

## Summary of Bird Blitz 2008

In 2008, 27 volunteers, most of them MOS members, participated in 33 Bird Blitz surveys at 10 sites across Maryland in an effort to identify areas of bird conservation importance. Bird Blitz is a breeding season bird count targeted at species at risk, and survey results are used to determine if a site supports threshold populations of these species in order to qualify as an Important Bird Area. Results from the 2007 Bird Blitz surveys, reported earlier led to the identification of five new IBAs in 2007/08: Prettyboy IBA, South River Greenway IBA, Lower C&O Canal IBA, Tuckahoe Creek IBA and Idylwild IBA. For details of these IBAs see Audubon MD-DC's website: [www.mddc.audubon.org](http://www.mddc.audubon.org)

Below is a summary of the results from each site, with count totals for some of the at-risk species, which were the primary targets of the survey. Many participants also counted secondary target species, which further assist the review of IBA nominations by providing data on bird species assemblages representative of different habitat types.

### **Lower C&O Canal, Washington County**

# Volunteers: 1

# Bird counts: 1

After the identification of this site as an IBA in February 2008, IBA Technical Review Committee member David Smith set out to determine whether this site should include the canal length from Harper's Ferry to Antietam Creek. His June survey recorded 17 Louisiana Waterthrush, 13 Prothonotary Warbler, and 11 Wood Thrush along this 14-km length of canal, which is similar to densities in lower portions of the canal, within the IBA. Based on these results, this portion of the canal was added to the IBA in February 2008 and the boundary of this site is currently being mapped.

### **Catoctin Mountain, Frederick County**

# Volunteers: 3

# Bird counts: 2

Surveys of the Owens Creek area and Thurmont Vista led to counts of 4 Cerulean Warbler, 7 Worm-eating Warbler, and 32 Wood Thrush. More surveys from this area are needed in 2009. Participants: David Smith, Mike Welch, John Christy.

### **Monocacy Grasslands, Frederick & Carroll Counties**

# Volunteers: 5

# Bird counts: 4

Bird Blitzes in the grasslands between US Rt.15 in Frederick County and MD Rt. 97 in Carroll County led to the identification of the Monocacy Grasslands IBA. Threshold population levels were surpassed for Red-headed Woodpecker (19), Dickcissel (13), and Grasshopper Sparrow (129), with 16 Wood Thrush recorded as well. This IBA was identified not only for these 3 at-risk species but also for diverse assemblage of grassland birds recorded by Bird Blitz, including American Kestrel, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark. Participants: Jim Wilkinson, Carol Wilkinson, David Smith, Mike Welch, Barbara Gearhart.

**Indian Springs Wildlife Management Area, Washington County**

# Volunteers: 2

# Bird counts: 5

Dave Weesner led significant efforts throughout the Indian Springs WMA. Survey coverage included Blairs Valley Road, Bear Pond Hollow, Hickory Ridge, Catholic Church Road, Mooresville Road, Tectonville Road, and Kuhns Ridge Road. Threshold populations were found for Worm-eating Warbler (23) and Louisiana Waterthrush (20). A number of Forest-interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) and shrubland birds were also counted including 8 Kentucky Warbler, 59 Wood Thrush, 5 Prairie Warbler, and 3 Northern Bobwhite. An IBA nomination for this site is in progress. Participants: Dave Weesner, Pol Heiney.

**Mattawoman Creek, Charles County**

# Volunteers: 2

# Bird counts: 1

Smallwood State Park was surveyed once in late June. The count recorded 4 Kentucky Warbler, 3 Prairie Warbler, 5 Wood Thrush, and 1 Bald Eagle. More work is still needed in this area, with Bird Blitz surveys planned for 2009. Participants: Jean Artes, Dan Haas.

**Nanticoke watershed, Dorchester & Wicomico Counties**

# Volunteers: 9

# Bird counts: 9

Charles Stegman led the way for bird counts in this sizeable area of deciduous swamp and upland loblolly pine forests. Extensive coverage of the area yielded counts that exceeded IBA thresholds for Worm-eating Warbler (22), Prothonotary Warbler (83), and Chuck-will's Widow (61). Other primary target species with high counts included Prairie Warbler (25), Northern Bobwhite (12), and Whip-poor-will (7). These counts, together with DNR records for 17 Bald Eagle nests and a nightjar survey by Mike Walsh who found 30 Chuck-will's Widows in southwestern Wicomico County, identified Nanticoke Valley as an IBA. Participants: Charles Stegman, Jean Fry, Larry Fry, David Curson, Ron Gutberlet, Pete Zerhusen, Charles Vaughn, Karen Harris, Bill Harris.

**Savage River Area, Garrett County**

# Volunteers: 5

# Bird counts: 5

Rob and Wendy Olsson led the way, covering New Germany State Park and trails throughout Savage River State Forest. Surveys yielded small numbers of Black-billed Cuckoo, Wood Thrush, Alder Flycatcher, Golden-winged Warbler, and Blackburnian Warbler. Bird Blitzes are scheduled for this area in 2009. Participants: Rob Olsson, Wendy Olsson, Laura Mitchell, Dan Ian, Travis Stotts.

**South Mountain, Washington & Frederick Counties**

# Volunteers: 2

# Bird counts: 1

A late June survey along Thurston Griggs Trail yielded 5 Worm-eating Warbler and 4 Wood Thrush. Participants: Rob Olsson, Wendy Olsson.

**Youghiogheny Valley, Garrett County**

# Volunteers: 1

# Bird counts: 4

Scott Berglund surveyed Mt. Nebo WMA, Garrett State Forest, and Herrington Manor State Park in mid June. These counts yielded 10 Blackburnian Warbler, as well as small numbers of Alder Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Canada Warbler, and American Woodcock. Bird Blitzes are planned for this area in 2009.

**Zekiah Swamp, Charles County**

# Volunteers: 2

# Bird counts: 1

Leslie Starr and Joe Turner conducted a late June survey of Allen's Fresh via kayak. This count turned up 7 Bald Eagle, 4 Prothonotary Warbler, and small numbers of Wood Thrush and Louisiana Waterthrush. Zekiah Swamp will be targeted with Bird Blitzes in 2009.

Many thanks to the MOS members who took part in Bird Blitz 2008. Data from these surveys enabled two new IBAs to be identified: Nanticoke IBA in Dorchester and Wicomico Counties, and Monocacy Grasslands IBA in Frederick and Carroll Counties. Even so, there are still many areas for which data are lacking.

**Go Birding with a Purpose: Bird Blitz 2009!**

This year the Maryland-DC IBA Program is expanding the Bird Blitz effort with the hiring of an IBA Program Assistant, David Yeany, who will act as Bird Blitz Coordinator. This 6-month temporary position has been made possible by generous funding provided by a MOS Research Grant, a State Wildlife Grant from Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and an Innovation Grant from the Toyota/Audubon Together Green partnership. David comes to the IBA Program fresh from completing his Masters in Applied Ecology and Conservation Biology at Frostburg State University, where he conducted thesis research on the bird community of Finzel Swamp in Garrett County.

Please take part in Bird Blitz this summer. In an effort to fill some conspicuous gaps in the statewide network of IBAs, Bird Blitz surveys in 2009 will focus on western and southern Maryland at the sites listed below. However, there are also a number of potential IBA in other parts of Maryland that still require the attentions of Bird Blitzers.

**Western Maryland**

**Youghiogheny Valley, Garrett County**

**Garrett State Forest, Garrett County**

**Mt. Nebo Wildlife Management Area, Garrett County**

**The Glades, Garrett County**

**Backbone Mountain, Garrett County**

**Savage River State Forest, Garrett County**

**Western Allegheny Grasslands, Allegany County**

**Dan's Mountain, Allegany County**

**Southern Maryland**

**St. Mary's River**, St. Mary's County

**Zekiah Swamp**, Charles County

**Nanjemoy Area**, Charles County

**Mattawoman Creek Area**, Charles County

**Piscataway Park**, Prince George's County

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Bird Blitz survey instructions, and other materials including IBA criteria, are available at Audubon MD-DC's website: [www.mddc.audubon.org](http://www.mddc.audubon.org)