

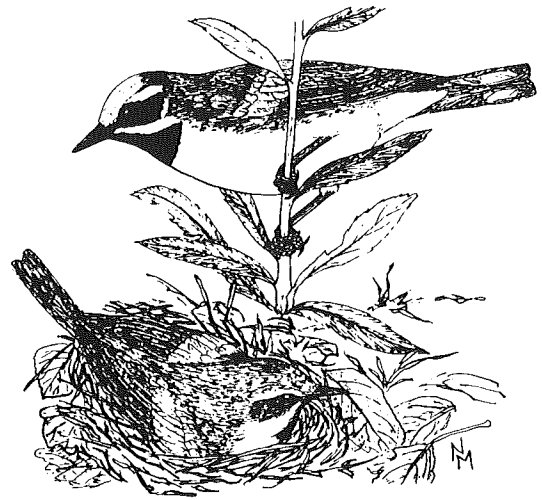
Golden-winged Warbler

Vermivora chrysoptera

The Golden-winged Warbler seems to be adapted to transitional and early successional habitat (Confer and Knapp 1979). Its preference for open, brushy areas with few trees restricts the species almost entirely to fields last farmed 10 to 30 years ago (Confer and Knapp 1979) and to swampy thickets (Chapman 1907). The recent disappearance of the species from parts of its range (Bull 1974) may have resulted from changing land use and the absence of large tracts of recently abandoned farmland.

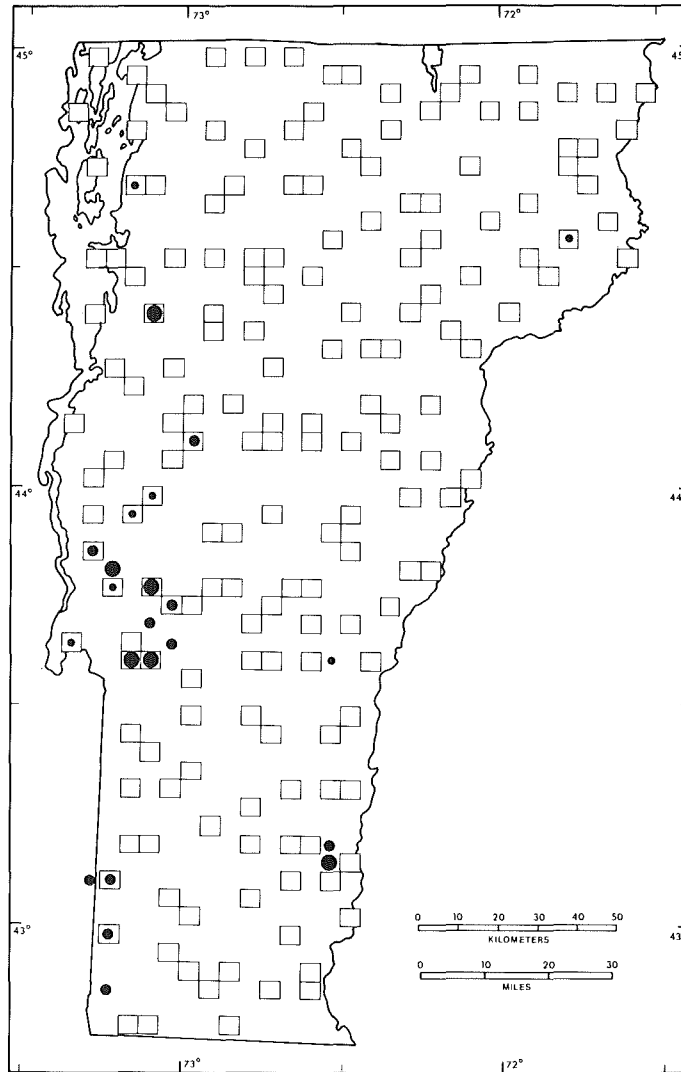
The male Golden-wing arrives in Vermont during the second week of May and sets up his territory. Territories are usually a little larger than an acre (Ficken and Ficken 1968b), but are highly variable in size from area to area and are sometimes as large as 2 ha (5 a) (T. Will, pers. comm.). This is the best time to locate the species, as the male throws his head back and gives a persistent buzzy *bee-bz-bz-bz* call, usually from an exposed perch. The female usually arrives a day or two after the male, and, as with the Blue-winged Warbler, pair formation occurs rapidly (Ficken and Ficken 1968a). The late arrival and early departure of these two *Vermivora* species, which may be related to their specialized feeding habits, shorten the time available for reproduction, possibly necessitating a more rapid courtship. Hybridization between the two *Vermivora* species is probably facilitated by the rapidity of courtship and similarities in their courtship displays (Ficken and Ficken 1968a).

The nest of the Golden-wing, built by the female on or near the ground, is usually supported by weed stocks, a small sapling, or tufts of grass on a foundation of dead leaves. It is a loose, bulky structure of grasses, tendrils, and bark shreds lined with hair or fine grasses (Chapman 1907; Bent 1953; Harrison 1975). Three to 6 (more commonly 4 to 5) eggs are incubated by the female for 10 to 11 days. The young, able to leave the nest 10 days after hatching, acquire their first winter plumage about a month later



(Bent 1953). Sprightly when feeding, the Golden-winged Warbler swings upside down on twigs from treetops to lower branches like a chickadee (Bent 1953), while eating caterpillars, spiders, ants, and beetles. Vermont egg dates are from May 18 to June 16; on May 27, 1959, a nest with 5 eggs was located in Union Village (Wellman 1959). Nestlings have been located from June 8 to July 6; fledglings from June 27 to August 6 (males were feeding young on July 4 in Rutland County and on July 9 in Sudbury). Because the birds are most active during the nestling and fledgling stages, the majority (four out of six) of Atlas Project confirmations (FY) were made during that period.

The Golden-winged Warbler has been expanding its range northward and eastward in the eastern U.S. for about 175 years (Confer and Knapp 1981). Reported from Vermont as early as 1893 by Hiram Cutting (Stearns and Coues 1893), the species was listed as a rare summer resident at the turn of the century (Perkins and Howe 1901) and a rare migrant in Windham County in 1907 (Davenport 1907). From 1913 to 1918 regular reports of singing males came from Muddy Pond on Pine Hill in Rutland (Kent 1919). The species was also listed as a migrant and local summer resident in Rutland County, as a rare summer resident in West Haven on Lake Champlain, and as a visitant at Hartland (Ross 1934; Morgan and Marble 1935).



No. of priority blocks in which recorded

TOTAL 15 (8%)

Possible breeding: 6 (40% of total)

Probable breeding: 5 (33% of total)

Confirmed breeding: 4 (27% of total)

Physiographic regions in which recorded

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	6	19	40
Green Mountains	2	4	13
North Central	0	0	0
Northeast Highlands	1	6	7
East Central	0	0	0
Taconic Mountains	6	37	40
Eastern Foothills	0	0	0

Considering data from both priority and non-priority blocks, Atlas Project workers found Golden-winged Warblers in all but the North and East Central regions of Vermont, with the majority of sightings (12 of 23) and confirmations (4) coming from the Taconic Mountains. Noteworthy was the sighting of a Golden-wing in the Northeast Highlands near Victory.

The Golden-wing was placed on the National Audubon Society's Blue List in 1982, as it continued to experience genetic swamping by Blue-wings (Tate and Tate 1982). Gill (1980) has shown that the arrival of Blue-wings and the local extinction of Golden-wings in an area are closely related; the

Golden-wings are usually gone within 50 years. Will (1982) has stated that the Blue-wing may be socially dominant over the Golden-wing, which may adversely affect the Golden-wings' success in fledging young where the two species' territories overlap. The early successional stages of abandoned farmland in the eastern U.S. probably provided the habitat needed for expansion of the Golden-wing's range; today much of that habitat is gone. Gill (1980) believed that if the present trend continues for another 100 years, the species will be very rare, if not extinct.

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