Bird Blitz surveys, and traversed 47 km of transects during more than 22 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, relatively high counts were recorded for Worm-eating Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and Wood Thrush (Table 2). These counts indicate that populations for these at-risk species could exceed thresholds for the area. Bird Blitz results also demonstrated that the area supports a relatively high diversity of Forest Interior-Dwelling Species (FIDS) with 18 FIDS recorded out of 24 possible in Maryland's Coastal Plain forests (Table 2).

Thanks go out to the volunteers who conducted Bird Blitz surveys at this site: Patty Craig, John Dennehy, Kevin Graff, Jim Green, Ron Gutberlet, John Hubbell, and Bill Hubick. These data will greatly aid our review of this area as a potential IBA later this year.

Table 1. Bird Blitz 2009 survey effort for the St. Mary's River candidate IBA.

Volunteers	Surveys	Distance (km)	Time (hr)
7	8	47	22.25

Table 2. Bird Blitz 2009 results for the St. Mary's River candidate IBA.

Primary Targets – At-risk Species	Total	Assemblage
Bald Eagle	1	--
Brown-headed Nuthatch	1	--
Wood Thrush	81	FIDS
Prairie Warbler	24	Shrubland
Prothonotary Warbler	1	FIDS
Worm-eating Warbler	15	FIDS
Louisiana Waterthrush	3	FIDS
Kentucky Warbler	3	FIDS
Secondary Target Species	Total	Assemblage
Red-shouldered Hawk	14	FIDS
Hairy Woodpecker	4	FIDS
Pileated Woodpecker	5	FIDS
Acadian Flycatcher*	x	FIDS
White-eyed Vireo	11	Shrubland
Red-eyed Vireo*	x	FIDS
Yellow-throated Vireo	3	FIDS
Brown Thrasher	18	Shrubland
Black-and-white Warbler	4	FIDS
American Redstart	1	FIDS
Northern Parula	32	FIDS
Ovenbird*	x	FIDS
Hooded Warbler	16	FIDS
Yellow-breasted Chat	27	Shrubland
Summer Tanager	9	FIDS
Scarlet Tanager*	x	FIDS
Eastern Towhee	41	Shrubland
Field Sparrow	19	Shrubland

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

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