

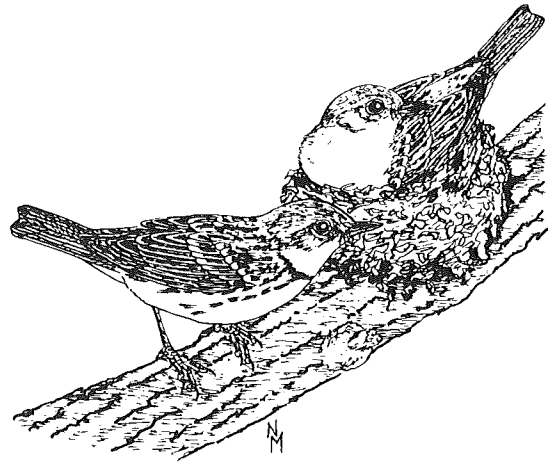
Cerulean Warbler

Dendroica cerulea

The Cerulean Warbler is closely associated with tall deciduous forest having little mid-story growth. These warblers spend most of their time high in the canopy. In the Northeast the species shows a preference for riparian situations, inhabiting swamps and floodplains. The small Vermont population inhabits tall, riparian forest adjacent to extensive swampland along the Lamoille River in the town of Milton (Chittenden County). The dominant trees in the area are silver maple and eastern cottonwood. The Cerulean was first confirmed as a Vermont breeding species on June 12, 1977 (ASR, W. G. Ellison); the state's population varies from four to six pairs. Because of its small population and occurrence in only one Vermont locality, the Cerulean is proposed for Species of Special Concern status in Vermont.

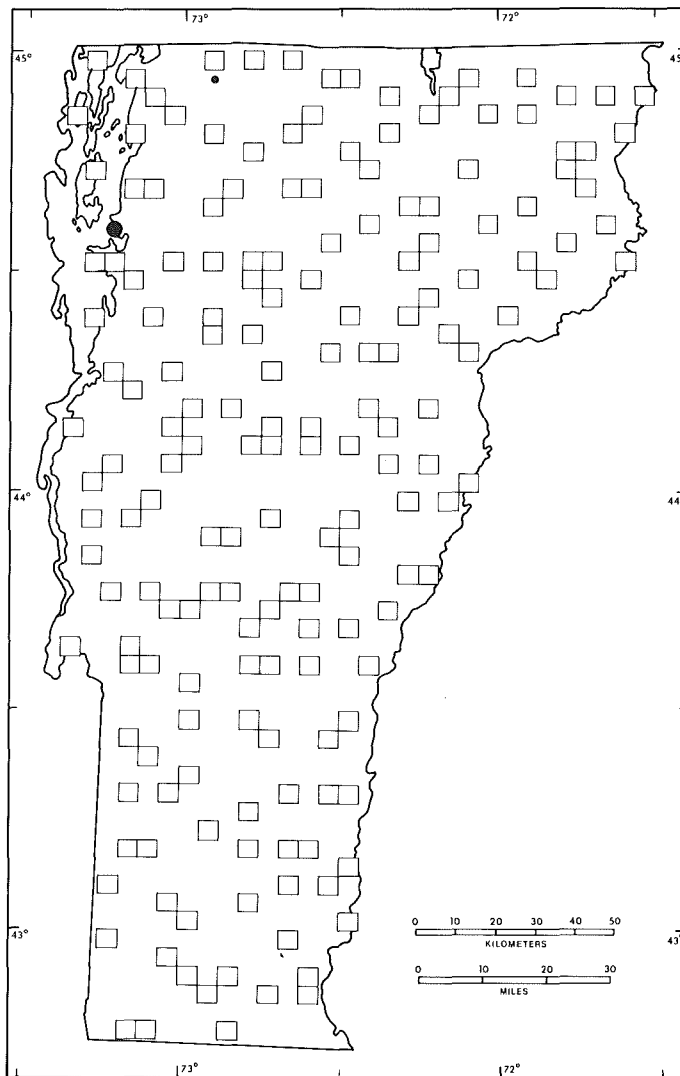
With its arboreal habits, the Cerulean Warbler is difficult to observe. Its buzzy song serves to locate it long before the observer's search is rewarded with a characteristic underside view. The song is fairly distinctive, but is similar enough to those of the Northern Parula and the Black-throated Blue Warbler to allow it to be overlooked. The reedy song consists of a rapid, spiraling series of notes ending with an upward-inflected, indeterminate buzz. The bird's high-ranging behavior as well as the high placement of the nest, generally above 9 m (30 ft), make confirmation difficult. However, two nests have been located at the one Vermont breeding locality in the Sandbar Wildlife Management Area. The nest is a shallow cup constructed of plant fibers and rootlets, invariably decorated with lichens. It is placed on a side limb, usually above an open space so as to resemble a knot in the limb. Confirmation can be achieved by watching the birds, especially the female, until one of them visits the nest.

Cerulean Warblers are single-brooded, which limits the period for confirmation to about one month. The two Vermont nests contained eggs on May 23 and June 12;



these dates are close to the range of the much larger sample for New York State (Bull 1974), which was from May 19 to June 23. There are no known nestling or fledgling dates for Vermont. In New York, nestlings are known from the second week of June to the first week of July, and fledglings are reported from the third week of June to the third week of July (Bull 1974). Cerulean Warblers arrive in Chittenden County, Vermont, in mid-May, and have been detected there as late as August 11.

In the Northeast the Cerulean Warbler has expanded slowly but steadily. Late in the nineteenth century, it was already known to be present on the Ontario Lake plains in New York. Eaton (1914) speculated that the species had originated from the Ohio River valley at some point during the preceding century. As early as 1894, the species appeared on the east bank of the Hudson River in Dutchess County, New York. A small population has bred there since at least 1922 (Bull 1974). The first New England records included a sighting at Stratford, Connecticut, in 1841 and a specimen from Cohasset, Massachusetts, in 1874 (Forbush 1929). Forbush cited fewer than 20 records for New England in 1929, 4 of which were from Vermont; however, details from 3 of these records are highly questionable, and at present, there are no available published details on the fourth (a mid-May 1927 sighting from Montpelier). There was



No. of priority blocks in which recorded

TOTAL	○	(○%)
Possible breeding:	○	(○% of total)
Probable breeding:	○	(○% of total)
Confirmed breeding:	○	(○% of total)

Physiographic regions in which recorded

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	○	○	○
Green Mountains	○	○	○
North Central	○	○	○
Northeast Highlands	○	○	○
East Central	○	○	○
Taconic Mountains	○	○	○
Eastern Foothills	○	○	○

a subsequent sighting of a Cerulean at St. Johnsbury on May 5, 1950 (F. Mold, Fairbanks Museum record).

Records of the Cerulean Warbler in southern New England increased in the late 1940s and 1950s to annual reports, leading Griscom and Sprunt (1957) to speculate that it would breed there. In 1972, a pair was found nesting at Canton, Connecticut (Finch 1972). In 1950, the Cerulean Warbler was recorded for the first time in southern Quebec, at St. Helen's Island (Ouellet 1967), where it continues to be seen annually. In addition, breeding has been postulated at Mt. St. Hilaire in the Richelieu River valley since 1965 (Ouellet 1967). Possibly these

birds arrived via the St. Lawrence River valley from populations around Lake Ontario. An alternative theory is that the colonists arrived from the New York population in Dutchess, Rensselaer, and Schoharie counties. In support of the Ontario theory is a summer record (June 14, 1981) for Lake Carmi State Park in Franklin, Vermont. A singing male at Lake Bomoseen State Park in Hubbardton, May 12–15, 1979, might indicate colonization of Vermont from the Hudson River population.

WALTER G. ELLISON