

The Marsh Wren is an uncommon and declining breeder in the Hudson River Valley.

Conservation Status

Breeding Bird Survey data indicate that the Marsh Wren has experienced a severe decline in New York since 1966. NYS Breeding Bird Atlas data reflect this decline in the Hudson River Valley, particularly in the southern part. Partners in Flight list the Marsh Wren as a Species of Regional Concern in Bird Conservation Region 30.



Marsh Wrens hide out in the dense vegetation of fresh and tidal marshes.

Identification

This species is small, with cinnamon-brown upperparts, a black triangle striped with white on the upper back, whitish underparts, buffy on the sides, a brown crown, and a long, thin downcurved bill. The sexes look alike, but the male is larger than the female. The song is a melodic, gurgling, bubbly trill.

Habitat

It is found in large, fresh, brackish or salt marshes with an abundance of tall, dense, emergent vegetation, including cattails, bulrushes, sedges, and common reed. It will also use emergent vegetation along the margins of ponds, lakes, and slow-moving rivers. Marsh Wrens are found in wetlands of varying sizes ranging from less than 12 acres to more than 50 acres.

Food

It feeds on invertebrates, especially insects and spiders, as well as aquatic insects in freshwater marshes. It typically forages on or near the marsh floor, hopping and creeping among the bases of cattail stalks or threading its way through fallen bulrush. It also forages on stems and leaves of cattails or other vegetation, and occasionally into the air to catch a flying insect.

Nesting

The nest is dome-shaped cup with a woven outer shell made of water-soaked strips of cattail leaves, grass stems, or sedges. Males build numerous nests and a prospective mate typically inspects these nests while being escorted by the resident male. She often accepts one of his nests, lining it with soft materials before laying eggs. When completed, the nest has a “door-step” or shelf of lining material that protrudes into the nest, forming a small tunnel. Territory size may depend on other species nesting in the area, and some research has documented it to range from 1/10 of an acre to almost an acre.

Threats

- Habitat loss because of destruction of marshes due to draining or filling.

Management Recommendations

- Marsh Wrens readily colonize restored marshes, e.g., those created for waterfowl, and can benefit from management that supports a wetland community as whole.
- Wetlands greater than 25 acres are preferred as they provide more interior habitat and reduce threats from predators.
- Maintain dense, strong heterogeneous stands of emergent vegetation in marshes.



Hudson River Tidal Marsh

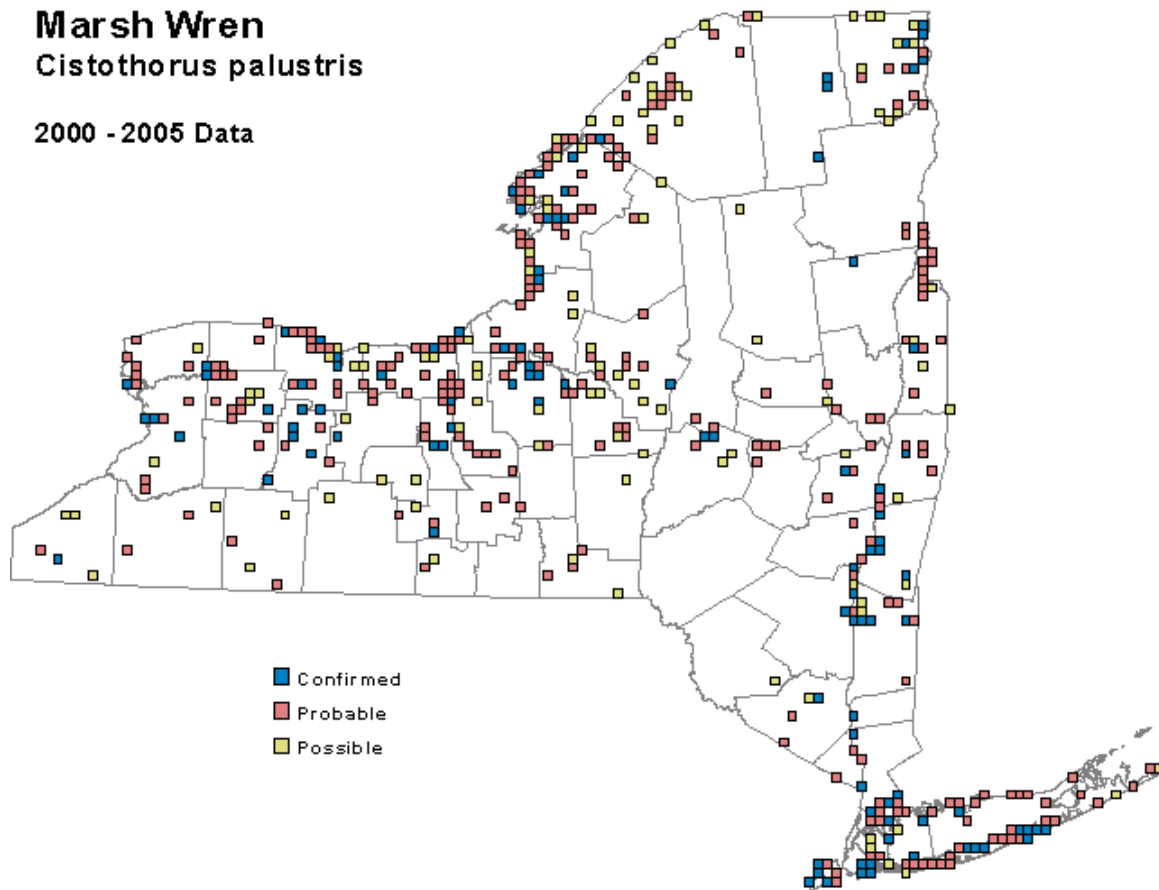
This management summary was adapted from Kroodsma and Verner 1997.

For additional information, see the following references:

- Brown, M., and J. J. Dinsmore. 1986. Implications of marsh size and isolation for marsh bird management. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 50:392-397.
- Gutzwiller, K. J., and S. H. Anderson. 1987. Habitat Suitability Index Models: Marsh Wren. Biological Report 82 (10.139). U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC. http://el.erdc.usace.army.mil/emrrp/emris/EMRIS_PDF/MarshWren.pdf
- Kroodsma, D. E. and J. Verner. 1997. Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*), *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/308>
- Leonard, M. L., and J. Picman. 1987. Nesting mortality and habitat selection by Marsh Wrens. *Auk* 104:491-495. <http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Auk/v104n03/p0491-p0495.pdf>
- Metz, K. J. 1991. The enigma of multiple nest building by male Marsh Wrens. *Auk* 108:170-173. <http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Auk/v108n01/p0170-p0173.pdf>
- NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.0. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: April 17, 2008).
- Verner, J. 1965. Breeding biology of the Long-billed Marsh Wren. *Condor* 67:6-30. <http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Condor/files/issues/v067n01/p0006-p0030.pdf>.
- Welter, W. A. 1935. The natural history of the Long-billed Marsh Wren. *Wilson Bulletin* 47:3-34. <http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Wilson/v047n01/p0003-p0034.pdf>
- Zimmerman, A. L., J. A. Dechant, D. H. Johnson, C. M. Goldade, J. O. Church, and B. R. Euliss. 2002. Effects of Management Practices on Wetland Birds: Marsh Wren. Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, Jamestown, ND. Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center Online. <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/literatr/wetbird/mawr/mawr.htm>

Marsh Wren
Cistothorus palustris

2000 - 2005 Data



Marsh Wren
Cistothorus palustris

1980 - 1985 Data

