

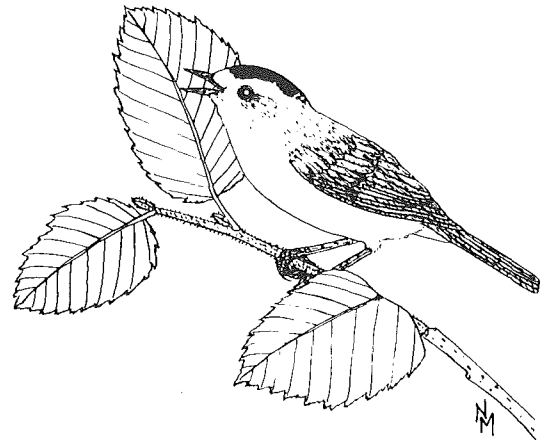
Wilson's Warbler

Wilsonia pusilla

The Wilson's Warbler breeds across the entire northern part of the continent, its range dipping south in the East to central Maine, northern New Hampshire, northern Vermont, and northeastern New York (Godfrey 1966; AOU 1983). Although the Wilson's habitat preferences may vary over its huge range, eastern continental populations of the species prefer somewhat open, damp areas edged with alder or willow stands, or areas of boreal spruce-fir-tamarack forest with stunted conifers. In Vermont, it is a rare, localized, and irregular breeder. Breeding habitat in the state—cool, boggy or swampy associations in boreal forest—is limited. The Northeast Highlands, the only region in which breeding by this warbler has been recorded recently, is threatened by clear-cutting.

Only four breeding records exist for Vermont. On July 8, 1977, an adult was recorded feeding a small fledgling in Bloomfield, in the far northeastern corner of the state (ASR, W. G. Ellison and R. Prum); the habitat was an open, wet meadow interspersed with alders and small white spruces, and bordered by coniferous forest. A male was found singing on territory at Holland Pond in the same region and in similar habitat in the summer of 1978—an Atlas Project probable record (ASR, L. N. Metcalf). There are two older records as well: in the 1950s the Wilson's was called a "regular breeder in small numbers in alder swamp" in the township of Morgan, within the North Central Region (Eldred, Field notes); and two sources (AOU 1957; Bent 1958) list northeastern Vermont as within the breeding range of the Wilson's, on the basis of unspecified records from St. Johnsbury. Many promising nesting habitats specially targeted by the Atlas Project as Unique and Fragile Areas (e.g., Moose Bog, Bear Swamp, and the swamp-marsh areas of Lake Memphremagog) failed to turn up more pairs.

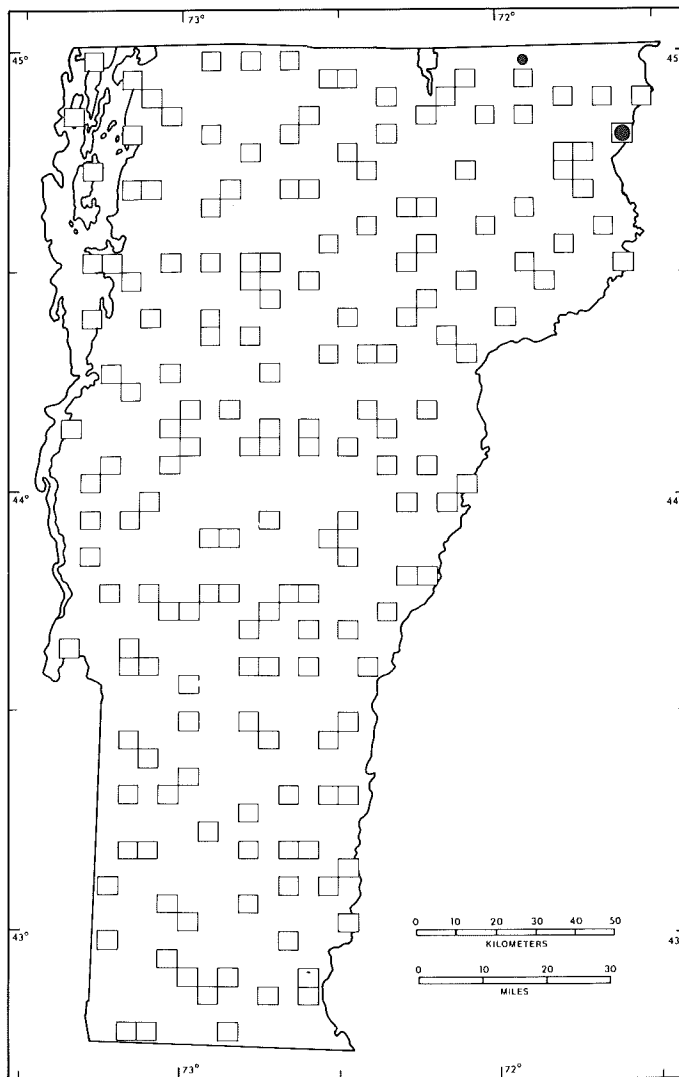
Confirmation of breeding is most easily obtained by searching among the lower



parts of trees and shrubs, since this species forages primarily within 3–4.6 m (10–15 ft) of the ground (Pough 1949; Stewart 1973), and by listening for the Wilson's distinctive song. Males sing frequently in the early part of the breeding season. The nest, bulky for the size of the bird, is constructed of grasses, leaves, and mosses, with a lining of fine grasses and, occasionally, hair. It is usually placed on the ground at the base of a shrub or small tree, often well hidden in a tussock of grass or moss. The eggs, generally 4 to 6 per set, are white with reddish brown speckling concentrated at the larger end (Griscom and Sprunt 1957; Bent 1958; Godfrey 1966). Four dates for eggs found in Maine—June 1, 4, 12, and 19 (Palmer 1949)—are probably roughly applicable to Vermont. The incubation period lasts about 12 days, and young seem to require an equal time in the nest after hatching (Stewart 1973).

Stewart (1973), studying the western race, found a mean territory size defended by breeding males of 0.6 ha (1.4 a) in one area and 0.5 ha (1.2 a) in another area. The species behaves boldly near its nest, and a persistent observer may stand quite close to a suspected nest site and be rewarded by views of adults returning to incubate or to feed young. Wilson's Warblers are almost entirely insectivorous, obtaining their food by a wide variety of techniques from leaf searching to flycatching (Bent 1958).

The Wilson's Warbler is normally encountered in Vermont migrating to or from its



No. of priority blocks in which recorded

TOTAL 1 (0.6%)

Possible breeding: 0 (0% of total)
 Probable breeding: 0 (0% of total)
 Confirmed breeding: 1 (100% of total)

Physiographic regions in which recorded

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	0	0	0
Green Mountains	0	0	0
North Central	0	0	0
Northeast Highlands	1	6	100
East Central	0	0	0
Taconic Mountains	0	0	0
Eastern Foothills	0	0	0

more northerly breeding territories. May 5 is the earliest report for spring, but Wilson's Warblers usually begin arriving in Vermont around May 11-12, and normally peak around May 15-25. The last spring migrants are usually reported about May 26-28, but the record late date is June 1. Only 7 to 15 birds are normally reported for the entire spring season, while daily counts of 4 to 6 birds, by a single observer, are not uncommon in the fall (though more observers are afield in the spring). The earliest report for fall is for August 7, though birds usually first appear on August 16-19 and peak from September 4 to 15. Wilson's Warblers have usually completed passage through

Vermont by the end of September or the first few days of October; the latest fall report is for October 9 (RVB, Fall 1973-81).

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