

WORM-EATING WARBLER

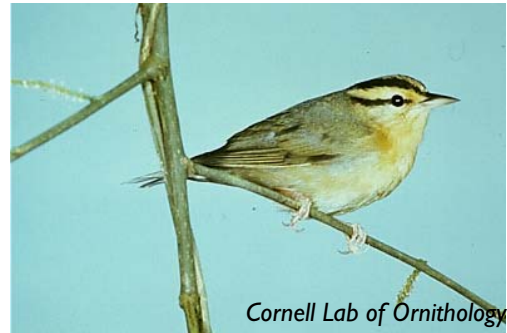
(*Helmitheros vermivorum*)

GUIDANCE FOR CONSERVATION

The Worm-eating Warbler is locally common breeder on steep, forested hillsides in the southern part of the Hudson River Valley.

Conservation Status

The Worm-eating Warbler is considered a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in New York. Partners in Flight regard it as a Species of Continental Concern in Bird Conservation Regions (BCR) 13, 28, and 30, and of Regional Concern, Continental Stewardship, and Regional Stewardship in BCR 28. The NYS Breeding Bird Atlas shows a reduced distribution in the Hudson River Valley over the past twenty years.



Identification

This small warbler is about the size of a chickadee, with olive upperparts, a buffy orange head with black eye and crown stripes, a buffy breast and sides, and a whitish belly. The sexes look alike. The song is a rapid buzzy trill similar to that of a Chipping Sparrow.

Habitat

This species is found in mature deciduous or mixed forests on steep hillsides or ravines with a dense, shrubby understory. It is considered to be area-sensitive and needs contiguous forests of at least 700 acres to achieve the greatest reproductive success.

Nesting

The nest is built by the female on the ground in dense understory vegetation, hidden in leaf litter, usually on a hillside or ravine bank. It is a cup made of decaying leaves lined with fine grass, moss stems, and hair.

Food

This bird forages in understory shrubs and trees by probing dead leaf clusters. It eats mostly caterpillars (formerly called “worms”) as well as other insects, slugs, and spiders.

Threats

- Destruction and fragmentation of forests due to suburban and commercial development.
- Parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds in fragmented forests.

Management Recommendations

- Protect and conserve large tracts of unfragmented mature deciduous forest greater than 700 acres with a dense shrub understory on moderate to steep slopes.

This species summary is adapted from Hanners and Patton 1998, NatureServe 2008, and Robbins et al. 1989.

For more information, see the following references:

Gale, G. A., L. A. Hanners and S. R. Patton. 1997. Reproductive success of Worm-eating Warblers in a forest landscape. *Conservation Biology* 11:246–250. [Available full text online through JSTOR]

Greenberg, R. 1987. Seasonal foraging specialization in the Worm-eating Warbler. *Condor* 89: 158–168. <http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Condor/files/issues/v089n01/p0158-p0168.pdf>

Hanners, Lise A. and Stephen R. Patton. 1998. Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorum*). *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/367>

NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer: an Online Encyclopedia of Life [web application]. Version 7.0. NatureServe, Arlington, VA. <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.

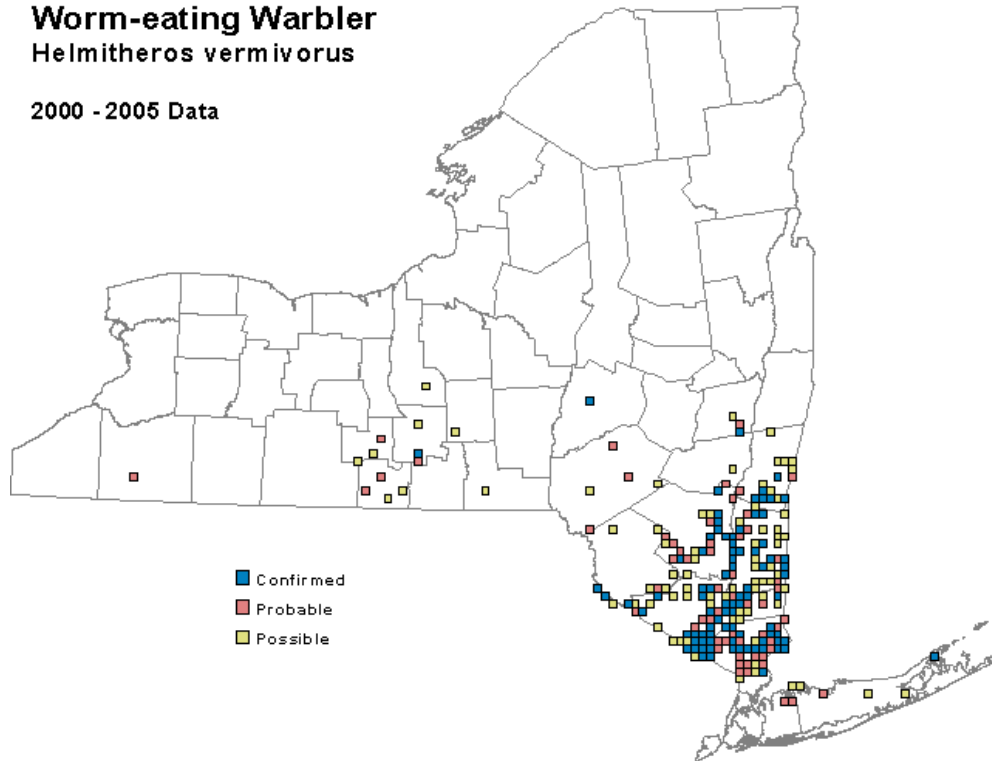
Robbins, C. S., D. K. Dawson, and B. A. Dowell. 1989. Habitat Area Requirements of Breeding Birds of the Middle Atlantic States. *Wildlife Monographs* no. 103:3-34. [Available full text online through JSTOR]

NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

Worm-eating Warbler

Helmitheros vermivorum

2000 - 2005 Data



Worm-eating Warbler

Helmitheros vermivorum

1980 - 1985 Data

