

# FACTS ABOUT THE CERULEAN WARBLER

- The Cerulean warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*), recognized by its bright blue plumage and distinctive song, is one of more than 50 species of warblers in North America. A migratory bird, it spends most of the year in forested mountains on the east slope of the Andes in Columbia, Venezuela, eastern Peru and northern Bolivia.
- The Cerulean has declined by roughly 80% in the U.S. between 1966 and 2004. A primary cause of population loss that is well-documented is destruction and modification of breeding habitat through clearing or other fragmentation of mature forests in this country. Another primary cause of its decline is deforestation of South American forests.
- The Cerulean warbler breeds in forests of eastern U.S., from Alabama to Vermont and into Canada, and west to Illinois. Core breeding range includes the Ohio Hills and Cumberland Plateau physio-geographic regions (parts of Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania).
- Ceruleans generally need forest tracts of at least 7,500 acres; some top scientists believe the bird would do best in tracts at least 50,000 acres. Research has shown that successful breeding rate drops by 50% in forests less than about 1,750 acres.
- Large-scale clearcutting in particular constrains Cerulean breeding habits. At the regional level, clearcutting results in habitat fragmentation which leads to poor reproductive success of forest interior birds. At the forest level, clearcutting eradicates canopy diversity that the Cerulean needs. Also, the open space attracts Brown-headed cowbirds which invade Cerulean nests—one of the worst threats to Cerulean survival, according to some scientists.
- In the U.S., Cerulean Warblers prefer mature, uneven-aged forests with multiple foliage layers. Common nesting trees include oaks, maples, sycamore and black locust. A study in Virginia found that the songbirds prefer stands at least 100 years old, with the over-story trees measuring about 100 feet, and under-story trees measuring 40 feet.
- The Cerulean Warbler received one of the highest overall rankings in the national “Partners in Flight” program as a species of immediate conservation concern. The songbird ranks first in the Southeast, second in the Northeast, and third in the Midwest.
- There is no law or regulation that directly protects the large expanses of contiguous mature forests the Cerulean needs to survive. Listing it as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act would begin this process.

