

Mountain Birdwatch

Summer 2010 Update

Climbing 4000-foot peaks, traversing muddy bogs, searching for non-existent trails, donating blood to black flies, and having an amazing time... that's what the Mountain Birdwatch technicians have been up to this summer. With three injuries, two dramatic bear encounters, several periods of sustained rain, one savage Attack Grouse, and over 100 mountains to cover, being a technician on Team Mountain Birdwatch is not for the faint of heart. In fact, it reads like a personal ad gone wrong: "Must love long walks outdoors, singing birds, glorious sunsets, biting insects, rock scrambles, wading through stinky muck, getting lost on a mountain in the dark..." Our hardworking, dedicated technicians weathered all of these temptations and trials with positive attitudes and bulging leg muscles. As of July 1, our teams have assessed and surveyed more than 75 new routes, almost half of which are in Maine. These efforts are part of a transition from our original Mountain Birdwatch program to Mountain Birdwatch 2.0, a modified project that involves partnerships with Canadian organizations, improved survey design, and of course, over 100 new routes across the Northeast.

Despite long hours, extended rain, and strenuous hiking, our technicians remain upbeat and have miraculously retained their senses of humor. One technician states, "[Things are] soggy and filled with mud, but morale remains high, along with B.O." Another technician's adventures included, "... my first pre-dawn start- hiking from 3:15 until 4:20 to start my point count on a trail that crossed a parallel river about half a dozen times during that section. It was pretty crazy!" A third technician discovered the horrors of the Giant Fanged Clawed Spiky Snakebird (i.e. Grouse): "I found a White-Throated Sparrow nest with four kids and flushed a couple grouse. I was also attacked by [a grouse]. It made the craziest display, sounding like a rattle snake, puffing its body up, and spinning while running at me. It scared me at first and I started running until I saw what it was. Very cool!"

While the official Mountain Birdwatch 1.0 survey season closed on June 21, the technicians will continue to survey and document routes through July 21, at which point they will return to civilization to enjoy unheard-of luxuries such as washing machines, showers, and ice cream. Stay tuned for more Mountain Birdwatch soap opera drama in our next episode of "As the Bird Turns..."