



Wayne NF Completes Most Successful Breeding Bird Survey in 4 Years

During the 2006 breeding bird survey, 112 species of birds were observed.



Wayne's bird survey team: Matt Martin, Dave Ayers, & Zac Allen with Dale Dalrymple in front.

The Wayne National Forest recently completed its 4th annual breeding bird survey, observing a total of 112 different species of birds, the most diverse survey of breeding birds completed on the Wayne in the last four years. The 23 survey routes are located across the Wayne in a variety of habitats including wetlands, grasslands, forest, and reclaimed abandoned mine land.

According to Becky Ewing, Forest Biologist, the Wayne has seen a total of 127 different species over the last four years, adding new species each year. This year, surveyors Matt Martin, Dave Ayers, Zac Allen, and Dale Dalrymple observed four new species of birds including the Blackburnian Warbler, the Great Egret, the Rusty Blackbird, and the Rose-Breasted Grosbeak. While each

birder had their favorite route, they all expressed interest in areas of the Forest that had been devastated by coal mining.

Zac Allen, for example, was particularly drawn to Brady Run, a tract of land on the Ironton Ranger District heavily impacted by mining and lacking most wildlife. Allen observed three Blue Grosbeaks at three different points, one Bobolink, and a Henslow Sparrow (one of the Forest's Indicator species for monitoring in the Revised Forest Plan and a Regional Forester Sensitive Species). Allen noted that "someplace like that, so devastated by mining and devoid of life, resurrected and supporting such great and rare bird species is a real treat to see."

Dave Ayers, while impressed with areas like Brady Run, was drawn to the abundant wildlife at Big Bailey Wetland on the Athens Ranger District. Ayers noted that he will not soon forget "the abundance of Black-billed Cuckoos that Dale, Matt, and I encountered the first day we tagged out stops at the Big Bailey route. We were also fortunate enough to see the mating activity of several birds, which is not something you get a chance to see everyday."

Stone Church was also a popular spot on the survey, given the abundance of bird activity in that area. Ayers noted that he immediately heard the calls of the Eastern Wild Turkey and numerous Warblers, "from a Yellow-throated Warbler to a Magnolia, one of my favorites." Stone Church also provided Ayers with his first and only encounter with a Veery (a small, tawny-colored bird that has been in slow decline throughout its range).

Dale Dalrymple, the most seasoned and experienced of the birders, favored the Rutherford Wetland tract and the diversity that particular area provides: "I think the best day I ever had was one at Rutherford. It just has so many types of wildlife – animals, birds, waterfowl, and an abundance of plant life and amphibians."

The data collected each year is used to estimate population and habitat trends of management indicator species and help Forest biologists better understand how bird populations may be changing in the future on the Forest. Based on the results of the last four years, the Wayne is hopeful and excited for future years.

Phil Sammon, Public Affairs Officer for the Wayne, noted the intimate connection between the restoration of wildlife habitat and the growing numbers of bird species identified on the Forest each year. He noted that "the continual successes of the annual bird surveys help demonstrate the effectiveness of proper Forest management practices. As the Wayne continues to reclaim abandoned land and improve wildlife habitat, we hope to see even more bird species in the future!"

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