

U.S. FOREST SERVICE EASTERN REGION (R9) REGIONAL FORESTER'S SENSITIVE SPECIES STATUS FOR THE CERULEAN WARBLER

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Introduction

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) currently lists the cerulean warbler as a species of management concern and a resource conservation priority in USFWS Region 3 (<http://www.fws.gov/r3pao/pdf/priority.pdf>). The USFWS was petitioned by the Southern Environmental Law Center, along with 28 other groups, to list the cerulean warbler as a federally threatened species. In addition, Hamel (2000) completed a Status Assessment for the cerulean warbler that was recently published and can be downloaded from http://www.fws.gov/r3pao/eco_serv/endanrd/birds/cerwasa.pdf.

In the process of completing a Conservation Assessment for the cerulean warbler, the Eastern Region of the U. S. Forest Service reviewed Hamel's (2000) Status Assessment and determined that it provided much of the information that would have been gathered for a Conservation Assessment. In light of this, work is ongoing to gather additional population and habitat information specific to R9 national forests and grasslands needed to supplement the USFWS Status Assessment (Lynda Andrews, Wayne NF, pers. comm.).

This paper summarizes the status of the cerulean warbler across 15 national forests and grasslands in the Eastern Region. Past and current Regional Forester Sensitive Species (RFSS) status for each forest is listed in Table 1 (Pg. 3). Forest-specific information is summarized at the end (Pg. 4). A brief summary of the status of the cerulean warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) as reported in the Status Assessment (Hamel 2000) is also given.

Habitat and Range

The cerulean warbler is a woodland warbler that breeds in mature, upland and bottomland, deciduous forests having large trees and an open understory (Hamel 2000). This neotropical migratory bird breeds in eastern North America, primarily in the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys (Hamel 2000)(Figures 1 & 2). Wintering in northern South America, migration occurs through the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys, southern U.S. and across the Gulf of Mexico to Central America (Hamel 2000). The cerulean warbler's diet throughout the year consists primarily of insects.

Population Trends and Threats

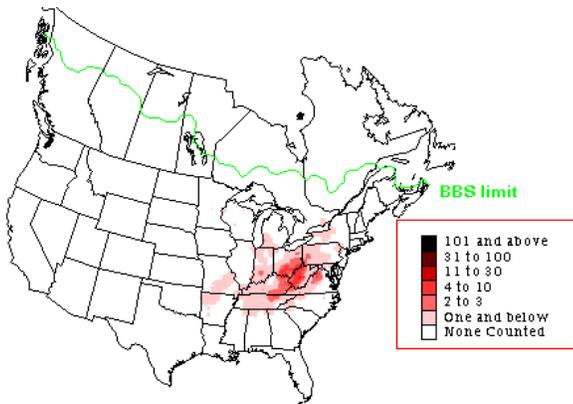
Population trends from the North American Breeding Bird Survey (NABBS) suggest that the population of the cerulean warbler has declined at an average annual rate of approximately 4% over the past 30 years (Hamel 2000) (Figures 3 & 4). The primary threat to the cerulean warbler is habitat loss through destruction, modification and fragmentation, both on the breeding and wintering grounds (Hamel 2000).

Conservation and Research

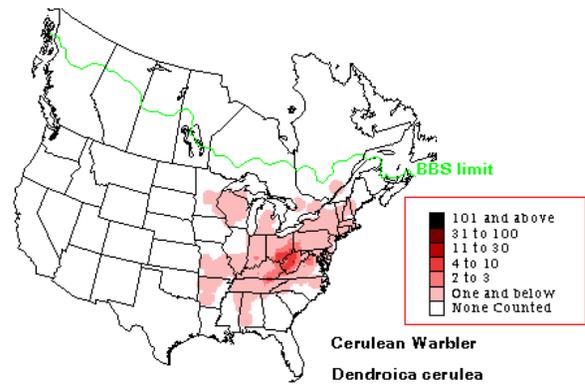
Successful conservation of cerulean warblers depends upon managing forested landscapes on the breeding and non-breeding grounds to provide high quality habitat (Hamel 2000). This will require additional research to identify silvicultural treatments and other land management activities that can create appropriate vegetation structure to meet year-round habitat requirements (Hamel 2000).

Figure 1. Summer and breeding distribution maps of relative abundance (number of birds seen on BBS routes) for the cerulean warbler in the United States and Canada, 1982-1996 (Sauer et al. 2000).

a.) Summer distribution



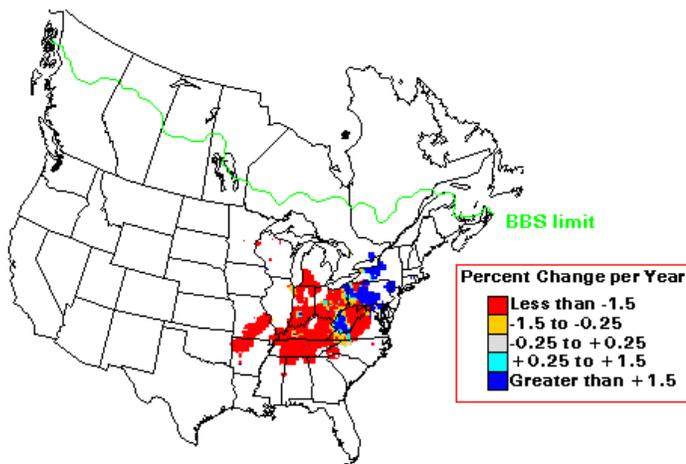
b.) Breeding distribution



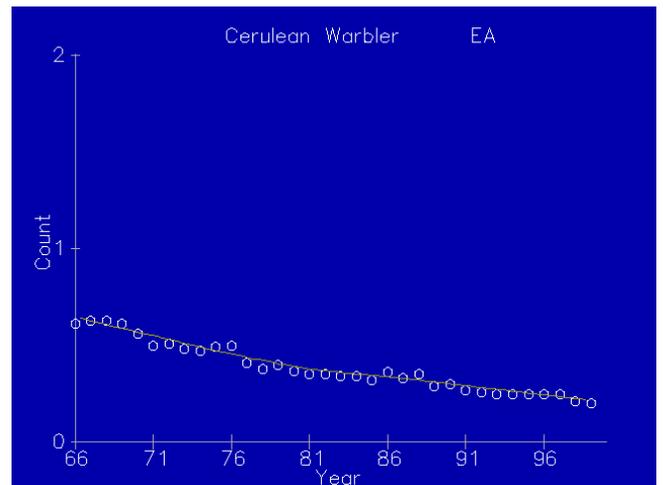
Source: (Sauer et al. 2000); www.im.nbs.gov/bbs/bbs.html (North American Breeding Bird Survey)

Figure 2. North American Breeding Bird Survey (NABBS) population trend results for the cerulean warbler, 1966-1996 (Sauer et al. 2000).

a.) BBS long-term population change, 1966-1996



b.) Eastern BBS Region, 1966-1998



Source: (Sauer et al. 2000); www.im.nbs.gov/bbs/bbs.html (North American Breeding Bird Survey)

Table 1. USFS Eastern Region (R9) Sensitive Species Status of the cerulean warbler by location.

NAME	STATE	R9 RFSS (3/1994)	R9 RFSS (2/2000)
Allegheny	PA	R ¹	+
Chequamegon-Nicolet	WI	R ²	+
Chippewa	MN		
Finger Lakes	NY		
Green Mountain	VT		
Hiawatha	MI		
Hoosier	IN	R	R
Huron-Manistee	MI		R
Mark Twain	MO	R	R
Midewin NTP	IL		R
Monongahela	WV	R	+
Ottawa	MI	R	
Shawnee	IL	R	R
Superior	MN		
Wayne	OH	R	R
White Mountain	NH		

- 1 – Codes from 2000 R9 RFSS list used where R = species is designated as Regional Forester Sensitive; + = species is present within proclamation boundaries but is not designated as Regional Forester Sensitive because not determined to be at risk on that forest. In 1994, species coded as B2d (B=Breeding population, 2=found within the Forest and d=other areas within the state and documented extant occurrence within the Forest) were included on the R9 Regional Forester’s Sensitive Species list.
- 2 – In 1994, designation is for Nicolet National Forest only.

USFS Eastern Region (R9) Forest-specific Summaries:

Chippewa, Finger Lakes, Green Mountain, Hiawatha, Superior, and White Mountain - Species not listed on 1994 or 2000 RFSS list for Region 9. Forest is on the edge or outside of the breeding range or species not known to occur on the NF.

Allegheny – Uncommon but present in suitable habitat. Species appears stable on ANF and in PA. Habitat is not threatened. Widespread in oak type. Mature oak intact on ANF. Vulnerable to extensive cutting, but not much cutting occurring in oak on ANF.

Chequamegon-Nicolet – Forest is at extreme edge of range with only several isolated observations on Nicolet (none on Chequamegon). May be non-breeders. No confirmed nesting records throughout northern Wisconsin from Breeding Bird Atlas project.

Hoosier – Six recent records on the forest, probably declining.

Huron-Manistee – Habitat is restricted on the forest to a small area. This area is facing increased threats from development making cowbird parasitism affect greater. Population is showing a downward decline.

Mark Twain – Fairly common, but local, probably based on riparian habitat. Populations declining. Riparian areas protected on NF. Distribution: Black, Current and Jack Fork Rivers.

Midewin NTP – Very rare, with small numbers present during the breeding season in one forested area. Limited habitat is present on the Midewin NTP. Over the long term (past 200 years) the population on Midewin NTP and adjacent lands has probably declined as the small, forested areas have been reduced in size and suitability by logging and clearing.

Monongahela – Very widespread and common in West Virginia. Common along Ohio River; localized in mountains. Least favored habitat is located on Monongahela NF.

Ottawa – No documented occurrence within proclamation boundary. Forest just outside natural range. Declining trend in Great Lakes Watershed.

Shawnee – Uncommon on Shawnee NF.

Wayne – One of the most common woodland warblers on the Wayne NF. Widespread in mature, deciduous forest. Plenty of habitat on NF. Population stable in Ohio.

Literature Cited

Hamel, P. B. 2000. Cerulean Warbler Status Assessment. U.S. Forest Service, Southern Research Station, Stoneville, MS. April 2000. 154 pp.

Sauer, J. R., J. E. Hines, I. Thomas, J. Fallon, and G. Gough. 2000. The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966 - 1999. Version 98.1, [USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center](#), Laurel, MD

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