

Yellow-throated Warbler *Setophaga dominica*



Folk Name: Sycamore Warbler

Status: Breeder

Abundance: Uncommon to Fairly Common

Habitat: Mature open forest, bottomland forest or pinewoods and mixed hardwoods, all below 2,000 feet

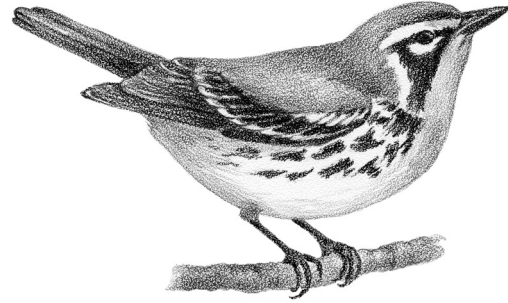
The Yellow-throated Warbler is one of the first neotropical migrants to return each year to breeding sites in the Carolina Piedmont. In early spring, males can often be found singing in the top of a tall tree, perhaps along the edge of a local lake, as they move into and through this region. In winter, this warbler can be found from the southeastern coast and Gulf Coast, south into Mexico and Central America. Carolina birders who visit Costa Rica and Belize often remark on their enjoyment of seeing “our” Yellow-throated Warblers in their winter territory.

Leverett Loomis collected specimens of Yellow-throated Warblers in Chester County on May 7, 1885; September 6, 1886; and September 8, 1887; among others. He observed this warbler to be “an incessant songster, and one the earliest of the spring arrivals.” He published detailed accounts of the plumage and bill measurements of several specimens of this species in *The Auk* and determined one to be a western subspecies being discussed at the time. His publications provided a great level of detailed analysis which helped Loomis garner the respect of the growing ornithological establishment. He was soon elected as a full member of the early American Ornithologists’ Union.

R.B. McLaughlin published a detailed account of the Yellow-throated Warbler nesting in Statesville in 1887. The nest was in an area of “primitive woods consisting mostly of oaks interspersed with a very large species of pine, usually called ‘lumber’ pine here...the pines were from a hundred ten to a hundred and twenty-five feet high, and the birds had a preference for the top...” On 4 June, he found a nest that was “built close to the main body of a small pine tree” in a pine woods. “The nest rested on a short, dead twig, 19 feet from the ground. It contained three young birds and one egg.” McLaughlin collected the male bird, nest, and eggs, and sent these to the Smithsonian Museum where they are still housed in the collection today.

E.M. Hoffman reported a Yellow-throated Warbler in Rowan County on April 5, 1924. William McIlwaine sighted his life bird Yellow-throated Warbler in Charlotte on April 8, 1929. He wrote:

And when I saw one sitting five minutes or more in the top of a low tree singing, I was sure it was a bird I had never identified before! Here are my field notes



“Warbler. Looked like B&W, but yellow-breasted. Seemed to have dark throat with larger black streaks on upper sides. Square heavy tail. Song something like that of B&W Pulsing like that of M.Y.T. Singing in top of dogwood tree. Head seemed striped black and white (heavily).” All in all—here must be the yellow-throated warbler.

Elizabeth Clarkson reported an adult in Charlotte “Feeding young out of nest June 29, 1942.” Leeds Cushman found a pair “Feeding nestlings, Kings Mountain National Park, York Co., SC, July 10, 1954.” In Stanly County, John Trott noted the Yellow-throated Warbler is “usually the first of the warblers to return in spring” and they commonly nest “in large stands of pines” throughout the Yadkin River valley with nesting activities completed by the first week of June.

The Yellow-throated Warbler usually arrives in this region in March and leaves by the end of October.



Yellow-throated Warbler. (jim Guyton)

Extreme dates on file are 5 March and 3 November. We have a single winter record on file. It was submitted from an experienced local bird bander Bill Anderson. He observed a Yellow-throated Warbler “in good light...in the open...on a wire” on the remarkable date of January 20, 1961.

Yellow-throated Warblers are regularly counted in small numbers on local Spring Bird Counts with numbers almost always below eight.

Surprisingly, volunteers with the Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas failed to document any breeding locations of Yellow-throated Warbler anywhere in the county throughout the duration of the study. A male was found singing on June 7, 2014, at a “traditional spot” on Sadler Road, and the block was mapped as a possible breeding site. Regrettably, an announcement was made in 2016 that the Sadler Road site will soon to be logged and turned into one of the largest multi-use developments in Mecklenburg County. Therefore, this species has been included on the “Lost Bird” list for Mecklenburg County.