

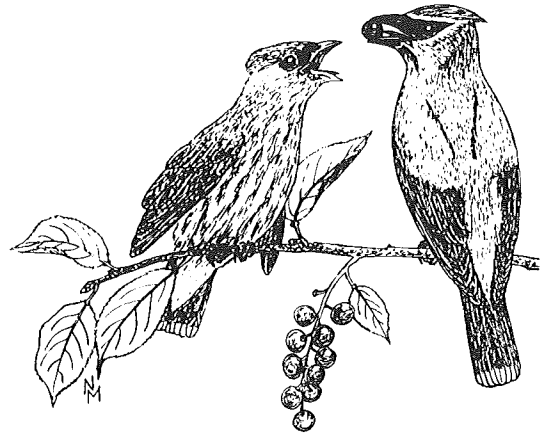
Cedar Waxwing

Bombycilla cedrorum

The major factor influencing the selection of nesting habitat by the Cedar Waxwing is food availability. Waxwings are highly frugivorous, supplementing their fruit diet with insects during the summer; for this reason, waxwings always nest near a steady supply of fruit. The species prefers edge habitats, probably because fruit-bearing plants grow most often in areas that are exposed to sunlight. As long as their food requirements are met waxwings will nest anywhere, from urban and suburban parks and plantings to forest clearings and roadsides, beaver ponds and meadows, and stream banks. This ability to adapt to any kind of edge habitat assures the waxwing of one of the widest distributions among Vermont birds. It was located in all 179 Atlas Project priority blocks, and was considered a confirmed or probable breeder in 92% of them.

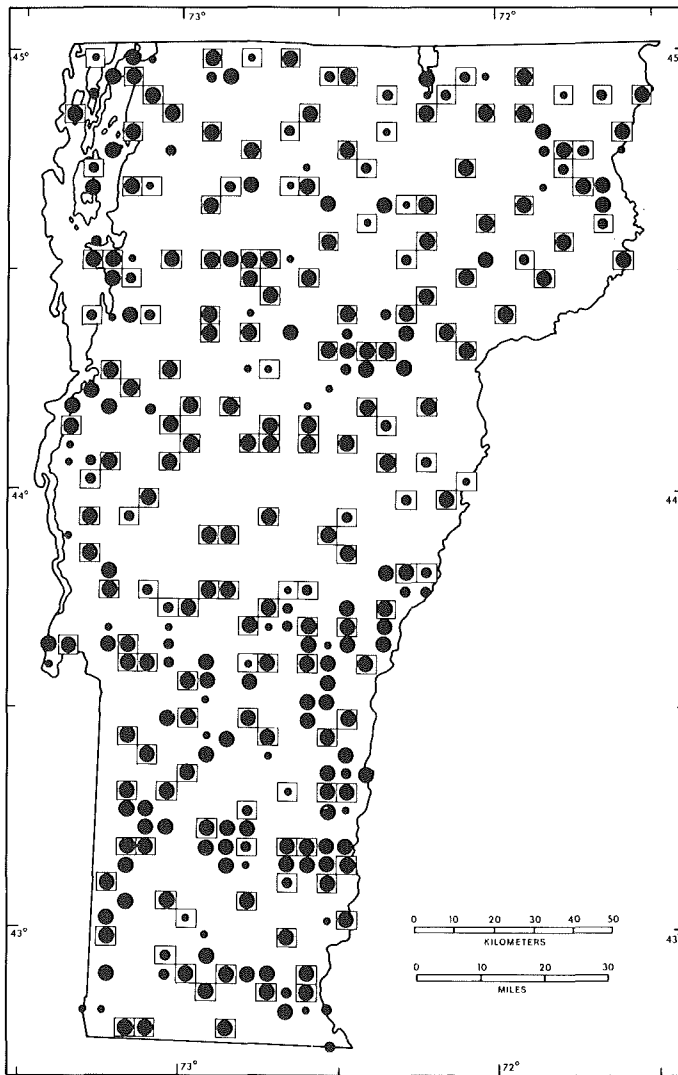
The Cedar Waxwing is generally easy to locate because of its gregarious nature, its constant movement between the nest site and food sources, and its habit of selecting conspicuous sentinel perches near the nest. The waxwing's voice is distinctive, but may be missed because it is sibilant and high pitched. Both members of the pair are active nest builders; as nests are placed fairly low, it is often easy to watch pairs coming from and going to them. When fledglings are present, their insistent begging calls often give them away. During the Atlas Project breeding was most frequently confirmed by nest building (26.5%), nests containing eggs (25.5%), and recently fledged young (20.1%).

Waxwings may be encountered year-round in Vermont, although the species is very local during the winter. In winter Cedar Waxwings are seen in the Champlain Lowlands and the Connecticut River valley, sometimes accompanied by a few of the rare Bohemian Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulus*). Most Cedar Waxwings arrive in breeding areas in late May and begin nest building by early to mid June. Nests are placed in shrubs



and small- to medium-sized trees, at heights of 1.8–6.1 m (6–20 ft) (Harrison 1978). Nests are constructed from plant fiber, artificial materials such as yarn, stems and leaves of herbaceous plants, and twigs. The nest is bulky and tends to be somewhat untidy. Egg dates from 28 Vermont nests range from June 17 to August 26. Nestlings have been reported from July 1 to September 10 (seven records). The four Vermont fledgling dates range from mid July to late September. Clutch size for 20 Vermont nests averaged 4.3 eggs, with a range of 3 to 5; this agrees with the average of 4.2 eggs per clutch cited by Leck and Cantor (1979). Some waxwings lay a second clutch in late July or August, but the majority are not double-brooded. Cedar Waxwings gather into their winter flocks and disperse from their nesting areas in late September and early October.

The Cedar Waxwing is common to very common in Vermont. As the species tends to concentrate at abundant food sources, the population may vary considerably from year to year. "Cedar birds," as they are also known, were considered common during the early part of the present century. The species has been increasing in numbers at a rate of 4% a year in the Northeast and 6.1% a year in Vermont since sometime in the 1960s (BBS 1966–79). This increase may be related to decreased pesticide treatment of shade trees and fruit orchards since the 1940s and 1950s, when the use of DDT and other persistent poisons was unrestricted.



No. of priority blocks in which recorded

TOTAL 179 (100%)

Possible breeding: 14 (8% of total)
 Probable breeding: 31 (17% of total)
 Confirmed breeding: 134 (75% of total)

Physiographic regions in which recorded

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	31	100	17
Green Mountains	54	100	30
North Central	19	100	11
Northeast Highlands	16	100	9
East Central	19	100	11
Taconic Mountains	16	100	9
Eastern Foothills	24	100	13

The Cedar Waxwing's name is derived from its fondness for cedar berries and the presence in many birds of red, waxy droplets on the tips of the bird's secondary feathers. These droplets serve no known function, but they are often present in both Cedar Waxwing and Bohemian Waxwing adults.

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