



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

**Nashville Warbler
*Oreothlypis ruficapilla***

State Status: **None**
Federal Status: **None**

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: The Nashville Warbler is a medium-sized wood warbler with yellow underparts, green back, and a gray head with a rufous crown patch and bold eye ring. In contrast to many species of warblers, Nashville Warblers lack wing bars and any white markings on the tail. Males and females are similar, but females tend to be drabber with a less extensive (and often obscured) rufous patch on their head. Hatching-year fall females can be very dull and can be confused with Tennessee and Orange-crowned Warblers.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE: The Nashville Warbler is broken into two disjunct populations: one in the West and another in the East. The western population includes the south inland portion of British Columbia through the Cascade Mountains of Washington and Oregon and into the Sierra Nevada Mountains of northern California. The eastern population extends from the boreal forest of central and eastern Canada to the Great Lakes region and throughout the northeastern United States. Their wintering range includes Mexico and Central America.

The Nashville Warbler was essentially unknown as a breeding bird in Massachusetts before 1830, but rapidly increased and became relatively common by the mid-1800s. Their numbers in the state peaked in the early 1900s and are thought to have steadily declined ever since. As indicated in the Breeding Bird Survey, Nashville Warbler has experienced a sharp annual decline since 1966 in Massachusetts (-5.7%) and in the mid-Atlantic/New England region (-6.2%). This decline is largely the result of a reduction in their breeding habitat, as young forests have declined in Massachusetts and many areas throughout the region.



Photo by William H. Majoros

HABITAT DESCRIPTION: The Nashville Warbler prefers regenerating areas of boreal, mixed hardwood-pine, and hardwood forests characterized by shrubby undergrowth. This habitat is created both through natural processes (e.g., fire, storms) and by anthropogenic activities (e.g., forest harvesting). Due to a reduction in the amount of habitat created from natural events, forestry practices may be required to maintain historical levels of young forest in the state.

Nest sites are often located along the edges of forests, field, ponds, or located along a stream. Nests are well-concealed and placed on the ground under shrubs or within patches of grass.

THREATS: Although this is a relatively little-studied species, the primary threat to the Nashville Warbler is thought to be loss and degradation of its breeding habitat. As with other nocturnal migrants, this species is also vulnerable to collisions with man-made structures. Depredation by domestic cats is also a factor, particularly in the nesting season.

A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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REFERENCES:

- Lowther, P.E., and J. McI. Williams. 2011. Nashville Warbler (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology.
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