



Endangered Species?



Many birds in the Skyline Wildlife Management Area are only seasonal visitors. Staying only during the spring and summer while the weather is warm and insects abundant, these birds breed and raise their young. Known as neotropical migrants, these birds fly over a thousand miles south during the fall seeking the warm, tropical climate of Central and South America.

Cerulean Warblers are only one example of neotropical migrants. They breed each year along the Sipsey River and other rivers across the eastern United States. Male Cerulean Warblers are a real crowd pleaser with their cerulean blue head, back, and wings that contrast the bright white belly and throat. The females have the pattern repeated in muted greenish-blue tones.

Skyline Wildlife Management Area is one of the few places in Alabama that this bird can still call home. While this neotropical migrant once flourished, studies show that Cerulean Warblers are declining at an alarming rate. Researchers suggest over 70% of the population of this handsome bird has disappeared due to habitat loss both here and on their Central and South American wintering grounds.

Listen Before You Look

Cerulean Warblers search for insects in the canopies of tall trees along the river. Therefore, although you may get lucky and spot one high overhead flitting through the branches, you are more likely to hear them first. The song of the Cerulean Warbler is a high-pitched musical buzz resembling *tzeedl*

tzeedl tzeedl ti ti ti tzeeee with each part rising higher than the last. The best way to find this bird is to focus on its song so you can locate the tree or group of trees from where the song is emanating. Scan the ends of branches carefully for movement or a flash of blue.



Cerulean Warbler/Cornell Lab of Ornithology, John Heidecker



Sipsey River Wilderness/ADCNR Photos

Habitat and Forest Fragmentation

Alabama's Cerulean Warblers are pickier than their northern cousins. Cerulean Warblers further north breed in small forest areas of 25-50 acres. On the southern and western ends of their range, they prefer forest areas of 1,000 acres or more. Inside these large forest patches the birds prefer hardwood-dominated forests. Forests of this size are difficult to find as more areas are developed or fragmented with roads and houses.



Cerulean Warbler/Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Bill Dyer

Is the Cerulean Warbler Endangered?

In October of 2000, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service was petitioned to list the Cerulean Warbler as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. Since that petition, more studies have been undertaken to monitor their population trends. Results have shown that the birds have decreased most dramatically in the southwestern portion of their range while their populations may be stable in the northeast.