

MAY 15 – 31, 2021 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT



Common Yellowthroat, *Geothlypis trichas*, Male,
© Eastsideaudubon.org

North America is considered the New World when compared to Europe. Therefore, the science of Ornithology, the study of birds, when referring to the New World family of birds is referring to birds found primarily in North America. Although many are highly migratory some will even migrate to South America.

Because EastView is generally situated in an open area with a few planted trees and shrubs, our habitat doesn't represent possible nesting sites for warblers. But we may see a warbler or two during migration in the Spring and Fall.

This note will focus on an easily recognized species that can be observed on the edges of both North and South Ponds, The Common Yellowthroat.

The Common Yellowthroat is a New World warbler. Certainly, the male in Spring and during the nesting season is easily recognizable with its black mask yellow throat and white line on top of the black mask.

Common Yellowthroats like to breed in freshwater marshes. They like various areas that are wet, damp, marshy and have plants that are densely packed in with each other. The vegetation needs to form good cover for the nesting birds as well as protection for the young.

The nest of a Common Yellowthroat is cup-shaped and found low in dense marsh vegetation. The female lays 3 to 5 eggs. Both parents have the job of feeding their young.

Because both North and South ponds now have an abundance of Cat-o--nine-tails it is very possible we will see this species nesting in them this year.

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Common Yellowthroat, *Geothlypis trichas*,
Female, © oiseaux-birds.com

The female of this species, as with many warbler species, is less conspicuous than the males. They tend to be more cryptic, more camouflaged, in the undergrowth than the male.

An interesting side of this species is that there are 13 races. The only way the different races differ is in the male's mask and the intensity of the coloring. As well, it is the intensity of the yellow either on the throat or belly. Studies have shown that females seem to be drawn to males that have a large mask.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER



Yellow-rumped Warbler, *Setophaga coronata*,
male, © Richard Harlow

Unlike the previous warbler species, this species does not have several races, but it does have two distinct subspecies. Combined, these two species basically cover the whole of North America during the nesting season. It nests in northern United States, Canada, and Alaska. It winters in southern United States and Central America. A very cosmopolitan species!

Some years ago, when I was growing up, I learned that this warbler of the Northeast was the Myrtle Warbler with a white throat and the one found in the West was the Audubon's Warbler with a yellow throat. At that time, they were considered separate species. Today both are considered subspecies one with a white throat and one with yellow throat and both with a yellow rump. But science in its infinite wisdom lumped them together as subspecies. The details are still under debate! However, ornithologists still use the original common terms when they talk about which subspecies they are referring to, whether the Myrtle Group or the Audubon's Group.

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This species is a coniferous forest type bird. Although it will nest in other trees, when there is a deciduous mixture, it prefers conifers.

Also, this species is probably the most abundant neotropical migrant of all the warbler species.



Yellow-rumped Warbler, *Setophaga coronata*, female, © ebird.org

It is also insectivorous as are all the warblers. It can forage for insects whether flying, on the ground, under leaves or what not. It is cosmopolitan when it comes to which insect it will savor today. Yet this species has the ability when insects are scarce to go after fruit such as the wax myrtle and can digest the wax coating of the fruit. This species has such a wide array of food items that it can eat no wonder it is one of the most abundant warblers in North America.

The nest of this species, made by the female, is usually made of twigs plus mammal hair, grasses, mosses and lichens shaped into a cup. The female will lay four to five eggs. Both parents are responsible for feeding the fledglings.

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Red Fox – 1

REPTILES

Garter Snake - 2

AMPHIBIANS

Green Frog – 1
Bull Frog – 3

BUTTERFLIES

Cabbage White – 2
Silvery Blue – 5
Clouded Sulphur - 1

[All Measurements taken at solar noon \(1230 EST\).](#)

PRECIPITATION

Average May Precipitation for Vermont = 3.46 inches.

Total precipitation for May was 36.0 mm or 1.4 inches. This is a 2.06 deficit for the month.

Overcast Days for the month was 17 days: Of those overcast skies 8 days produced rain. This month added to the draught we are in even though it may not feel like it.