



Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*)

The Yellow-rumped Warbler is one of North America's most familiar birds. This small songbird weighs about one-half ounce and grows to five to six inches long. A distinctive bright yellow patch above the tail and on its side distinguishes this species. It sings a slow musical warble, where the notes

are sung with a trill or modulated sound. It is also a hardy bird. While most other warblers have struggled or declined, this species has thrived, maintaining stable and increasing numbers on its breeding and wintering grounds including the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary.

In the early stages of songbird migration, particularly in April, Yellow-rumped Warblers pass through the Mid-Atlantic States in great numbers. They tend to roost in isolated areas of trees, especially in parks within cities or at edge of large bodies of water. Around the Harbor Estuary, a few of the most popular places to spot them from Sandy Hook, New Jersey (where some winter as well) to New York's Central, Prospect and Jacob Riis Parks, and Jamaica Bay. These areas are powerful magnets for migratory birds including the Yellow-rumped warbler. The New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary sits at a juncture of the Atlantic flyway used for eons by many birds from songbirds to waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, and raptors. As they fly into the area and need to rest and feed, there are only so many patches of green available to them. The Estuary's parks and other natural areas are bits of critical habitat without which these birds might not successfully make their long journey.

The Yellow-rumped Warbler is a highly adaptable bird, uniquely equipped for survival. Unlike other warblers who only eat insects, the Yellow-rumped warbler can feed on fruits and berries too. During warm weather, like other warblers, this bird is a natural pest-controller. It consumes large numbers of beetles, weevils, wood borers, scale insects, sawfly larvae, flies, mosquitoes, gnats, spiders and aphids that it finds in budding trees.

In winter though, it can be found in brushy thickets of bayberry, wax myrtle, cedar, Virginia creeper, dogwood and even poison ivy (a winter favorite). The Yellow-rumped Warbler is able to digest the waxy seeds of these plants. Since other warblers cannot eat these foods, low-competition allows the Yellow-rumped warbler to thrive. It can also winter farther north (including Sandy Hook) than any other warbler species. As an additional benefit to the environment, seeds of native plants are dispersed in the bird's droppings with new plants occurring naturally. The wintering range of this hardy species goes from Central America, the West Indies, and the southern United States northward to the snow line.

Coniferous and mixed coniferous-deciduous woodlands host breeding Yellow-rumped warblers in summer. Nests are located in the mid-section of the trees. Their habitat is

open areas particularly in woodland edges, dunes, marshes, and residential areas. Their breeding range is from northern Alaska, northern Manitoba, central Quebec, and Newfoundland south in West to northern Mexico and in East to Michigan, New York and New Jersey, on up to Massachusetts, and Maine. Their clutch size is 3-5 eggs. Their incubation period is 12-13 days and it takes 10-12 days to fledge.



This entry was researched and written by Claire Antonucci, Rosemary Higgins and Cathy Yuhas of the New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium Extension Program. It is part of a larger project, "The Key Species of New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary" produced with funding from the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program.