

Profile

Pine Warbler

Dendroica pinus

Pine Warblers are birds of eastern pine woodlands and live up to their name; they are rarely found in deciduous vegetation except during migration and spend most of their time in pine forests.

Pine Warblers in much of the southeastern United States are permanent residents and those in Corkscrew do breed here. Those in the northern states migrate to the southeastern states and have a relatively short migration in spring back to the more northern states.

The scientific name describes its habitat: *dendron* (a tree); *oicos* (inhabitants); and *pinus* (a pine tree). The birds are among the most abundant warblers in the forest and readily adapt to different types of food available at different times of the year.

This species is most active at dawn during the breeding season when males sing vigorously from treetops within their territories.

Like most warbler species, only males sing. Unlike most other warblers, males will sing throughout the year although there is a noticeable increase in the frequency of their songs during the early part of the breeding season.

Two calls are typical. The contact call sounds like a slurred *tsup* while the flight call is a buzzy *zeet*. The flight call is very weak and rarely heard.

The song is a musical trill that sounds a little like a cell phone ringing in the top of a pine tree. Occasionally the song is two-parted with the second part faster and higher pitched.

Pine Warblers forage in the middle and upper canopies, slowly searching

along branches for insects, fruits, and seeds. They hop along the branches and may hang upside down at the branch tips searching for food.

They open seeds by placing them in bark crevices and hammering with their bills. Because they are seed eaters, they will come to bird feeders (*below with Chipping Sparrow*).

During the winter months, migrant

Pine Warblers from the northern part of their range join resident Pine Warblers in the southeastern states, often forming large flocks of up to 50 birds. They are also common in mixed species flocks in the winter.

Pine Warblers reach sexual maturity at one year. Mating season is from mid March through early June.

Females construct nests and do all incubation. During incubation, males may bring food to their mates as well as sing to defend the territory.

The nest is a deep cup of grass, pine needles, twigs, and plant fibers bound together with spider or caterpillar silk. The nests are lined with fine plant parts, hair, and feathers. Nests are typically located high in pine trees on

horizontal branches near branch tips, often at a fork which gives a sturdy base to build the nest.

Females lay from three to five eggs. Females almost exclusively incubate the eggs, but males will feed mates during egg incubation. The young hatch after about 12-13 days and fledge within another 10 days.

Both parents feed chicks until they are ready to leave the nest. Time to complete independence is unknown, but parents may continue to care for their brood several days post-fledging.

Average life span in the wild is less than five years; the oldest known banded Pine Warbler lived just over six years.

There are several similar looking warbler species. The relatively plain face pattern and yellow throat and breast of the Pine Warbler is somewhat similar to the Yellow-throated Vireo,

but the vireo has spectacles, a thicker bill, and unstreaked underparts.

In fall, the plumage is similar to the basic and immature plumages of several other warblers.

Blackpoll Warblers have yellow legs and feet and a streaked back. Bay-breasted Warblers have a streaked back, buffy undertail coverts and less streaking on the breast. Cape May Warblers have more streaking across the breast and a pale mark on the neck. Orange-crowned Warblers have yellow undertail coverts and lack wing bars.

