

## Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*



**Folk Name:** (none)

**Status:** Migrant

**Abundance:** Rare to Uncommon

**Habitat:** Forest understory: shrub layer

A singing male Canada Warbler is a wondrous sight to behold. Its bluish-gray back and crown are offset by the bird's bright yellow throat and underparts. It has a complete whitish eye-ring and yellow lore stripe that create the effect of spectacles. It has a black line linking its eye to a diagnostic "black necklace" splashed across its bright yellow breast that vibrates rapidly as the bird sings.

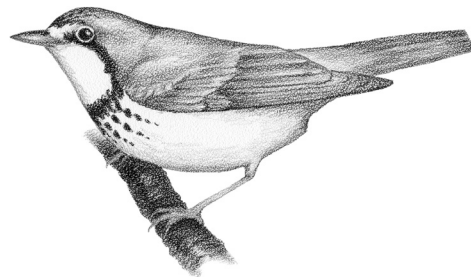
The Canada Warbler is an annual spring and fall migrant in the Carolina Piedmont. As its name suggests, this warbler breeds primarily in Canada, but some nest in the Appalachian Mountains all the way south to Georgia. The breeding population apparently skips over the mountains of South Carolina. The population in North Carolina inhabits dense understory "tangles" in rhododendron thickets beneath the canopy of hemlock, northern hardwood, and spruce-fir forests, all usually above 3,000 feet.

Leverett Loomis collected the first specimen of a Canada Warbler ever taken in the state of South Carolina in Chester County on May 8, 1879. He reported that this warbler was "not uncommon" there during the first two weeks of May "where they render themselves conspicuous by their frequent singing." He recorded it as rare in September during fall migration. Surprisingly, there were fewer than a half dozen reports of this species in South Carolina over the next half century.

Elmer Brown had a Canada Warbler in Salisbury on May 8, 1927. He sighted one at Davidson in Mecklenburg County on May 5, 1927, and reported them there again the following year on May 13–14, 1928. A year later, Charlotte's William McIlwaine wrote:

Two new birds for the day. The Canadian [*sic*] warbler and the Parula. Of the former I saw two or three.... They were in the little thicket on Briarwood Creek by the bridge on New Sharon Road. No, one or two were there. Another was back in my little "inland" meadow bordered on one side by a pine slope, on the other by a beautiful creek with trees on either bank. Both places are rich in bird life.

William McIlwaine recorded two additional Canada Warblers in Charlotte on May 6, 1929, another on May 15, 1930, and one on May 12, 1931. Charlie Sellers sighted one on May 12, 1940. Mrs. A.F. Bachman reported a Canada Warbler in Mecklenburg County on September



18, 1943. John Trott reported a male singing at Pfeiffer College in Stanly County on April 27, 1945. One was killed on the night of September 25, 1955, after colliding with the ceilometer tower at the Charlotte Municipal Airport. The specimen was collected by Mecklenburg Audubon Club members.

Four were found on the Charlotte Spring Bird Count on May 6, 1961, providing our peak one-day tally for the region. This warbler is a relatively rare find on spring counts conducted in the Central Carolinas. It has been reported just over a dozen times since counts began in 1940.

Our earliest spring arrival date is 18 April, and our latest spring date is 21 May—which was a bird banded at the Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge MAPS banding station. Our earliest reported arrival in fall is 22 August, and our latest report of this species is 4 October. Dennis Lankford found one at the McMullen Creek Greenway in Charlotte on September 5, 2000. He had a great look at the bird and watched it "gleaning insects from the underside of leaves in the trees next to the cattails." Stephen Thomas photographed one in Fort Mill on September 28, 2008.

The Canada Warbler is listed on the Yellow Watch List of birds of the continental United States. It is a species with both "troubling" population declines and "high threats." It is in need of conservation action.



Canada Warbler. (Jim Guyton)