

Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea*



Folk Name: Autumnal Warbler

Status: Migrant

Abundance: Rare to Uncommon

Habitat: Forest canopy

The Bay-breasted Warbler is one of our less well-known migrants. It is usually reported found within a mixed flock of warblers moving through the forest canopy during the peak of spring migration. It is actually more common here during fall migration, but it is harder to identify at that time of year. Leverett Loomis collected two Bay-breasted Warblers in Chester; both were males in full breeding plumage. One was collected on May 14, 1887, and the other was collected on May 5, 1888. Elmer Brown reported one on May 3, 1924, in Salisbury.

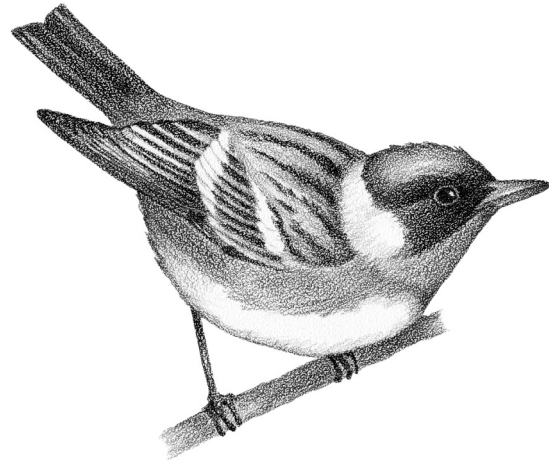
William McIlwaine sighted a Bay-breasted Warbler in Charlotte on May 14, 1928. He wrote:

I saw this bird distinctly on two different occasions but I did not see him as distinctly as I should have liked, nor did I have much time for identification. This is a very quick-moving bird, here and there in the tree-tops, and darting into the air to take some insect on the wing.

McIlwaine also reported individuals on May 13, 1930, and 6 May and 13 May in 1931.

Frank Brown reported Bay-breasted Warblers present at Davidson College on 7 May and 12 May in 1929, with “one seen each day on campus with a flock of Blackpoll Warblers.” Charlie Sellers filed a report with the Bureau of Biological Survey: one Bay-breasted Warbler found in Charlotte on April 20, 1940, “[s]een clearly at close range with 8 power glasses. Distinctive chestnut band noted.”

Sarah Nooe reported sighting Bay-breasted Warblers on the campus of Queens College in Charlotte on May 11, 1950, and May 12, 1951. Rhett Chamberlain noted one near his feeders in Matthews on October 10, 1956, with “very conspicuous wing-bars and rose-tan tinting on sides.” Joe and Becky Norwood collected a Bay-breasted Warbler on October 2, 1959, after it struck a television



tower while migrating at night over east Charlotte.

The Bay-breasted Warbler has been reported on about a third of all Spring Bird Counts conducted in this region. Our earliest spring arrival date is 23 April, and our latest spring date is 14 May. Our earliest fall arrival date is 2 September and our last departure date is 24 October. The peak one-day count for this species in this region is only six birds.



Bay-breasted Warbler in spring migration. (jim Guyton)