



Top, L–R: Yellow warbler [M] (*Setophaga petechia*); Common yellowthroat [M] (*Geothlypis trichas*); Black and White warbler [M] (*Mniotilta varia*)
 Bottom, L–R: Palm warbler [M] (*Setophaga palmarum*); American redstart [M] (*Setophaga ruticilla*); Blue-winged warbler [M] (*Vermivora cyanoptera*)

Warblers

by Education and Visitor Center Services Coordinator Kim Compton

Warblers are small insect-eating birds that often flitter around in the tops of trees. Sometimes this can be frustrating for bird watchers but with a little luck and patience, you can get a chance to see these beautifully colorful birds in McHenry County’s woodlands.

Spring is the perfect time to look for warblers — both because they are at their most colorful during breeding season, and because dozens of species migrate through our area during this time. To find them, keep your eyes and ears open. Often we hear them before we see them so it may be a good idea to familiarize yourself with several species’ calls on an app like Merlin or eBird. To see them you will need binoculars but first scan the tops of trees with just your eyes, looking for movement among the branches. Then focus in.

To tell warblers apart from each other, look for several physical characteristics in color and pattern. For example, note whether the bird has an eye ring — a ring of color, usually white that encircles the eye. Next look for “eyebrows”, forehead patches, head caps or “crowns”, and throat color. On the body, pay attention to the wings to see if there are color bars called wing bars horizontally across the wings’ feathers. Some warblers have a differently colored rump patch so watch for this too. Once you are able to focus in on these features, you will be able to identify the warbler species before it flies away.

Study a field guide to then learn some of the more common species’ features. This way you aren’t trying to look through the whole book while also trying to look at the live bird. Start simple. For example, the **yellow warbler (A)** is completely yellow with

reddish vertical streaks on its breast. The **common yellowthroat (B)** has a bright yellow throat and rump patch, a black mask, and a white stripe above the black. The **black and white warbler (C)** has no colors other than black and white that are heavily streaked over the whole body and it has an obvious white eyebrow.

Identifying birds with multiple colors and features may seem overwhelming at first but you will learn to find their main features. A **palm warbler (D)** has yellow underneath its body, brown wings and back, a yellow throat, a yellow head stripe, and reddish streaks down its breast. But, its most distinguishing feature is its rufous colored crown. Find that and you will know you are looking at a palm warbler. Similarly, the **American redstart (E)** has a distinguishing feature — and that is its unmistakable combination of black and orange. No other warblers have that color combination. Sometimes the name of the species can help with identification. The **blue winged warbler (F)** has blue gray wings, but also look for two white wing bars, a yellow crown, and yellow underbody.

There are 27 warbler species on the McHenry County bird checklist. Only five are known to nest here. So your window for warbler watching may be short. Usually migration through our area is concentrated in mid to late April. This is also a good time to bird watch because the trees have not leafed out yet. Once there is full leaf cover, you will have a much harder time finding small warbler species.

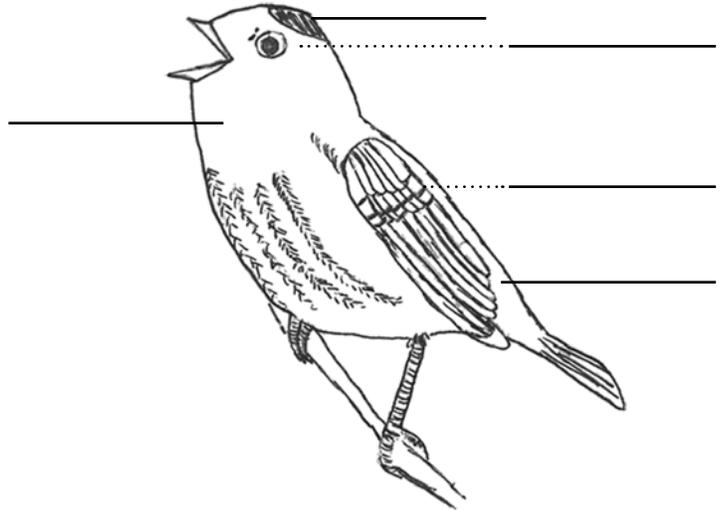
Consider joining us on a guided bird hike! **Woodland Wandering is Thursday, April 16 from 6–8:30 p.m.** at Glacial Park. For Ages 14+, details on page 22.

Wondrous Warblers

Throughout the United States, there are more than 50 different species of warblers! These birds come in many colors but can be difficult to identify because of their quick movements. However, warblers do have some special markings that can help you tell them apart. Below, you will find a picture of a warbler with some special markings that will help you identify warblers more easily. See if you can correctly label the picture with the right markings listed in the word bank.

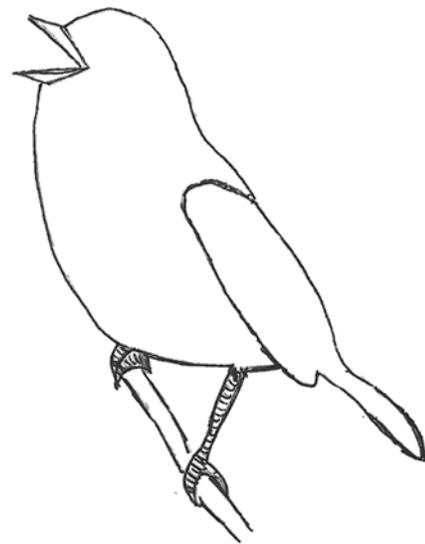
WORD BANK

Eye Ring Crown Throat Rump Patch Wing Bars



Draw your own!

Using pictures found on the previous page draw markings and color the picture to match one of the warblers. Or make up your own! Don't forget the eye ring!



Warbler Wave

by April Pulley Sayre and Jeff Sayre

Conservation Tales: The Cerulean Warbler

by Tom J. McConnell

Stokes Beginner's Guide to Birds – Eastern Region

by Donald and Lillian Stokes



Bird Hike

Now that you know a little more about warblers, head out to one of the McHenry County Conservation District's sites like Coral Woods, Marengo Ridge or Glacial Park to see if you can spot some!

Need some help on your warbler identification? Not to worry, come celebrate **World Migratory Bird Day** at the Lost Valley Visitor Center in Glacial Park on **May 9** from **8 a.m.–Noon** for a family fun-packed time! See page 21 for complete birding program details.