

Cape May Warbler

Dendroica tigrina

General Information:

-Identifiable by its chestnut cheek patches, this bird is named after Cape May, New Jersey, where it was discovered in 1811. This fairly common inhabitant of northern spruce forest is known for its aggressive behavior of chasing other birds from treetop foraging areas. Females are duller but are easily identified by the yellow rump and patches on the side of the neck.

Song:

-Sounds like *seet seet seet seet*, high-pitched, wiry, and up-slurred, usually in a series of 5-6 notes.

Behavior:

-Solitary or in pairs, this little warbler forages in thickets or high in trees, particularly in conifers on breeding grounds. Hawks insects and spruce budworms. Sometimes drinks tree sap, juice from grapes, and flower nectar.



Breeding:

-Monogamous and solitary.

Nesting:

-Breeding biology poorly known. Incubation about 11-13 days by female. The 1 brood per year of altricial young are brooded by the female, fed by both sexes, and stay in the nest for an estimated 10-12 days.

Population:

-Uncommon in spruce fir forests; may become locally common during spruce budworm outbreaks. Declining short-term populations.

Conservation:

-A neo-tropical migrant that is vulnerable to loss of breeding and wintering grounds due to deforestation and forest fragmentation.

Shoreline Restoration Issues:

-If you want to create an environment friendly to the Cape May Warbler I highly recommend planting coniferous trees such as Black and White Spruce, Northern White Cedar, Balsam Fir, Eastern White Pine, and Red Pine. Emergent aquatic vegetation and a thick planting in the buffer zone would definitely help, but an intriguing idea also would be to plant some Riverbank Grape next to mature conifers that are at the waters edge.