

General Field Notes

General Field Notes briefly report such items as rare sightings, unusual behaviors, significant nesting records, or summaries of such items.

First, second, or third sightings of species in either state must be submitted to the appropriate Bird Records Committee prior to publication in *The Chat*.

Summer records and first breeding of Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata*) in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee

Richard L. Knight

804 North Hills Drive, Johnson City, TN 37604
rknight8@earthlink.net

The Myrtle subspecies of the Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) breeds in the boreal forest zone of the northeastern and north-central US from Maine to Minnesota, across most of Canada except in the southwest, and through much of Alaska (Dunn and Garrett 1997). In the East, this species has shown a gradual summer range expansion southward along the Appalachian Mountains in recent decades. The first summer records for West Virginia occurred in 1975, with nesting confirmed there in 1987 (Buckelew and Hall 1994). Summering Yellow-rumped Warblers were first reported in the mountains of northern Virginia in 1992 and in the Mt. Rogers area of southwestern Virginia by 2001. Breeding evidence was noted in the northern counties of that state in 1995, 2001, and 2004 (Rottenborn and Brinkley 2007).

The first summer records from the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee came from Roan Mountain, which sits astride the border of these two states, as do some other peaks mentioned in this article. In late June 1993, John Gerwin, curator with the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, observed a female Yellow-rumped Warbler carrying nest material (Lewis 1993). On 16 July 1993, he showed the nest to the author and, as we watched, both adult warblers repeatedly fed the nestlings small green caterpillars and small moths. After several minutes we witnessed the two young fledge. The nest was located about 20–25 ft above the ground in a Red Spruce (*Picea rubens*) beside the paved US Forest Service road that runs from Carver's Gap to Roan High Knob, just above the Balsam Road turnoff at approximately 6000 ft elevation on the North Carolina side. Gerwin later collected the nest, and it is in the NC Museum of Natural

Sciences' Bird Collection. This sighting represented not only the first summer record in the mountains south of Virginia, but also the first breeding record south of West Virginia. Table 1 documents subsequent summer records from this site for at least seven years through 2010. Most of these observations have been of one singing male per year. A pair was seen in 2010 (Migrant in press) along the Roan High Bluff trail, but no other breeding evidence was obtained that year, in part because the area was closed for road and facility work on 7 July.

Table 3. Summer records of Yellow-rumped Warbler in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee. Records cited in this table are taken from "Briefs for the Files" in *The Chat* and "The Summer Season" in *The Migrant* (including one issue in press).

| Location | Date | Evidence | References |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Roan Mountain (NC/TN) | 1993 late Jun – mid Jul | pair, 2 young | Migrant 64:89, this paper |
| | 1994 Jun 4 | 1 male | Migrant 65:65 |
| | 1997 Jul 4 | 1 male | Migrant 68:137 |
| | 2000 Jun 23 | 1 male | Migrant 71:123 |
| | 2005 Jun 17, Jun 26 | 1 male | Migrant 76:148, Chat 69:170 |
| | 2006 Jun 25 – Jun 28 | 2 males | Migrant 77:148, Chat 70:132 |
| | 2007 Jun 10 | 1 male | Migrant 78:143, Chat 71:137 |
| | 2010 Jun 8 – Jul 6 | pair | Migrant (in press), Chat 74:114 |
| Unaka Mountain (TN/NC) | 2000 Jun 8 – Jun 27 | 1 male | Migrant 71:123 |
| | 2002 Jun 18 | pair | Migrant 73:115 |
| Mount Le Conte (TN) | 2000 Jun 14 – Jul 11 | 1 male | Migrant 71:123 |
| Craggy Gardens (NC) | 2001 Jun 9 | 1 male | Chat 66:34 |
| Mount Mitchell (NC) | 2001 Jun 11 | 1 male | Chat 66:34 |
| | 2004 Jun 19 – Jun 22 | 1 male | Chat 68:172 |
| | 2005 early Jun | 1 male | Chat 69:170 |
| Clingman's Dome (NC/TN) | 2004 Jul 4 | 1 male | Chat 68:172 |
| | 2010 Jul 1 – Jul 4 | 1 male | Migrant (in press) |
| Grandfather Mountain (NC) | 2006 Jun 20 | 1 male | Chat 70:132 |
| Mount Kephart (NC/TN) | 2007 Jun 6 | 2 males | Migrant 78:143, Chat 71:137 |
| Mount Guyot (NC/TN) | 2010 Jul 1 – Jul 4 | 1 male | Migrant (in press) |
| Tricorner Knob (NC/TN) | 2010 Jul 1 – Jul 4 | 1 adult, 1 young | Migrant (in press), Chat 74:114 |

Table 1 also lists all of the published breeding season records of Yellow-rumped Warblers in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee, with a total of 21 records from 10 sites. All records have occurred in the last two decades, with the majority in the last decade. Most records involved single males, some of which appeared to be territorial. The span of dates for most records was brief, often just 1 or 2 days. In many instances, however, this may have simply represented a lack of follow-up.

All of the locations are in the spruce or spruce-fir belt at high elevation. At Roan Mountain, most of the sightings have occurred in areas with a small deciduous component or an edge effect created by a road. Five of the sites

listed in Table 1 are in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (Mt. Le Conte, Clingman's Dome, Mt. Kephart, Mt. Guyot, and Tricorner Knob), which contains the largest "island" of spruce-fir forest in the southern Appalachians. However, more records have come from Roan Mountain than any other site, perhaps due to its more northerly location or to more consistent coverage there.

North Carolina's second breeding record came during 1–4 July 2010, when Tom Howe observed an adult Yellow-rumped Warbler feeding a recently fledged juvenile along the Appalachian Trail at the Tricorner Knob Shelter in the Smokies (Migrant in press). Tricorner Knob is near the junction of Swain and Haywood Counties, North Carolina, with Sevier County, Tennessee. Southern (2010) erroneously placed this record in Avery County in early June.

On the Tennessee side of Unaka Mountain on 18 June 2002, Allan Trently observed a pair of Yellow-rumped Warblers near an unoccupied nest; however, the ownership of the nest could not be confirmed (Lewis 2002).

In addition to these records, there are a few summer reports from sites well away from the mountains in both states. Such sightings are typically regarded to be tardy migrants or non-breeding wanderers.

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