

---

*The Yellow-breasted Chat is a rare and declining breeder in the Hudson River Valley*

**Conservation Status**

The Yellow-breasted Chat is regarded as a Species of Special Concern in New York State. It is not on the Audubon Watch List. Partners in Flight regard it as a Species of Regional Concern in Bird Conservation Region 28. There is no Breeding Bird Survey trend map for New York. It was only found in four blocks in the Hudson River Valley during the second Breeding Bird Atlas.

**Identification**

This bird is the largest of the wood-warblers, somewhat larger than a bluebird. The male has olive-gray upperparts, with a deep yellow throat and breast, white spectacles, and a large, thick bill. The female is similar to the male. During the breeding season, the male sings constantly, throughout the day and night. The song is similar to that of a mockingbird and includes a series of series of unmusical notes, such as whistles, catcalls, chuckles, and rattles. Outside the breeding season, they are quiet and difficult to find.



*Yellow-breasted Chat* M.Reid

**Habitat**

This species is found in low, dense, tangled, shrubby vegetation with an open canopy, including shrubby habitat along stream, swamp, and pond margins; forest edges, regenerating burned-over forest, logged areas, fencerows, shrubby old pastures, thickets with few tall trees, and power-line corridors.

**Food**

In the summer this bird eats small invertebrates, mostly insects and spiders gleaned from foliage as well as small fruits and berries. Nestlings are fed primarily larval and adult insects, particularly grasshoppers, crickets, moths, and butterflies;

**Nesting**

The nest is well-hidden in dense vegetation such as bushes, brier tangles, vines, and low trees, and is 3-6' above the ground. It is built by the female and is a bulky cup of grasses, dead leaves, grass and weed stems, and bark strips lined with finer plant materials.

**Threats**

- Loss of early successional habitat from suburban development.
- Reforestation of old fields and shrublands.
- Destruction of regenerating habitat due to more frequent mowing.
- Application of herbicides which prevent succession.
- Parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

---

**Management Recommendations**

- Create and maintain shrubby openings of at least 12 acres in forests by clear-cutting. It is important to leave shrubs, so clear-cuts should not be burned or treated in any way that results in shrub loss.
- Abandoned agricultural fields left unmanaged for 10 years provide excellent chat habitat.
- Remove trees and encourage shrub layer in powerline rights-of-way.

**This management summary is adapted from Eckerle and Thompson 2001 and NatureServe 2009.**

**For additional information, see the following references:**

Burhans, D. E., and F. R. Thompson, III. 1999. Habitat patch size and nesting success of Yellow-breasted Chats. *Wilson Bulletin* 111:210–215.

<http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Wilson/v111n02/p0210-p0215.pdf>

Eckerle, K. P. and C. F. Thompson. 2001. Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*), *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/575>

Ford, T. B. 1992. Management of thickets for Yellow-breasted Chat. *Connecticut Warbler* 12: 93–100.

NatureServe. 2009. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, VA. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: May 26, 2009 ).

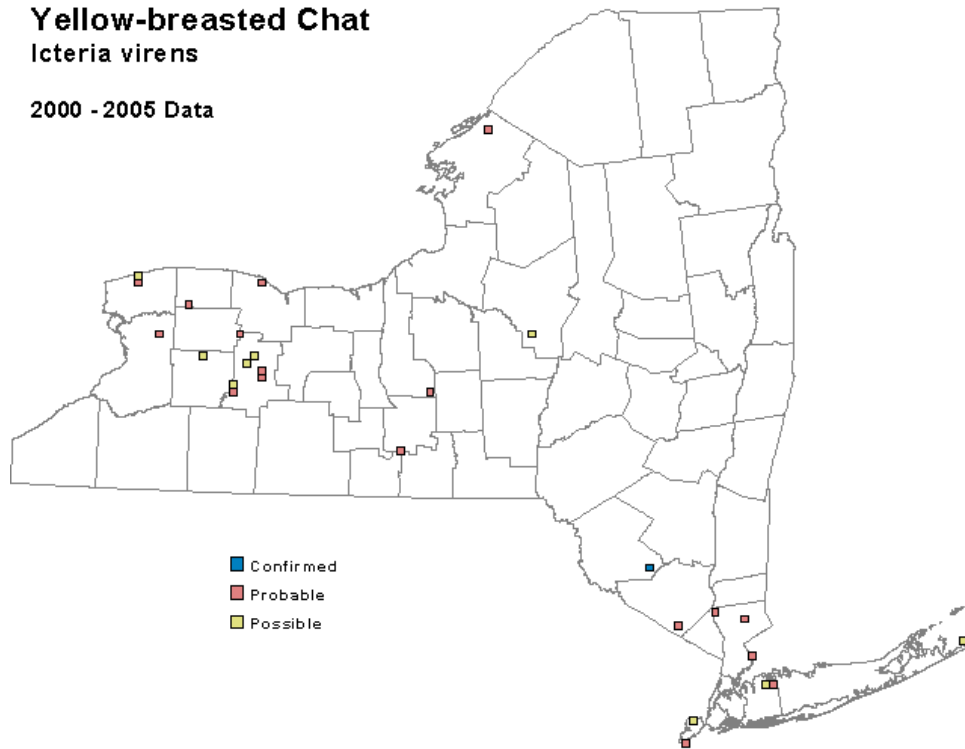
Ricketts, M.S., and G. Ritchison. 2000. Nesting success of Yellow-breasted Chats: effects of nest-site and territory vegetation structure. *Wilson Bulletin* 112:510–516.

**NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA**

**Yellow-breasted Chat**

*Icteria virens*

2000 - 2005 Data



**Yellow-breasted Chat**

*Icteria virens*

1980 - 1985 Data

