

## **Important Bird Areas Program**

### **Bird Blitz 2009: Youghiogheny Valley**

Another 2009 Bird Blitz target area for western Maryland was the vast and forested Youghiogheny Valley in western Garrett County. This area included the oak-hickory and maple-beech-birch forests of the Youghiogheny River watershed, beginning at the Youghiogheny Reservoir near Friendsville and extending south to include Mount Nebo Wildlife Management Area and Herrington Manor State Park. Other lands in the target area included the Maryland DNR owned and managed Youghiogheny River Natural Environment Area, Garrett State Forest, and Swallow Falls State Park, as well as a number of privately owned parcels. This site brought some challenges to Bird Blitzers, as many of the survey areas were fairly remote with limited access points. Streams across the site cut through rocky ravines and were often lined with dense alder and Rhododendron thickets, and occasionally created pockets of mountain peatland. Not to mention, the slopes bordering the Youghiogheny River offered steep and hazardous mountain terrain. Even so, this rugged area received excellent survey coverage, with 3 volunteers and one Audubon staff member conducting 13 surveys for a total of 40 km of transects during 69 survey hours (Table 1).

The results of these surveys are summarized below in Table 2, with highlighted species representing those with count totals that exceeded their state-level IBA thresholds. Remember 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 9 at-risk species recorded with 3 species exceeding their state-level IBA thresholds. Alder Flycatcher exceeded its state-level threshold of 5 pairs, Blackburnian Warbler exceeded its state-level threshold of 10 pairs, and a count of 52 Canada Warbler, including 33 singing males, far exceeded its state-level IBA threshold of 10 pairs. Bird Blitz results demonstrated that the area supports a high diversity of Forest Interior-Dwelling Species (FIDS) with 29 FIDS recorded out of 34 possible on the Allegheny Plateau of the Appalachian Mountains region of Maryland (Table 2). Additionally, the mountain peatland assemblage was well-represented at the site with 3 of 6 possible species in this group recorded during Bird Blitz 2009.

Many thanks go out to the volunteers who conducted Bird Blitz surveys at this site: J.B. Churchill, Ross Geredien, and Bill Hubick. These data will greatly assist our review of this area as a potential IBA.

**Table 1.** Bird Blitz 2009 survey effort for the Youghiogheny Valley candidate IBA.

Participants	Surveys	Distance (km)	Time (hr)
4	13	69.39	40.25

**Table 2.** Bird Blitz 2009 results for the Youghiogheny Valley candidate IBA.

Primary Targets - At-risk Species	Total	Assemblage
Willow Flycatcher	2	Shrubland
<b>Alder Flycatcher</b>	<b>7</b>	Mountain Peatland
Wood Thrush	33	FIDS
<b>Blackburnian Warbler</b>	<b>22</b>	FIDS
Cerulean Warbler	2	FIDS
Louisiana Waterthrush	33	FIDS
Northern Waterthrush	3	FIDS/ Mountain Peatland
Kentucky Warbler	5	FIDS
<b>Canada Warbler</b>	<b>52</b>	FIDS/ Mountain Peatland
Secondary Target Species	Total	Assemblage
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	FIDS
Broad-winged Hawk	3	FIDS
Barred Owl	1	FIDS
Hairy Woodpecker	13	FIDS
Pileated Woodpecker	11	FIDS
Acadian Flycatcher*	4	FIDS
Red-eyed Vireo*	6	FIDS
Blue-headed Vireo	110	FIDS
Yellow-throated Vireo	1	FIDS
Common Raven	17	FIDS
Brown Creeper	24	FIDS
Winter Wren	6	FIDS
Veery	93	FIDS
Hermit Thrush	40	FIDS
Brown Thrasher	2	Shrubland
Magnolia Warbler	34	FIDS
Black-throated Blue Warbler	100	FIDS
Chestnut-sided Warbler	79	Shrubland
Black-and-white Warbler	23	FIDS
American Redstart	20	FIDS
Northern Parula	10	FIDS
Ovenbird*	16	FIDS
Hooded Warbler	18	FIDS
Yellow-breasted Chat	1	Shrubland
Scarlet Tanager*	6	FIDS
Eastern Towhee	64	Shrubland
Field Sparrow	10	Shrubland

\*Species not targeted by Bird Blitz due to their wide distribution across Maryland.

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