



# Audubon IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

## Powell and Stone Mountains

Wise, Scott, and Lee Counties,  
City of Norton

Total Size: 55,373 ha (136,829 acres)

Elevation: 427 – 1244 m (1401 - 4081 ft)



### IBA Criteria Met

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Data</i>	<i>Season</i>	<i>Source</i>
Species at Risk	Appalachian Winter Wren	7 in 1999	Breeding	U.S. Forest Service Surveys
Species at Risk	Wood Thrush	1. 107 in 2006 2. Population in likely in the tens of thousands	Breeding	1. IBA Surveys 2. Population projection by A. Weldon
Species at Risk	Kentucky Warbler	1. 24 in 2006 2. Population is likely to exceed 1000 breeding pairs	Breeding	1. IBA Surveys 2. Population projection by A. Weldon
Species at Risk	Canada Warbler	1. 26 in 1999 2. Population is likely to exceed 1000 breeding pairs	Breeding	1. U.S. Forest Service Surveys 2. Population projection by A. Weldon
Species at Risk	Worm-eating Warbler	1. 15 in 2006 2. Population is likely in the thousands	Breeding	IBA Surveys
Species at Risk	Swainson's Warbler	1. 16 singing males in 1998 2. Population is likely to exceed 1000 breeding pairs	Breeding	1. U.S. Forest Service Surveys 2. Population projection by A. Weldon
Species at Risk	Louisiana Waterthrush	1. 17 in 2006 2. Population is likely to exceed 1000 breeding pairs	Breeding	1. IBA Surveys 2. Population projection by A. Weldon

Responsibility Species Assemblage - Forest	Ruffed Grouse, Whip-poor-will, Eastern Wood-pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Appalachian Winter Wren, Wood Thrush, Black-and-white	Breeds	Breeding	1. IBA Surveys 2. U.S. Forest Service Surveys
	Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Canada Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Scarlet Tanager			

**Description**

The Powell and Stone Mountains IBA occupies portions of the rugged mountainous region at the confluence of Wallen Ridge, Powell, and Stone Mountains. The mountainous landscape is highly dissected by a network of streams and steep, narrow valleys where characteristic rich and acidic cove forests develop. Understories of dense rhododendron thickets are common and eastern hemlocks are frequent canopy dominants. The drier and less fertile uplands generally support extensive mixed oak-hardwood communities. Powell and Stone Mountains IBA represents a large contiguous forested landscape of generally unbroken, mature forests. Over 75% of the forested habitat is more than 70 years old, making it ideal habitat for interior-dwelling species and those that depend on old-growth conditions such as tree fall gaps and downed logs.

**Conservation and Management Units**

Fifty percent of the forests within the Powell and Stone Mountains IBA is owned and managed by the U.S. Forest Service to meet conservation objectives. The IBA overlaps with a smaller portion of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Hagy Wildlife Management Area.

**Birds**

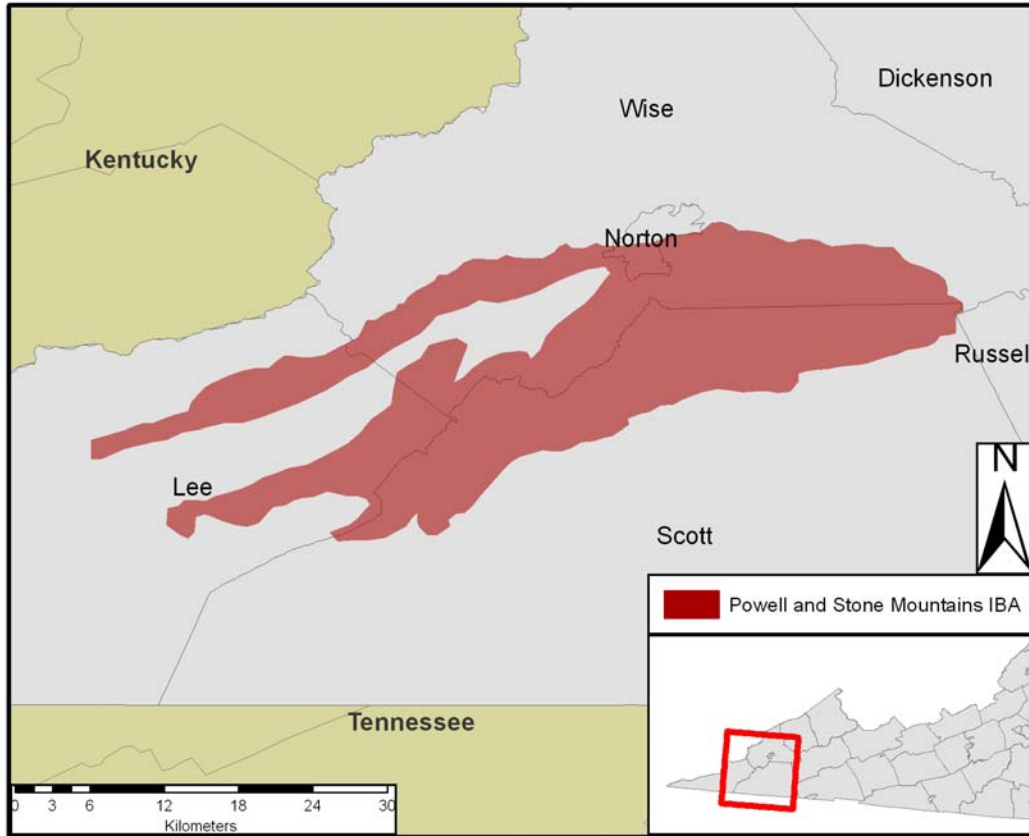
The Powell and Stone Mountains IBA supports the entire suite of species associated with the mature eastern mixed-mesophytic forest community, many of which are interior species dependent on large contiguous blocks of forest. Dense cove forests and steep slopes support populations of Swainson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Worm-eating Warbler. Species that depend upon old-growth conditions such as the Winter Wren and Cerulean Warbler are also regularly sighted, although it is unclear whether the Cerulean Warbler occurs on the site above thresholds. The Louisiana Waterthrush is common along stream channels and the Wood Thrush is abundant and well-distributed throughout the IBA. This area of Virginia has received relatively little

research and monitoring attention and the status of the avian community to date is poorly understood.

### **Conservation and Threats**

Because half of the land within the IBA is owned and managed by the U.S. Forest Service, land use threats are relatively low. Mixed hemlock forests have become increasingly threatened by invasion of the hemlock woolly adelgid, an aphid-like insect that was introduced from Asia and that can kill mature trees in a matter of just a few years. The U.S. Forest Service is currently developing an Environmental Assessment to develop a strategy to control the recent invasion. Hemlocks play a valuable role in the forest ecosystem and provide unique habitat niches for birds and other wildlife, making their loss a significant threat to biodiversity. On private lands, conversion of forest to developed, mined, or logged areas is a continual threat. Due to the large-scale habitat destruction caused by many mining activities, this land use is a particularly significant threat and one that is likely to become more pressing in the future. Gas and oil drilling are allowed on leased parcels within the Forest Service boundaries but these areas are maintained as small (~1 acre) clearings of grasses and shrubs and new road construction is highly regulated. The suppression of fire is reducing habitat diversity on some parts of the IBA and the Forest Service is addressing this concern through prescribed burning programs where appropriate. Due to the rugged and often inaccessible terrain of this area, there has been relatively little research conducted on priority species and much remains unknown about their population status.

## Powell and Stone Mountains IBA Map



For more information about this and other IBAs in Virginia please visit our website at:  
<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/virginia/>

Or contact Mary Elfner, the Virginia IBA Coordinator, at:  
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