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Warblers, and How to Identify Them.

Miss Maudie Audubon Society
April 24, 1933
D.M. City Library

Family of Compsothlypidae - Wood Warblers

Otherwise known as the Sylvicolidae as to distinguish them from the Old World Warbler, Sylviidae. Old World form quite different, dull colored, largest being found on Pacific Islands. Confined to Americas-distinguished by 9 primaries, 10 tail feathers, bill nearly straight, not hooked as in the Vireos. Neither is it toothed or notched. Legs are slender, and modified according to its mode of life. Most of the species are arboreal. Feed largely on insects. The family is rather an artificial one, and can be described as consisting of small, brightly colored birds, often well marked with colors, and the songs are frequently distinct.

Second largest Family exceeded only by the Fringillidae, or sparrows. Contains about 250 species and subspecies, found during the breeding season from the Argentina, through Central America northward to Alaska and Labrador. In North America a total of 58 species and an additional 24 subspecies. In Iowa 37 kinds of Warblers have definitely been found.

Migration.

One of most distinct things.

Few remain on their breeding grounds in U.S. Pine retires to southern portion of its breeding range. All remain in the U.S. Very definite routes, which may be an indication of their early origin. That is certain genera are believed to have originated in the West Indies (Dendroica) while others came up through Mexico.

Blackpoll breed north of U.S. border, all winter in South Am. Some, that breed in Alaska, make a 7,000 mile trip.

Myrtle is the hardiest, feeding on bay-berries on Long Island. Also the Palm, Black and White, Orange-crowned, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Pine remain in U.S. While a few Prairie Warblers and Ovenbirds may be found in Florida. Prairie, Bl.-thr. Blue Most of the Black-and-White, Swainson's, Bachman's, Cape May, Kirtland's, go to the West Indies.

A large group go only to Central America.

While most of the Black and White, Prothonotary, Golden-winged, Tennessee, Yellow, Cerulean, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Blackburnian, Kentucky, Connecticut, Mourning, and Canada Warblers, and Redstart, Ovenbird and both Water-Thrushes go to South Am. None fly direct from New England to South America as do some of the shore-birds. Only two, the Blackpoll and Connecticut use the West Indies as a migration route to So. Am.

Majority hop from Florida or the Gulf coast across to Yucatan, a distance of about 500 to 700 miles. They are able to make this in one night.

Migration is by night. Mortality is high, because of their small size. Probably no other family suffers as great a loss. Very susceptible to light and great numbers are killed during storms by flying into lights.

Travel in mixed flocks. Usually a large variety present during second week in May. Kenny found 18 kinds in half an hour.

In the east 28-30 have been seen in a day.

Waves are very pronounced. Palm Warbler April 26th-May 12th

migration
habits
behavior
size
color
song

Habitats.a. Marsh

1. Northern Yellowthroat. (Grinnell's Water-thrush once).

b. Stream

1. Louisiana Water-thrush, 2. Grinnell's 3. Parthoutany.

c. Bush

1. Northern Yellowthroat, 2. Mourning Dove, 3. Connecticut

d. Sumac or low shrubs

1. Bluewinged, 2. Canada, 3. Chat, 4. Golden-wing - 5. Wilsons.
-
6. Kentucky 7. Hooded 8. Yellow, 9. Prairie, 10. Chestnut-sided

e. Hillside - wooded

1. ovenbird, 2. worm-eating.

f. Wild crab, hawthorn, or feeding thru trees

1. B+W, 2. Nashville 3. A. Vangueson 4. Blackburnian,
-
5. Myrtle 6. Magnolia, 7. Parula 8. Blackpoll, Palm,

g. Tree tops

1. Cerulean 2. Redstart 3. Tennessee, 4. Cape May 5. Bay-breeze,
-
6. Bl. thr. Green, 7. Bl. thr. Blue

Pine warbler - pines.

Prairie - burnt over brush.

chestnut-sided - end growth.

Yellow-throated or tycamore - live crab. Hooded - deep woods.

Redstart - willows

Myrtle - bay berries

Palm - sand-bars.

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Behavior

Some distinctions

a. walking on ground

1. Robin bird, 2. Water Thrushes (stream birds).

b. Creeching on sides of tree

1. Bl. & White.

c. Perched

1. Bl. winged, 2. Chat, 3. Kentucky & Hooded
Pine 5 Prothonotary.

d. flycatching

1. Redstart, 2. Wilson's, 3.

Size

Most all small. Some few may be distinguished
by size.

Largest. Chat, Robin bird, Water Thrushes, Kentucky.

Smallest. Parula, Wilson's, Nashville, Cerulean.

Color. Some few may always be distinguished as markings
are so unusual.

♂ Redstart, Black thr. Blue ♂, Chat

Bay-breasted ♂, Parula

Considerable difference between ♂s + ♀s and likewise
in young.

When in the field keep in mind that Black & White
streaked birds can be only Bl. & White, + ♂ Bl. Bell

(4)

Of those yellow below certain ones only are unmarked,
such as Bl. winged, Wilsons, Kentucky, or N. yellowthroat,
+ Nashville.

ones that are yellow streaked may be Magnolia, Cape May,
♀ Blackpoll. yellow, ♀ Blackburnian.

The yellow rump of the Myrtle.

Tail wagging of Palm.

Brown back of N. yellowthroat in any plumage.

Orange-crowned dull greenish, slightly streaked, lighter
under tail, + chips. crown may be seen?

Nashville much yellower.

♀ Chestnut-sided greenbacked + gray below.

Louisiana does not have throat streaked.

yellow throat of Lycamore different color from orange
of Blackburnian.

yellow of Canada very bright.

Top of Wilson warbler's head looks flat.

Bl. & Wh. has striped head.

Prothonotary is orange with no wing bars.

(5)

Bl. W. & Gold. wing have wing bars

Panda is so small.

Worm-eating has chipping call - very distinct.

Pine has wing bars - white in tail, chipping call.
+ is in pine trees. Must not be confused
with ♀ Magnolia.

Bl. thro Blue has white wing patch.

♀ Bay. breast ^{greener} & ♀ Blackpoll very similar

♀ Conn ^{browner} & ♀ Mourning similar

Songs.

Some few may always be distinguished by song
such as Cowbird, Northern Yellowthroat, Blue-
winged Warbler, Water Thrush.

Others may be learned and will prove as helpful
as any other means for identification.

Chickadee, Hooded, Prothonotary, Cerulean, etc.

Songs are of different types and are given in
different manners.

I. Sing while resting

a. Loud whistled song

Prothonotary, Pine, Yellowthroat, Sycamore, Cowbird,

6. Water Thrush, Kentucky, Connecticut, Morning,
Chet. North. Yellowthroat.

B. Not loud whistled

Tennessee, Cape May, Blackburnian, Palm.

The song white feeding.

A. wee-chee, cher-wee whistled
yellow, magnolia, Chestnut, sides, Bay, breast,
Palm, Hooded, Canada, Wilsons, Redstart.

B. chipping sp. ~ junco type
worm-eating, Nashville, Orange crowned, Tennessee
Myrtle Palm.

C. Zee quality
Blue winged, Golden winged, Panda, Bl. thr. Blue,
Cerulean, Bl. thr. Green, Prairie

D. thin wing
Bl. & White, Cape May, Blackpoll, Blackburn

So in looking for warblers.

1. Know what ones occur in Polk County. (see county list)
2. Learn which arrive first. & last (Myrtle Palm, - Canada, Morning)
3. Look for them in certain habitats.
4. Associate habits of behavior
5. Make use of size comparisons
6. Learn field marks by color.
7. Associate a type of song with each.