
A Day in the Field

by Paul Hamel

We spent a good part of the day – from 8:00 a.m. until about 2:00 p.m. – in the field trying to catch cerulean warblers. It was hot and humid as always. Wilks got his first case of chiggers.

We're out on bottomland forest site in Desha County, AR, owned by the Anderson-Tully timber company. The site has been harvested a bit as a part of an experiment to manipulate forest structure to attract neotropical migratory birds. The trees are large – lots of green ash, sycamore, pecan, some sweetgum, American elm, and nuttall oak, a few large cottonwoods.

We set up our capture system, a pair of nets placed in a V-shape around the decoy mounted on the tip of a branch or atop a pole in a likely spot. We used a CD of recordings of male cerulean warblers singing provided by the Borror Lab of Bioacoustics at Ohio State University. We play the recordings for up to 30 or 40 minutes and hope that a cerulean warbler male will come

down from the treetops and attempt to chase the decoy away, thereby entangling itself in the net.

That day we set up at three different locations where cerulean warblers had been recorded during this breeding season. We failed to get a response at two of the locations, but in the third we caught a male cerulean warbler which we measured and banded with a US Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum band and 3 different colored plastic leg bands so it could be individually identified during later fieldwork. While we were waiting to catch



Cerulean warbler captured (unharmmed) in a mist net. (Photo by Wilks Wood)

that bird, we also inadvertently caught a male prothonotary warbler, another neotropical migratory songbird we study. Doc Weaver released each of those birds after we retrieved them from the nets. —Paul Hamel



Doc Weaver mounts his decoy on the tip of a branch to lure male cerulean warblers. (Photo by Wilks Wood)



Doc Weaver compares his decoy to the real thing. (Photo by Wilks Wood)



*"The real thing."
(Photo by
Wilks Wood)*

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