



Audubon IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Pine Mountain Wise and Dickenson Counties

Total Size: 17,628 ha (43,562 acres)

Elevation: 284 - 987m (932 – 3,238 ft)



IBA Criteria Met

Criterion	Species	Data	Season	Source
Species at Risk	Swainson's Warbler	1. 8 singing males in 1998 2. 6 singing males in 2006	Breeding	1. U.S. Forest Service Surveys 2. IBA Surveys
Species at Risk	Kentucky Warbler	Estimate of at least 1000 breeding pairs (2006)	Breeding	1. IBA Surveys 2. Population projection by A. Weldon
Species at Risk	Worm-eating Warbler	Estimate of at least 1000 breeding pairs (2006)	Breeding	1. IBA Surveys 2. Population projection by A. Weldon
Species at Risk	Wood Thrush	Extensive habitat available. Population likely in the thousands	Breeding	1. IBA Surveys 2. Population projection by A. Weldon
Responsibility Species Assemblage – Forest	Eastern Wood-pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Wood Thrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Canada Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Scarlet Tanager	Breeds	Breeding	1. U.S. Forest Service Surveys 2. IBA Surveys

Description

The Pine Mountain IBA occupies the south-southeastern facing flank of Pine Mountain along the Virginia-Kentucky border in extreme southwestern Virginia. This area is composed of uplifted sedimentary stones such as siltstone, sandstone, and shale, through which an intricate network of streams have dissected deep and narrow valleys. Habitat is predominantly mature forests with mixed-mesophytic communities of oaks, poplars, and hemlocks dominating along stream channels and at lower elevations, then giving way to drier mixed oak-hardwoods in the uplands. Expansive understories of dense rhododendron thickets characterize the moist cove forests that are found along streams and in sheltered valleys. The habitats within the IBA are diverse, largely unbroken, and expansive, providing excellent habitat for interior dwelling birds.

Conservation and Management Units

Over 43% of the habitat within Pine Mountain IBA is owned and managed by the U.S. Forest Service to meet conservation objectives with smaller portions in State ownership (Breaks Interstate Park) and private ownership.

Birds

The forests of Pine Mountain support the entire suite of species that are characteristic of eastern mixed-mesophytic forests. This assemblage includes Swainson's Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, Worm-eating Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Wood Thrush. The extensive network of streams and dense cove forests support Swainson's Warblers at relatively high densities compared to other surveyed areas in the region. This species is rare in western Virginia, being found almost exclusively in the Cumberland Mountains region of the Commonwealth. Other species associated with streams or ravines such as the Kentucky Warbler and Worm-eating Warbler are relatively common in the IBA, while Wood Thrushes are abundant throughout. Cerulean Warblers are found occasionally on U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Geological Survey breeding bird surveys but it is uncertain whether their populations meet thresholds within the IBA. With only eight survey routes distributed throughout the IBA's more than 17,000 hectares, the majority of the area remains unsurveyed and understudied.



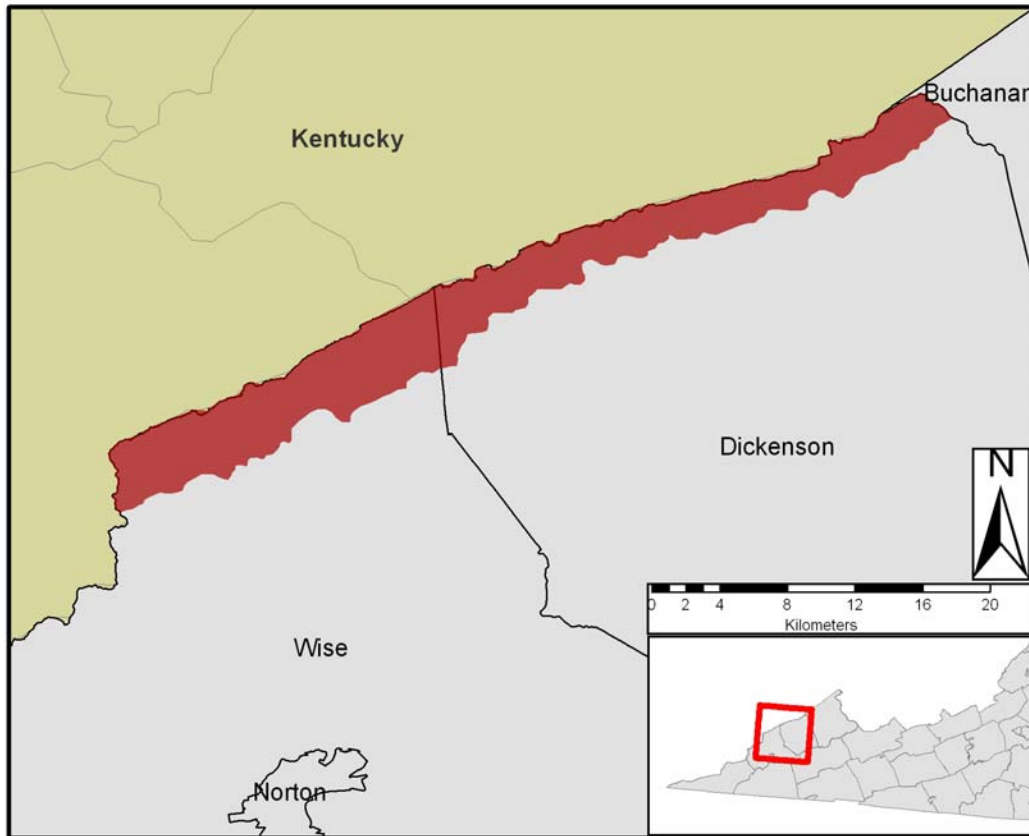
Hooded Warbler

Conservation and Threats

Mixed hemlock forests have become increasingly threatened by the invasion of the hemlock woolly adelgid, an aphid-like insect that was introduced from Asia. The adelgid, a serious pest that can kill hemlocks in a matter of just a few years, has recently invaded the IBA. Considering the valuable role that hemlocks play in the forest ecosystem and to birds, this is a considerable threat. The Forest Service is currently developing an Environmental Assessment to determine the best means of controlling the infestation. Conversion of forested habitats to development, mining, or logging uses

is a continual threat outside of Forest Service boundaries. Many of the birds that are dependent on the IBA are forest interior species and increased fragmentation is likely to have a negative impact on their populations. Fire suppression in parts of the IBA is also a threat as it reduces habitat diversity for forest birds. The Forest Service is currently using prescribed fire to maintain the natural diversity of the forest in many parts of the IBA.

Pine Mountain IBA Map



For more information about this and other IBAs in Virginia please visit our website at: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/virginia/>

Or contact Mary Elfner, the Virginia IBA Coordinator, at: melfner@audubon.org or 804-788-7660



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