

## A WINTER POPULATION OF YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

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In past years, as the southerly push of fall migration has brought warblers through western New York State, a number of Yellow-rumped (Myrtle Warblers have stopped to overwinter in the Town of Junius, Seneca County. We have observed this population for the last two winters (1972-73 and 1973-74) and have reason to believe, from accounts of nearby residents, that Myrtle Warblers have wintered in Junius in previous years.

Of all warbler species, the Yellow-rumped is the most common of winter warblers in western New York. A survey of back issues of *The Kingbird* and *Audubon Field Notes*, and the reports on the Audubon Christmas censuses give an indication of the yellow-rumps' regularity. Rarely a year goes by without winter sightings from a variety of western New York locations. Certain localities have winter yellow-rumps more regularly than other areas. For instance, the Buffalo and Rochester Christmas counts report yellow-rumps almost yearly.

Unlike downstate and Long Island, where winter reports of several hundred Yellow-rumped Warblers have been reported, the western New York sightings tend to be of small size. The Mendon Ponds area of Rochester, with counts of seven during the winter of 1970-71 and six during the winter of 1965-66, had the highest numbers reported in the literature for the past ten years in upstate New York. Some examples of other locations reporting Yellow-rumped Warblers are:

|              |        |                           |
|--------------|--------|---------------------------|
| Watkins Glen | 1      | 1966-67                   |
| Montezuma    | 2      | 1969-70                   |
| Syracuse     | 1 or 2 | several different winters |

What has made the Seneca County population so interesting has been its size. During the past two winters we have made frequent observations on this population. During the winter of 1972-73 the population numbered at least nineteen, and during the 1973-74 season it numbered at least twenty-two. The birds could be regularly found on a 350-acre tract of land owned by the Seven Lakes Girl Scout Council and licensed by the Junius Ponds Natural Science Center. The land, named Camp Bayberry, is located two miles southeast of the Geneva Thruway exchange. The Junius Ponds area may be seen from the New York State Thruway, between the Geneva exchange and the Junius Ponds service area. The land itself is extremely diverse, with evergreen plantations, deciduous woods and bushy areas accompanying the pond environment. As expected, the warblers were often found feeding on the numerous bayberry (*Morella pennsylvanica*) bushes growing in the sandy soil. Bayberry, however, was by no means their only source of food.

Throughout the two winters, they were seen to feed on poison sumac (*Rhus vernix*) berries which grow around the two ponds and adjacent to a small stream which joins the two ponds. In addition, we have observed them working among white pines (*Pinus strobus*) in a vireo-like manner, probably in search of overwintering insect eggs, pupas or active adults. During the winter of 1973-74, there were several warm days during January when the temperature reached the high 50's. On these days, as insects began to fly, the yellow-rumps took to the tree tops in very typical warbler fashion. Also, during these thaws we observed that the warblers spent a great deal of time on the ground with flocks of Tree Sparrows and Juncos. Exactly what they were feeding on was not ascertainable although there were abundant seeds to be found there, as well as some insects.

Yellow-rumped Warblers (5) were also seen at a roadside edge of a deciduous woods area approximately three miles from the Junius Ponds site during the month of January, 1974.

828 Snyder Hill Road, Ithaca, New York 14850

#### NEW MEMBERS

The Federation welcomes the following new members:

Arendt, Gary, 3271 Wepax Road, Eden, New York 14057

Polshek, Peter 32 Washington Square, New York, New York 10011

Slotnick, Mrs. Karen, 211 Tolbert Drive, North Syracuse, New York 13212