

Hooded Warbler *Setophaga citrine*



Folk Name: Spring Talker, Fly-catching Warbler

Status: Breeder

Abundance: Fairly Common to Common

Habitat: Rich, deciduous or mixed forests (moist) or occasionally mature pine forests

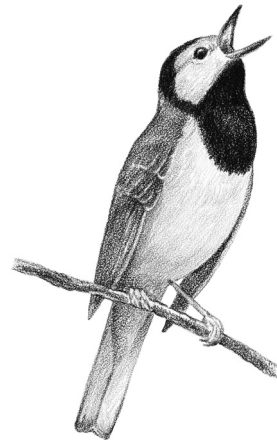
The adult male Hooded Warbler is one of the easiest warblers to identify as, unlike many warblers, its plumage is the same in both the spring and fall. It has a bright yellow cheek and forehead surrounded by a full black hood. It is olive green above and lemon yellow below, and it regularly flashes its white-blotched tail feathers as it moves about in the understory in search of caterpillars, flies, and other insects. This warbler is one of our neotropical migrants. Each spring and fall it moves between its breeding grounds in the eastern United States and its wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America.

The Hooded Warbler is often heard before it is seen. It has a distinctive whistled song that has been characterized as *a-weet, a-weet, a-WEE-tee-oh*, or as Carolina birders Bill and Norma Siebenheller described it: “Come in and sign the register!” Pishing works well to draw this bird out into the open.

Hooded Warblers breed in forest areas throughout both Carolinas. They are most common in swamps and forested wetlands in the Coastal Plain. They do well in coastal canebrakes and cane patches in bottomland forests. In the Carolina Piedmont, they thrive in the thick, moist understory of rich, mature, deciduous forests. They build their nests in dense shrubs or vine tangles about 3 feet above the forest floor. Breeding Bird Survey data indicate a general decline over the past 30 years and the Hooded Warbler is less common in heavily populated areas with little contiguous forest habitat.



Hooded Warbler. (Jeff Lemons)



J F M A M J J A S O N D

The Hooded Warbler can be expected to be present in the Central Carolinas 8 months out of the year. Most arrive in April and depart by the second week of October. Our earliest spring arrival date on file is 13 March, and our latest regular fall departure date is 25 October. We have a single report from the month of November and no reports of this species in the region from the months of December through February.

Leverett Loomis collected a single specimen of this species in Chester County on September 25, 1879. R.B. McLaughlin reported the Hooded Warbler to be “[a] bird of comparatively recent appearance” near his farm in Statesville in the late 1800s. He noted them arriving 13 April in 1887 and 18 April in 1888. Elmer Brown had a Hooded Warbler in Salisbury on April 23, 1921. William McIlwaine recorded a Hooded Warbler in Charlotte on April 23, 1928, and one in late summer on August 7, 1929.

On April 19, 1930, McIlwaine sighted his first Hooded Warbler of the year and designated this species as “fairly common” in the area in spring. He also noted it as a local breeding bird and summer resident in Charlotte. He recorded his last one departing that fall on 24 September. McIlwaine reported a Hooded Warbler present in breeding season on June 3, 1931, and noted it was “not common in summer.” Charlie Sellers noted it as a “rare” breeding bird in Charlotte in 1939, but changed the breeding status to “common” in his report to the U.S. Biological Survey in 1941.

Elizabeth Clarkson sighted her first Hooded Warbler of the year in Charlotte on 12 April in 1944. It was a female. She later noted the Hooded Warbler as a summer resident in Mecklenburg County.

In the spring of 1947, J. Weston Clinard of Hickory wrote: “On July 30th, a bird flew into the building where I work, and some of the men caught it and brought it to me.

It was slightly stunned from flying against the window, and we had a good look at it. The bird, which was a Hooded Warbler, soon revived and we let it fly away.” According to John Trott, the Hooded Warbler was “by far the most common” species of warbler breeding along the banks of the Yadkin River in Stanly County in the 1950s. He also noted this warbler’s preference for nesting in thick damp undergrowth in deciduous woods.

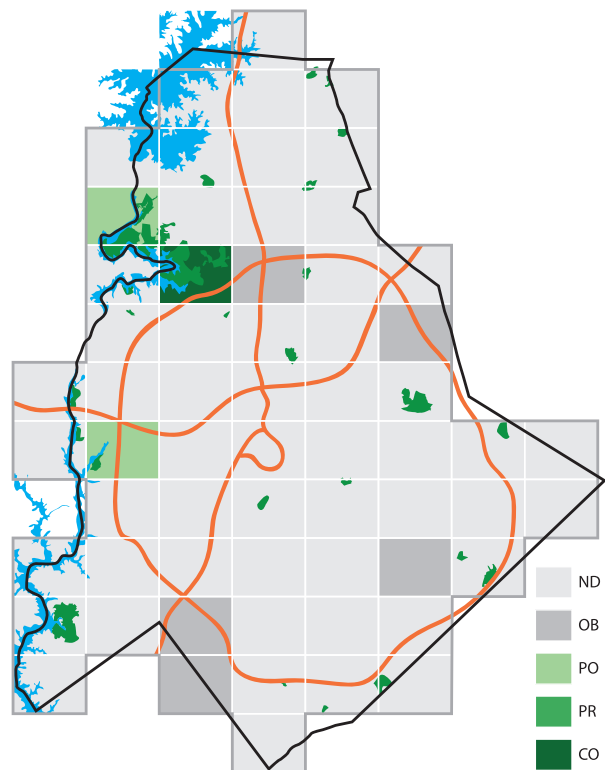
Like many warblers, the Hooded Warbler is a nocturnal migrant. One was found dead at the Charlotte airport where it had hit the ceilometer tower on the night of September 25, 1955. The Norwoods collected a Hooded Warbler on October 2, 1959, after it struck a television tower while migrating at night over east Charlotte. On April 22, 1982, a Hooded Warbler was found dead at Edwin Towers after it hit a window. It was collected and turned over to staff at Discovery Place Museum to keep as a specimen. Mecklenburg Audubon Lights Out survey volunteers collected a male Hooded Warbler at the base of a building in downtown Charlotte on September 14, 2014.

The Hooded Warbler is regularly found on local spring counts held in this region. Usually fewer than a dozen are counted. The peak one-day count was a tally of 27 in 1965.

An immature male Hooded Warbler banded at the Hilton Pond Center in York County in August 1987 was recaptured the following May on its breeding grounds near Chapel Hill, NC. It had in all likelihood wintered in the Neotropics and had returned north the following spring.

Data collected during the Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas indicate a breeding code of confirmed or probable in five or fewer survey blocks for this species in the county. It was therefore designated as an imperiled

breeding bird that is especially vulnerable to extirpation. BBA volunteers were able to document breeding of the Hooded Warbler at a single site over the entire length of the survey. This was despite repeated searches in appropriate breeding habitat.



Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas:
Very Local (PR/0, CO/1)