

KENTUCKY WARBLER (*Oporornis formosus*) GUIDANCE FOR CONSERVATION

The Kentucky Warbler is a rare breeder in the southern part of the Hudson River Valley, where it is at the northern limit of its range.

Conservation Status

The Kentucky Warbler is considered a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in New York. It is also listed as a “Yellow” WatchList species by the National Audubon Society and as a Species of Continental Concern and of Regional Concern in Bird Conservation Regions (BCR) 28 and 30, and of Continental Stewardship and Regional Stewardship in BCR 28 by Partners in Flight. NYS Breeding Bird Atlas data indicate a reduction in its distribution in the Hudson River Valley in the past two decades.



Identification

This wood-warbler is about the size of a chickadee, with olive-green upperparts and bright yellow underparts. Its face and crown are black, with bright yellow “spectacles.” The sexes are similar, but the female is not as bright as the male. Its song resembles that of the Carolina Wren and is a series of rolling musical two-syllable notes, “churry churry.”

Habitat

This bird is found in rich, moist deciduous forests near streams, wooded swamps, and bottomland hardwoods, with a dense understory of shrubs and saplings and a slightly open canopy. It is most common in second-growth forests. Robbins (1979) estimated that the minimum forest area required to sustain a viable breeding population was 80-125 acres. Essential to its reproductive success is a thick understory and well-developed ground cover.

Nesting

The nest is placed on the ground at the foot of a shrub or tree or low in understory vegetation and is a well-hidden cup made of grass, rootlets and other plant material built on a foundation of dead leaves.

Food

This species feeds on or near the ground, hopping or running rapidly while turning over dead leaves with its bill, searching under sticks and in crevices, and leaping up to take prey from the undersides of low, overhanging leaves or branches. It eats insects and larvae, such as caterpillars, grubs, spiders, and plant lice.

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Threats

- Removal of understory during forest management.
- Loss of forest habitat to residential development, recreational development, and agriculture.
- Fragmentation and loss of second-growth breeding habitat.
- Increased nest parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbird and nest predation by raccoons, Blue Jays, and opossums due to forest fragmentation.
- Destruction of understory due to overbrowsing of white-tailed deer.

Management Recommendations

- As long as overall forest cover in a landscape is not permanently reduced, practice forest management in a way that mimics natural disturbance and promotes deciduous shrubs and saplings.
- Maintain large and unfragmented forest blocks in patches of 100 acres or more.
- Promote dense understory growth and a well-developed ground cover through natural disturbance or management.
- Limit overbrowsing by deer and livestock.

This species summary is adapted from McDonald 1998 and NatureServe 2008

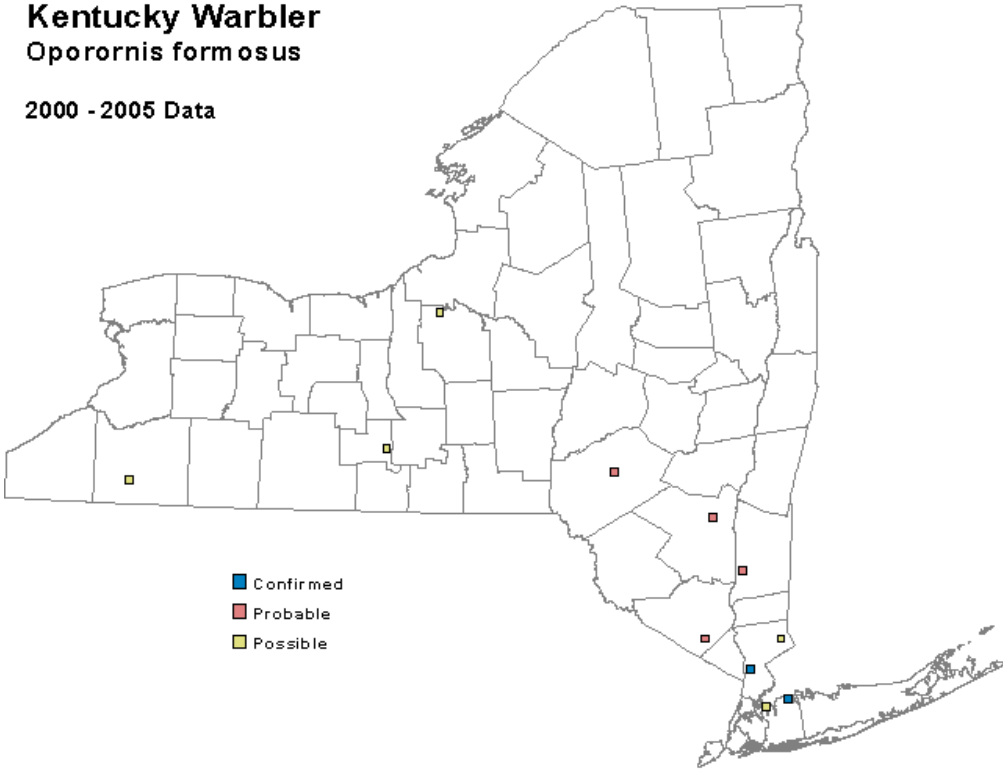
For more information, see the following references:

- McDonald, M. V. 1998. Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu.bnaproxy.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/324>
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- Robbins, C. S., D. K. Dawson, and B. A. Dowell. 1989. Habitat Area Requirements of Breeding Birds of the Middle Atlantic States. Wildlife Monographs no. 103:3-34. [Available full text online through JSTOR]

NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

Kentucky Warbler
Oporornis formosus

2000 - 2005 Data



Kentucky Warbler
Oporornis formosus

1980 - 1985 Data

