



## Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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*Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife*

## Chestnut-sided Warbler *Setophaga pensylvanica*

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

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** Breeding male Chestnut-sided Warblers have a distinct yellow crown, chestnut on the flanks, and black facial markings with black and white stripes along the back and a white underside. Nonbreeding adult males maintain chestnut-colored flanks, but are otherwise less striking with an olive-colored crown and back and a gray face and underside. Breeding females are distinguished from males by having a greenish color to the crown, less black facial markings, and chestnut coloration on the sides. Immature birds have fewer dark markings along the back and less chestnut coloration.

**DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE:** The Chestnut-sided Warbler is a Neotropical migrant that breeds throughout Massachusetts and the rest of New England. Its breeding range expands south to northwest New Jersey and southeast Pennsylvania following the Appalachian Mountains into Georgia. North of New England, Chestnut-sided Warblers breed in southern Saskatchewan, east through Manitoba to the Maritime Provinces. The wintering range includes Central America, Caribbean Islands, and northern South America.

In Massachusetts, the population of Chestnut-sided Warblers has been significantly declining since 1966, and this is primarily a result of a reduction in breeding habitat. Massachusetts has little remaining young forest habitat, which is now thought to be below historic levels.

**HABITAT DESCRIPTION:** Chestnut-sided Warbler nesting habitat includes young deciduous forests (<20 years post-disturbance). Historically, habitat for this species was created naturally through strong storms, fire, and beaver activity. With natural disturbances minimized today, such habitat can be created through forestry practices. This warbler colonizes young forest soon after disturbance and places its nests in a shrub within a



*Photo by William H. Majoros*

couple of meters from the ground. During migration, Chestnut-sided Warblers use a wide variety of forested habitat types in varying stages of succession.

**THREATS:** The primary threat for Chestnut-sided Warblers is the loss and degradation of suitable breeding habitat. They are also susceptible to collisions with manmade structures, especially during their nocturnal migration.

### REFERENCES:

- Byers, B.E., M. Richardson, and D. Brauning. 2013. Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Setophaga pensylvanica*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology.
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- Sauer, J.R., J.E. Hines, J.E. Fallon, K.L. Pardieck, D.J. Ziolkowski, Jr., and W.A. Link. 2014. The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966 – 2013. Laurel, MD.

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

## Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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Please allow the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program to continue to conserve the biodiversity of Massachusetts with a contribution for 'endangered wildlife conservation' on your state income tax form, as these donations comprise a significant portion of our operating budget.

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