



Cerulean Warbler Occurrence Atlas for Military Installations

09-429

Background:

The Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) is a species of management concern in 16 states and 1 Canadian province, ranging from special concern to threatened. While the Cerulean is not on the Federal Endangered Species List, it is on the 2004 Continental Watch List compiled by Partners in Flight. This small wood-warbler nests and forages 50 feet up in the canopy and requires mature forests. This habitat can be found on many military installations within the bird’s breeding range but there is no Service-wide or Department of Defense (DoD)-wide way to track the occurrence of Cerulean Warblers at these sites. Without knowing the distribution of this species on military lands, the DoD cannot manage for it effectively.



Male Cerulean Warbler

Photo by Phil Swanson

Objective:

This multi-year project will determine the status of Cerulean Warblers on all 417 military installations (including Army Corps of Engineer reservoirs) that have appropriate habitat and lie within the breeding range. The final products will include a GIS layer and a set of management recommendations. The Legacy Program entirely funds this project.

Summary of Approach:

There are two phases to the Cerulean Warbler Occurrence Atlas. The first stage is a questionnaire on habitat and survey work, sent to the environmental officer at each potential site. The returned questionnaires are evaluated and the Cerulean Warbler status assigned as present, not present, or unknown. The second stage is a bird survey conducted at those locations marked “Cerulean presence unknown”. During Year 1, only a small number of sites

were surveyed. The remaining sites will be surveyed in Years 2 and 3.

Benefit:

Knowing the distribution of Cerulean Warblers on all military lands will allow the Department of Defense to coordinate range-wide multi-Service management efforts. Partnerships with organizations concerned with Neotropical migrants and rare species, such as Important Bird Areas programs and state natural resource departments, can also be strengthened. The long-term goal of all Cerulean Warbler management is to support the population and prevent the addition of this bird to the Endangered Species List.

Accomplishments:

Nearly 260 sites were contacted during Year 1. Finding the point of contact for each location proved to be the most difficult part of the project. Surveys were sent to 187 sites; the remainder had no habitat at closer inspection or are no longer military property.

Cerulean present	44
Cerulean not present	38
Status uncertain	52
Other (no habitat, etc)	71
No response	53
No POC yet	159

Field staff surveyed at 10 locations in USFWS Region 3. Cerulean Warblers were documented at one site; a second site had the bird documented by a Breeding Bird Atlas observer. The bird lists compiled by the field staff were shared with both the facility and with ongoing Breeding Bird Atlas efforts.

The Cerulean Warbler Occurrence Atlas is providing impetus for a standardized approach to future wide-ranging projects.

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