

Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa*



Folk Name: Golden-crested Kinglet

Status: Winter Resident

Abundance: Common to Very Common

Habitat: Coniferous forests or mixed hardwood forests

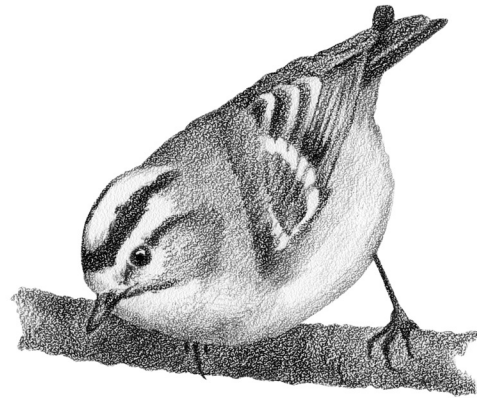
“I have been interested to notice this year so many kinglets. Unless you know these little songsters, little birds with big songs, then you have missed a really great joy. The golden-crowned is the species more abundant here. And they are numerous in February and March in Rankin’s woods down by the creek, or on Westminster Place, or in the little pine grove back of J.P. McKnight’s on Kenilworth Avenue, or indeed almost anywhere in the young pines.”

—William McIlwaine, Charlotte, April 8, 1928

The Golden-crowned Kinglet is a mere 4 inches long. It has an olive plumage above and is mostly ruddy-white below. It has a short, thin black bill with a black eye line and a thick white eyebrow above. It has a bright golden-yellow or yellow-orange crown, bordered by a ring of black. The female’s crown is yellow, while the male’s crown is a deeper orange, which is quite obvious when the bird is agitated and its crest is raised. The Golden-crowned Kinglet has two wing stripes. This bird is often considered to be “fearless” of man. This bird’s high-pitched *tsee* call is generally heard long before it is seen.

Golden-crowned Kinglets are known as the “treetop nesters of the north woods.” Most nest in coniferous forests of New England and Canada, as well as out west. Some nest at higher elevations along the Appalachian Mountains. There is a resident breeding population in North Carolina’s mountains and a small breeding population is believed present in Oconee County, South Carolina. In the Carolinas, they prefer spruce-fir forests, but are found nesting in hemlock and white pine forests at lower elevations (usually above 3,000 feet) as well.

This bird is a winter resident throughout the Carolina Piedmont. It is a social bird that is often found in small groups or with other birds. Our earliest fall arrival date is August 14, 2004, when Ranger John Sutton reported a group at Baker’s Mountain Park in Catawba County. They were described as “extremely early.” Most years, the



bulk of these birds arrive in October and depart by April. Specimens of fall nocturnal migrants have been collected at television towers in the region in late September. Our latest spring departure date appears to be 6 May, but some may linger later in the South Mountains, Brushy Mountains, or higher elevations on the western edge of the region. We have no records from the months of June or July. Our highest one-day count is 152 birds reported on the Southern Lake Norman CBC in 1995.



Golden-crowned Kinglet in Iredell County. (Jeff Maw)