

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*



Folk Name: Long-billed Marsh Wren

Status: Migrant, Winter Visitor

Abundance: Rare

Habitat: Marshes and wet meadows with cattails

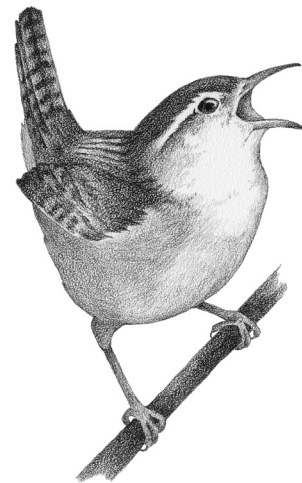
The Marsh Wren breeds primarily in cattail marshes in Northeastern, North Central, and some Western states, as well as up into Canada. There is also a resident breeding population in brackish marshes along the coast of both Carolinas. It is believed that most of the birds that are found in the Carolina Piedmont are migrants from the North moving back and forth between their breeding and wintering grounds.

The Marsh Wren has been reported here between September and May. We have no records of this bird in June, July, or August. Our earliest fall arrival date is 11 September, and our latest spring date is 24 May. We only have a handful of reports from November, December, and January, and we have only one report from the months of February and March. This is a bird sighted by Robin Carter in southern Fairfield County on February 2, 2007. Marsh Wrens appear to be primarily associated with cattail wetlands in the spring, but fall sightings have been reported in a variety of weedy habitats.

In Chester in 1885, Leverett Loomis reported the Marsh Wren was “rather common” during spring and fall migration and was “a denizen of the bottomlands.” E.M.



Marsh Wren at Clarks Creek Greenway in October.
(Kevin Metcalf)



Hoffman and Elmer Brown reported one in Salisbury on December 26, 1923. A single Marsh Wren was documented in Davidson on May 12, 1940, by observers conducting the Spring Bird Count. One had been seen the day before the count on 11 May, and one was sighted again on 24 May. Another Marsh Wren was located the next year on May 24, 1941. One was reported on the Stanly Christmas Bird Count in 1955.

David Wright found a Marsh Wren at the Wallace Dairy Farm in eastern Mecklenburg County on September 11, 1989, and Taylor Piephoff found one in the county on September 20, 1989, just prior to the arrival of Hurricane Hugo. Kevin Hennings reported one in a marsh in southern Mecklenburg County on December 15, 1991. One was reported on the Statesville CBC in January 2000. Taylor Piephoff reported one at Cowan’s Ford Wildlife Refuge on April 18, 2000.

Like the Sedge Wren, the Marsh Wren has been found in the region almost annually since the turn of the twenty-first century. However, in this case, the peak count has only been two birds. A few notable reports follow. Individual Marsh Wrens were found five years in a row in the same small cattail wetland at the Renaissance Golf Course in Charlotte during the annual Charlotte Spring Bird Count. This could presumably have been the same individual. On September 24, 2009, MCPRD staff collected a tower kill specimen at the base of the WRET television tower on Hood Road in Charlotte. The specimen was turned over to the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences for use as a voucher specimen. On October 22, 2011, Taylor Piephoff reported finding a Marsh Wren beside the Kirk Farm Field boardwalk in Charlotte. He remarked “I enjoyed perhaps the most cooperative Piedmont Marsh

Wren I have ever seen. This bird perched for extended periods of time on tops of cattails trying to figure out where the pishing was coming from.” On May 14, 2013, Kevin Metcalf sighted a Marsh Wren at the McDowell Nature Preserve prairie restoration site and provided this comment:

Well seen two times—responded to spishing. It was foraging along the edge of pond in emergent vegetation. Clearly a wren with a supercilium, plain breast (center of breast with no orangish tones as in the much larger Carolina Wren), warm brown upperparts with blackish and white dashes on back. Second one that I have seen in the County this spring.