



## Wayne NF Helps Ohio's Second Breeding Bird Atlas

*The Wayne National Forest and the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas Project have partnered to incorporate Wayne National Forest monitoring data into the Breeding Bird Atlas database.*



Katrina Schultes (with binoculars) and Cheryl Coon survey for birds at the Rutherford Wetland.

The second Ohio breeding bird atlas (OBBA II) is a mainly volunteer state-wide cooperative effort that relies upon the participation of bird enthusiasts to document the current distribution and abundance of breeding birds in Ohio. The current project began in 2006, more than 20 years after the first atlas was initiated, and will run through 2010.

By engaging Ohio's citizens in a cooperative effort, OBBA II fosters interaction among bird enthusiasts of all experience levels and heightens public awareness of birds in Ohio. Data is collected on a standardized grid system. The goal is to survey all 4,437 atlas blocks in the state. Other goals of the OBBA II include:

- \* Assess changes in breeding distributions since the first Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas (1982-1987),
- \* Provide new measures of abundance of breeding birds in Ohio,

- \* Identify important habitats and breeding locations that support high diversity or species of concern, and

- \* Collect distributional and abundance data for species that are difficult to survey, such as owls, nightjars, and various wetland birds.

Kari Kirschbaum, Wildlife Biologist on the Ironton District notes that these goals dovetail well into the Wayne's goals. Kirschbaum notes, "We would obviously benefit from the same information, and though the OBBA II has a wider scope, many of their volunteers are also collecting information in the area of the Wayne so having access to that information helps us."

The Wayne NF has conducted breeding bird surveys (BBS) each spring since 2003. All birds seen and heard are recorded at 242 specific points along 23 survey routes each year. These routes occur in different habitat types (forest, openland, wetland, and grassland) and are sampled twice during a month-long survey period from 20 May to 20 June. The BBS data is used by the Forest to map population trends of avian species, especially 7 bird species that are Management Indicator Species identified in the Forest Plan.

An organizer of the OBBA II, Aaron Boone, indicated that "southeast Ohio is one of the areas needing more survey coverage." Although the organization of the BBS and the OBBA are somewhat different, biologists on the Wayne have informally partnered with the staff at the OBBA II to submit as much useful data to the state-wide initiative as possible. After some minor reorganization of the data, Boone said he was "happy to work with so much interesting data."

Wayne biologists contribute to the OBBA II in the regular course of their work too. Biologists and other personnel on the Wayne have been submitting observations incidental to their regular project field work. Katrina Schultes, a wildlife biologist on the Athens District noted, "Observations of birds active at night, such as whip-poor-wills and owls are especially helpful to the breeding bird atlas - they are often under-surveyed by birders, who are mostly active during the day." According to Schultes, "spring frog surveys and summer bat surveys are ideal times to take note of nocturnal birds."

Lynda Andrews, Athens District Wildlife Biologist has long been a coordinator for Area 70 (the atlas is broken down into areas based on the Delorme Gazetteer). Area 70 includes not only parts of the Wayne but private land as well. In addition Andrews has coordinated two regional get togethers and attended the statewide meeting of coordinators and worked on getting the paperwork together every year for volunteers to camp free on the Forest. "This is an exceptional partnership that benefits our wildlife program in many ways," agrees Andrews who hopes to see the program continue to grow in the future.

*For more information contact Katrina Schultes at 740-753-0901*