

Nashville Warbler

Oreothlypis ruficapilla



The Nashville Warbler has two geographically discrete breeding populations. The eastern population extends up the Appalachian Mountains from Pennsylvania to the Maritime Provinces, then northwest across the Great Lakes to central Saskatchewan. The western population occurs from southern British Columbia and Idaho into the Pacific Northwest and south into California. Two disjunct wintering areas also have been identified: a narrow band along the California coast and a second, much larger region in Mexico (Williams 1996b).

Considered rare by early naturalists, the species apparently increased in the East during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Nashville Warbler prefers secondary growth, and the original unbroken forests of America probably offered little suitable habitat. After extensive forest clearing in the Northeast for farmlands and the subsequent abandonment of those farms, vast acreages of potential habitat became available. The Nashville Warbler also occurs along the margins of northern bogs and wetlands where nutrient-stressed trees and shrubs provide structurally similar habitat to secondary growth.

Nashville Warblers return to Vermont in early May. Although a ground-nesting species, males sing from the tops of trees and while in flight. Nest building during the second atlas was noted in early June. The nest, built entirely by the female, is well hidden under grass or bushes, or among hummocks. During the 11 to 12 days when the female is incubating the eggs, the male may feed her, wagging his tail as he approaches the nest (Lawrence 1948). The female, like many ground nesters, may perform a distraction display to dissuade intruders. Nestlings are fed by both parents. Young typically leave the nest at 9 or 10 days, but parental care continues for several days thereafter. In Vermont, recently fledged young, incapable of sustained flight, were noted from 21 June through 27 July.

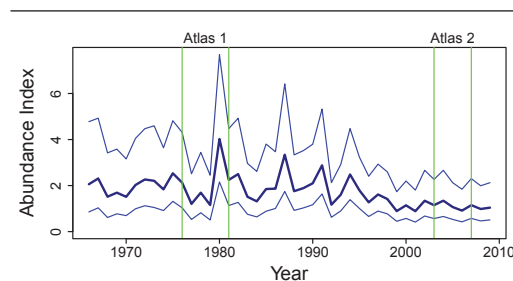
The Nashville Warbler is most frequently encountered in northeastern Vermont. During the second atlas, it was found in every block in the Northeastern Highlands. The species becomes much rarer from the Green Mountains west and was only sporadically encountered in the pre-

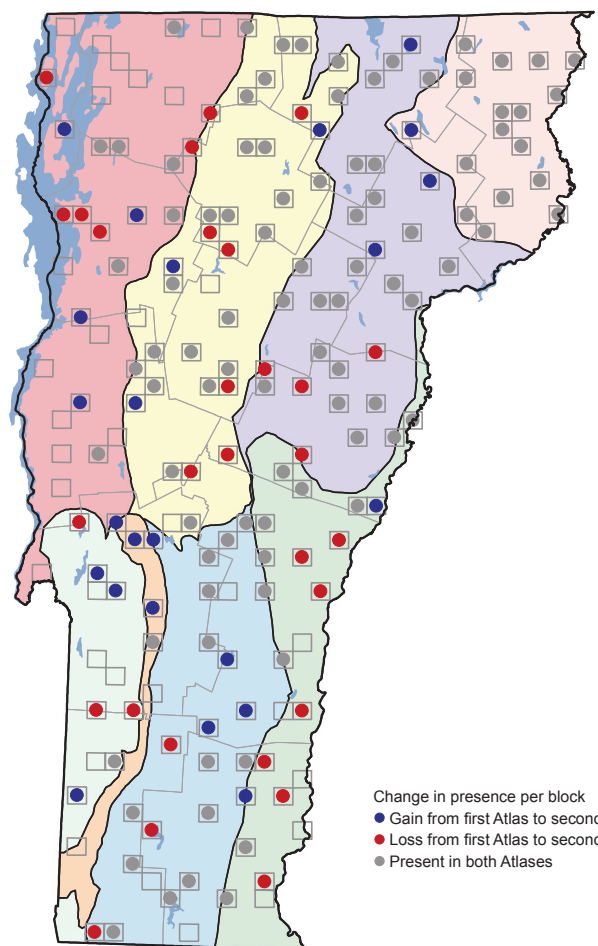
dominantly agricultural Champlain Valley. A 38 percent decrease in occurrence was evident in the Southern Vermont Piedmont adjacent to the Connecticut River, but reasons for this decline are unknown. Conversely, the species increased by 12 percent in the Southern Green Mountains. Statewide, the second atlas documented a slight (5 percent) decline in occurrence.

Declines in Breeding Bird Survey counts in Vermont from 1982 to 2007 have not been statistically significant (Sauer et al. 2011). Occurrence of the species declined by 7 percent between the first and second New York atlases (McGowan and Corwin 2008) and by 2 percent in Pennsylvania (Wilson et al. 2012). Breeding Bird Survey data from both states have suggested no significant population changes from 1982 to 2007 (Sauer et al. 2011). In contrast, Ontario documented a substantial, 50 percent increase in the probability of observation during its second atlas; in fact, the Nashville Warbler was one of the most common warblers. The species was noticeably absent, however, from the southernmost portion of the province adjacent to Lake Erie (McLaren 2007).

The continental population of the Nashville Warbler is estimated at 34 million birds, of which approximately 0.1

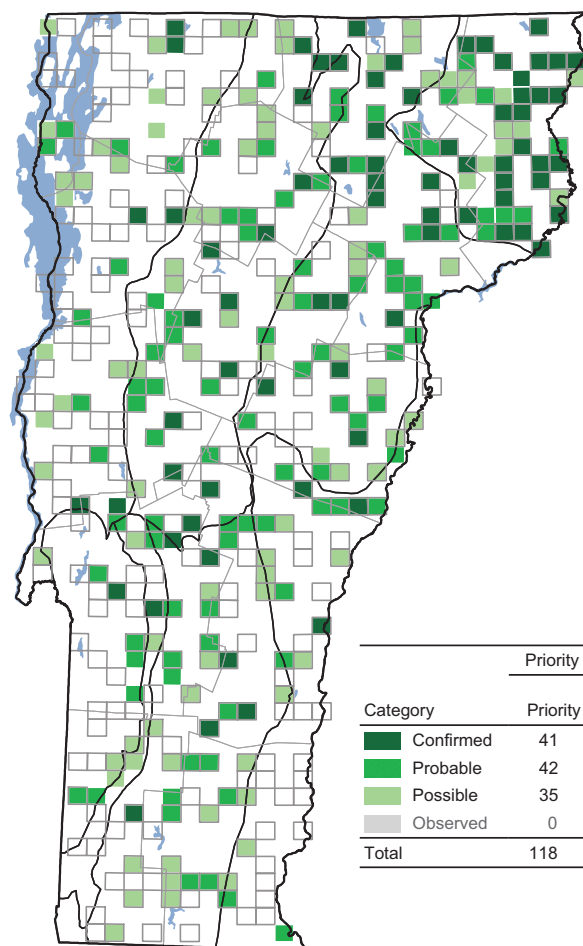
RELATIVE ABUNDANCE OVER TIME





CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN ATLASES

Biophysical Region	First Atlas	Second Atlas	Change	% Change
Champlain Valley	14	12	- 2	- 14
Northeastern Highlands	16	17	+ 1	+ 6
Northern Green Mountains	29	26	- 3	- 10
Northern Vermont Piedmont	27	26	- 1	- 4
Southern Green Mountains	17	19	+ 2	+ 12
Southern Vermont Piedmont	16	10	- 6	- 38
Taconic Mountains	4	4	+ 0	+ 0
Vermont Valley	1	4	+ 3	+ 300
Totals	124	118	- 6	- 5



Category	Priority Block Count	
	Priority 1	Priority 1 & 2
Confirmed	41	71
Probable	42	84
Possible	35	71
Observed	0	0
Total	118	226

DISTRIBUTION IN CURRENT ATLAS

Biophysical Region	% of region species occupies	% of all records for this species found in region
Champlain Valley	31	10
Northeastern Highlands	100	16
Northern Green Mountains	73	21
Northern Vermont Piedmont	83	24
Southern Green Mountains	64	16
Southern Vermont Piedmont	45	8
Taconic Mountains	28	3
Vermont Valley	50	2

percent occur in Vermont (RMBO 2007). Nashville Warbler populations in northern New England have shown a significant decline of 6 percent per year from 1982 to 2007, although populations within the entire eastern Breeding Bird Survey region have been stable during this period (Sauer et al. 2008). The species appears capable of responding readily to increased habitat availability. However, declines may persist if forests continue to mature, although responsible timber harvesting practices could help offset the impacts of regional reforestation. The Nashville Warbler is still widespread and fairly common

in Vermont. Its population trends have not yet generated serious concern, but conservationists will need to pay closer attention if declines persist.

DOUGLAS P. KIBBE