

2010 SPRING UPDATE

The Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program has had a very active and successful year with 6 new IBA sites identified, 108 Bird Blitz surveys completed to record at-risk bird species, and actions to promote habitat protection and conservation planning on Maryland's lower Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland.



*Cerulean Warbler is globally vulnerable due to extensive loss and fragmentation of forest habitat.
Photo: Bill Hubick.*

Why Important Bird Areas?

Bird conservationists agree that not all places on the landscape are equal when it comes to protecting birds. Audubon focuses conservation actions on Important Bird Areas (IBAs), sites essential for vulnerable bird species. Maryland's IBAs are as diverse as the state itself, ranging from the barrier island beaches of Assateague Island where the federally Threatened Piping Plover finds sanctuary, to the forested mountains of the Green Ridge IBA, home to the rapidly declining Cerulean Warbler.

IBAs and Habitat Protection

One of the greatest threats to birds in Maryland is the loss and fragmentation of their habitats due to development. Audubon has successfully used Important Bird Areas to further conservation goals by working with state and county level planners to incorporate IBAs into the land use planning process. Over the past year Audubon has:

- Joined the Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County (SGACC) to oppose construction of a 4-lane highway (the Cross County Connector) across **Mattawoman Creek IBA**, which supports a particularly diverse assemblage of forest-interior birds, including three WatchList species: Prothonotary Warbler, Kentucky Warbler and Wood Thrush. In November 2009, we sent detailed documentation on the bird conservation value of Mattawoman Creek to the Maryland Department of Environment and urged them to deny the permit for this highway project. A decision is expected later in 2010.
- Worked to include Important Bird Areas in Comprehensive Plans for Somerset County and Wicomico County, which are currently being updated.
- Campaigned with a local coalition of environmental groups to try to repeal the "density bonus" zoning provision in Wicomico County, which promotes sprawl in the county's rural areas. Our actions resulted in two public hearings and a Council vote on legislation, which unfortunately did not pass. We are continuing to push on this issue.



IBA dedication ceremony for Maryland Coastal Bays IBA and Assateague Island IBA.

- Partnered with the Wicomico Environmental Trust to defeat a proposed subdivision of 147 houses in the heart of **Pocomoke-Nassawango IBA**, home to 12 at-risk bird species.

- Hosted dedication ceremonies at **Assateague Island IBA** and **Maryland Coastal Bays IBA** in Worcester County (April 2009) and at **Chapman State Park IBA** in Charles County (June 2009). IBA dedication events, attended by elected officials, landowners and the media, present a great opportunity to publicize bird conservation and to recognize land managers who are doing the right thing for the environment.

In each of these actions it is Audubon's bird expertise and the careful documentation of birds at each site that enables IBAs to add a unique contribution to the land use planning process.

Engaging Citizen-scientists – Bird Blitz Produces New IBAs

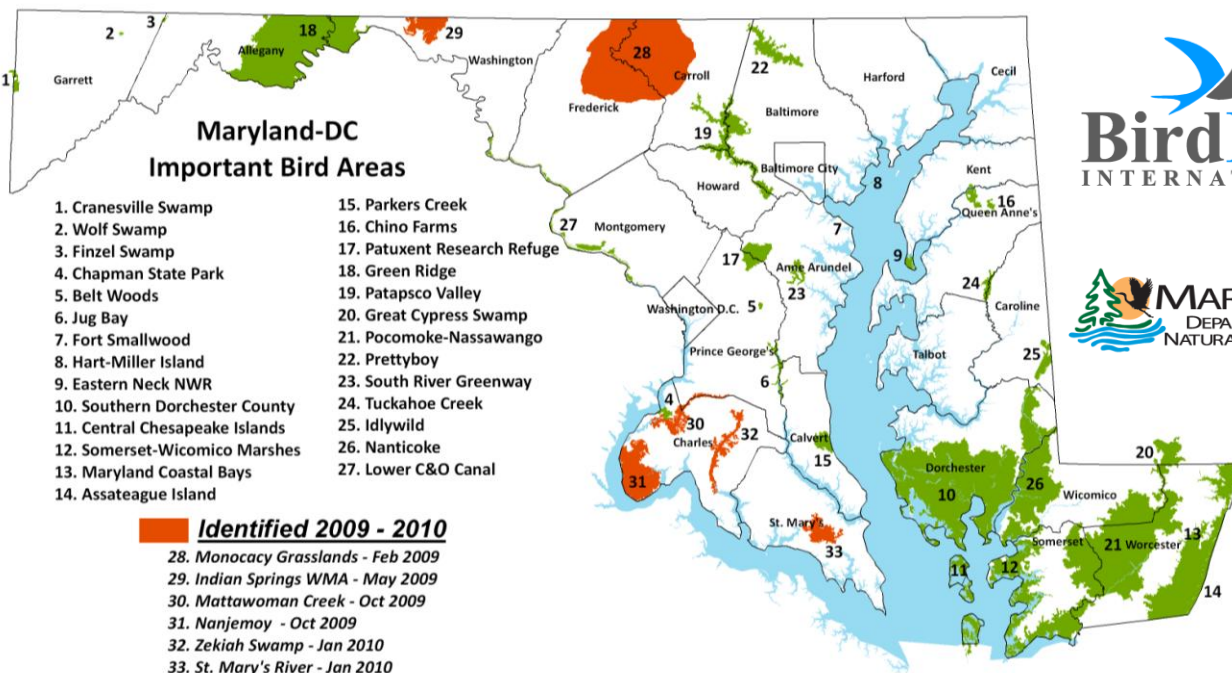
Bird Blitz is a volunteer driven, breeding bird survey method used to collect population data for bird species at-risk in Maryland. These data are vital to the identification of new Maryland IBAs and are used as evidence for protecting critical bird habitat. In 2009, Audubon recruited 42 volunteers who conducted 108 bird surveys at 13 sites across the state. Highlights included:

- **Dan's Mountain, Allegany Co. & Jennings Randolph Lake, Garrett Co.** – both forested sites produced counts of Cerulean Warbler indicating globally significant populations.
- **Pleasant Valley, Garrett Co.** – 51 Red-headed Woodpecker recorded, indicating a significant state population of this globally vulnerable species.
- **Nanjemoy, Charles Co.** – significant state populations were recorded for Bald Eagle, Worm-eating Warbler, and Whip-poor-will.



Henslow's Sparrow is listed as Threatened in Maryland. Bird Blitz found a globally significant population of 60 individuals in Allegany and Garrett Counties. Photo: George Jett.

Bird Blitz data has resulted in 6 new IBAs in Maryland in 2009-2010. IBAs are identified by the Maryland-DC IBA Technical Review Committee comprised of Audubon staff, Maryland DNR biologists, and other bird experts.



An estimated 111 pairs of the continentally vulnerable Prothonotary Warbler breed in the floodplain forest of Mattawoman Creek IBA. Photo: George Jett.

A Special Thanks to Our Supporters:

Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment
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Maryland Ornithological Society
Audubon Society of Central Maryland
Maryland Coastal Bays Program
Mary-Jo Campbell
Carol McCord
David Pardoe



Donations to the Audubon Maryland-DC IBA Program can be made online at [HTTP://MDDC.AUDUBON.ORG/SUPPORT-US](http://mddc.audubon.org/support-us)

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