

Featured Volunteer Work: A Guide for Birders Warblers Edition



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
 EXTENSION
 MASTER NATURALIST

Chicago Area, Illinois, USA

Warblers of the Chicago Region (PARULIDAE)

Maureen Marsh and Cathy Walz

1

M = Migrant (seen in Spring, Fall)
 BR = Breeding (seen in Summer)
 R = Rare in Chicago Area

All photos are of male birds in breeding plumage unless otherwise noted. Bird groupings for this guide were based on similarity of colors or features to facilitate direct comparison between species. For example, birds with yellow chests and black streaking were placed alongside one another. Consult a field manual for additional classifications, descriptions, and images, including female (*fm.*) and immature (*imm.*) birds.
 Photos © by: Laurel Ahlenius, Josh Feeney, Ken Koontz, John Picken, and Mark Vaughan. Input from Josh Engel.
 Produced by: Maureen Marsh and Cathy Walz. [fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org] [999] version 1 3/2018

			
1 <i>Setophaga coronata</i> Yellow-rumped Warbler Streaky. Yellow rump. Yellow patches on "shoulders" more easily seen. M	2 <i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i> Golden-winged Warbler Black throat and mask bordered by white. Yellow forehead. Yellow wing panel. M	3 <i>Setophaga dominica</i> Yellow-throated Warbler Yellow throat and upper breast. Black cheeks extending to streaks on sides. M, BR	4 <i>Setophaga virens</i> Black-throated Green Warbler Yellow face. Black throat. Black streaks on side. M

As a birder and Master Naturalist (class of 2017), I thought it would be interesting to create a Rapid Color Guide for the Field Museum. These guides are online publications designed to be downloaded—and printed if desired—to serve as a resource in the field. Another birder and Master Naturalist, Maureen Marsh, and I worked together to create a guide for “Warblers of the Chicago Region”.

Our Rapid Color Guide was targeted towards beginning birders, who might have difficulty making rapid identifications of birds that appear similar to each other. We purposely grouped the birds, not by taxonomy, but by similarity of features in order to facilitate direct comparisons. For example, birds with yellow bodies and bluish-gray wings were placed together. Short captions helped point out distinguishing marks. We definitely wanted our guide to serve an educational purpose.

We were on a self-imposed tight deadline, as we wanted the project completed before spring migration. We opted to work with several photographers in order to quickly get the desired number of photographs. Our tasks then included adapting a template from the Field Museum to meet our needs, editing the photos and fitting them into the template, creating the captions, verifying that our information was correct, and submitting the guide.

Working on this project had a number of benefits: focusing my warbler identification skills, learning new processes (that can be adapted to future Rapid Color Guides), working collaboratively, and the satisfaction of seeing our work published. It has also been rewarding to see our guides being used on bird walks and referred to in presentations.

-Cathy Walz, Cook County Master Naturalist