

# Three Resident Warblers of Cold Spring Park

Our wood warblers evolved in Northern Central America and moved north in between ice ages. Several moved south and became residents of South America. We see many others in their spring and fall migrations. This whole family of singing birds that have nine primary feathers is called *Parulidae*. They are related to our blackbirds and orioles and also to our buntings and longspurs.

There are three species that spend the summer in Cold Spring Park: the Yellow Warbler, the American Redstart, and the Pine Warbler. Our Pine Warblers arrive around April 1st and can still be heard singing here in October. They nest in the white pines along the Cochituate Aqueduct. The Yellow Warblers arrive in early May and set up territories abutting the wetlands along Beaconwood Road. The American Redstarts arrive later in May and are found in the deciduous trees throughout the park.

## The First to Arrive: Pine Warblers



Male Pine Warbler.

This is the male Pine Warbler. They arrive around April 1 in Newton. They are larger warblers and have dim streaks under their wings. They have yellow breasts and white under their tails. The song is a steady, liquid trill, usually sung high in a white pine tree.

## The Last to Leave: Pine Warblers



Female Pine Warbler

This is a female Pine Warbler. She has the same eye-catching white wing bars as the male, and a duller yellow wash below. She gives a loud, sharp chip as a warning note. These warblers winter in the southern U. S. U.S Pine Warblers are in

Newton until November.



Male Yellow Warbler

## Along Beaconwood Road

This is the male Yellow Warbler. The red streaks on his bright yellow breast give a beautiful color combination. He

sings a song that is a high “sweet, sweet, sweet” followed by a lower “so, so, so-sweet.” This is an onomatopoeic attempt to verbalize the bird’s song. These birds are usually at low to mid height around the Beaconwood wetlands.

## The Female Yellow Warbler



Female Yellow Warbler

Both she and her mate have no wing bars and are all yellow. She has a black eye staring out of her yellow face. As you can see, her back is olive-green. These warblers are among the earliest to leave us for the southern U. S. and Central America, departing at the end of July. Both these and the next species winter in Central America and the northern half of South America.

## The Flashiest Looker



Male American Redstart

This is a male American Redstart. They are often very active in their search for insects. Once you see them in binoculars, you are reminded of the larger, more orange, Baltimore Orioles that nest in the park. Their song is a little warble that either drops or rises at the end. It has some sibilant quality to it.

## The “Yellowstart”



Female or first-year male American Redstart

This is either a female American Redstart, or a first-year male that has yet to molt into the redder plumage. In the summer they will be under pressure to find lots of caterpillars and other insects to feed their growing chicks, so, they will remain active in the trees throughout the day.

Most warblers are in the midst of a physically demanding journey when we see them in Cold Spring Park. They are depleted from long flights and desperately need to replenish their bodies. They rely on insects, with caterpillars being the most nutrition per mouthful. Thus, they can often be seen obsessively searching for food during much of the day.

The time of year that our trees produce leaves, hence the emergence of insects and caterpillars that eat those leaves, is changing as we warm the earth up. This is becoming a bigger problem for migrants, and for the warbler parents who need the insects and caterpillars to feed their growing chicks. If the caterpillars are out two weeks before the migrating warblers get here from the south, the food supply for the young warblers may not exist by the time the young have hatched.

Planting native shrubs in your yard to support native insects like caterpillars can help with this sort of problem.

Indiscriminate spraying adds to the problem.

In addition to the latter food problem, there is the ongoing danger involved in the migration that these small birds encounter annually. In his well-researched book, *A World on the Wing*, Scott Weidensaul states that, on average, 50% of songbirds die during each year of migrating. The probability of both male and female partners returning to the nest site after going south and coming back is about 25%. ♦

✿ Pete Gilmore

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**Individuals 70½ and older can make a tax-free gift to the Newton Conservators directly from their IRA. Please consider a gift to the Conservators from your 2022 IRA distributions. The benefits to you include the reduction in income subject to tax, even if you don't itemize, and the amount donated counts toward the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).**

**The benefits to the Conservators are immense and allow for us to continue to help preserve open space in Newton. Ask your IRA holder for a simple transfer letter or form. The Newton Conservators is a recognized 501(c)(3) organization.**

— Thank you.

**Newton Conservators, P.O. Box 590011, Newton, MA 02459**

### MISSION

#### Newton Conservators, Inc.

The Newton Conservators promotes the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests, and streams which are open or may be converted to open space for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters.

A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land, buildings, and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, educational, recreational, literary, and other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare of the people of our community.

*The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization 61 years ago in June 1961.*

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We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles or letters by email in MS Word or rich text format to [articles@newtonconservators.org](mailto:articles@newtonconservators.org). Digitized photographs, maps, and diagrams are also welcome.

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