

## Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum*



**Folk Name:** Yellow-bellied Red-Poll Warbler

**Status:** Migrant, Winter Visitor

**Abundance:** Uncommon to Fairly Common

**Habitat:** Open habitat

The Palm Warbler is unlike the rest of our warbler species. It is most often seen out in the open and walking on the ground in grassy areas, on the edges of parking lots, or in fields. This warbler also has the unusual habit of pumping its tail up and down as it walks. If you encounter a small drab bird with pale to bright yellow underneath its back end, that is actively foraging on the ground while wagging its tail...think Palm Warbler, and move in for a closer look. If you can get a look at its thin bill, dark eye line, and pale eyebrow, you've got your identification clinched.

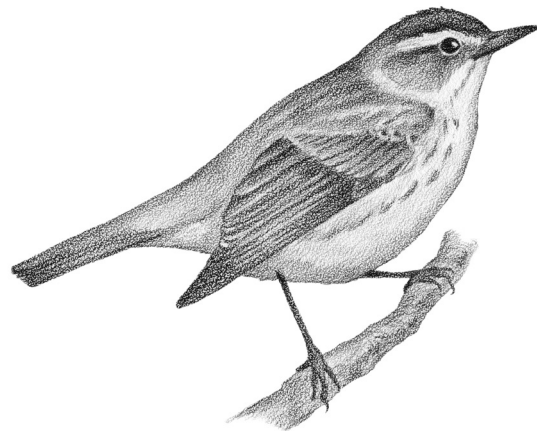
There are two subspecies of Palm Warbler, and both have been identified occurring in this region since the late 1800s. The western subspecies seems to predominate in most of our area. It is mostly brown above and pale below with a yellow vent. The eastern subspecies is more olive above and is much more yellow below. Males of both races have a reddish cap in their alternate plumage.

Palm Warblers have been recorded in the Central Carolinas from September through May. We have no records from June through August. Our earliest arrival on record is 2 September, and our latest spring departure date is 16 May.

In the late 1800s in Chester County, Leverett Loomis considered the Palm Warbler common in the winter and abundant in migration. He collected many specimens from "cotton fields, weedy lands, and old fence rows." Elmer Brown reported a Palm Warbler in Salisbury on April 22, 1922. John Trott found one in Stanly County on October 20, 1954, and another there in early April 1955.

This species has been documented on about half of all Spring Bird Counts conducted in this region, and it is regularly found on our Christmas Bird Counts. Our peak count is an estimated 50 birds in a flock that John Bonestell observed at Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge on November 1, 2007. Flocks of thousands of these birds have been counted along the North Carolina coast in the fall.

One Palm Warbler was collected after hitting the ceilometer tower at the airport on the night of September 25, 1955. Dick Brown collected specimens of Palm Warbler



*Palm Warbler in April and in February.*  
(Jim Guyton, Jeff Lemons)

in Mecklenburg County on two occasions during the fall of 1978. Both were found dead at the base of the WRET television tower on Hood Road in eastern Mecklenburg County. The first was picked up on 27 September, and the second was found on 29 October.