

Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora cyanoptera*



Folk Name: Pine Creeper

Status: Migrant

Abundance: Rare to Uncommon

Habitat: Deciduous woods (usually moist)

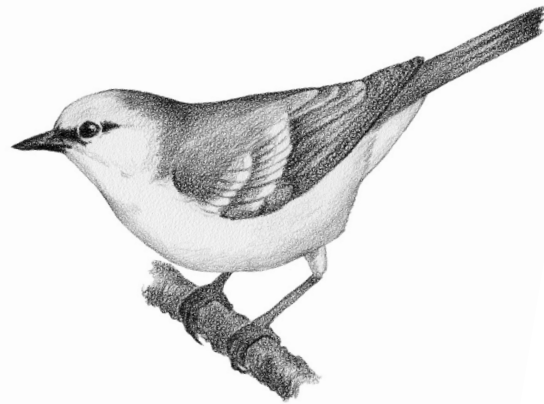
The Blue-winged Warbler is closely related to the Golden-winged Warbler, but it is a relatively much more common migrant in this region. It breeds throughout much of the central and northeastern United States. In North Carolina, it breeds in low elevation early successional habitat, like brushy fields, clearcuts, and wet thickets, in about a half-dozen western counties. Its breeding population is currently listed as “Significantly Rare” in the state, which means it exists in small numbers and needs monitoring. At one time, there was suggestion of breeding reported in Oconee, Pickens, and Greenville counties in South Carolina; however, breeding was not confirmed, and this species is not believed to be currently breeding in that state.

The Blue-winged Warbler is known for its “high-pitched insect-like song” that sounds like a drawn out *beeee buzzzz*. It is occasionally heard singing during migration. The song of the Golden-winged Warbler sounds somewhat similar, but is faster and adds one or two extra notes at the end...*zeee buz buz buz*.

This beautiful warbler is strictly a spring and fall migrant in the Central Carolinas. Leverett Loomis collected a single specimen of this species during all his years of study in Chester. It was a male Blue-winged Warbler he found on April 30, 1887. Charlie Sellers reported one in Iredell County on May 2, 1941. In 1944, Elizabeth Clarkson reported a total of three late August



Blue-winged Warbler. (Jeff Lemons)



records, one of which was a bird she found in her garden at Wing Haven. John Trott reported a single record of this bird in Stanly County. He found a male on April 30, 1955. Another was reported on the Stanly Spring Bird Count held April 26, 1969. It was seen in the same area that a Connecticut Warbler was found.

Blue-winged Warblers have been reported on almost two dozen Spring Bird Counts conducted in the region. It is always a highlight when it is seen. It may be expected in any county in our region during spring or fall. Our earliest spring arrival date for this species is 9 April, and our latest spring departure date is 20 May. Our earliest fall arrival date is 17 August, and our latest fall departure date is 15 October. Our peak one-day count total is six birds.

Jeff Lemons provided this report after he and Rob Van Epps heard a Blue-winged Warbler singing at Ribbonwalk Nature Preserve in Charlotte on August 26, 2015:

We had a Blue-winged Warbler calling in a large mixed flock. We tried pishing it in for a look and it flew up to a branch about 15 feet up. To our surprise the Blue-winged wasn't all yellow. It had a yellow head on top looking almost like a yellow cap, black line through the eye, a whitish throat and light yellow on the breast. Rob saw the yellow wing-bars and we watched it sing the Blue-winged Warbler song. ...This has been a great year for Blue-winged Warblers. I've had seven birds in the county this year plus this Brewster's. That exceeds my previous year high by six and one-half. Now we need a Golden-winged!