

Common Birds of New York Northern Hardwood Forests

New York State is home to over 200 species of breeding birds, most of which are migratory songbirds. Forests are the most important habitats in our state, and the northern hardwood forest (dominated by sugar & red maple, American beech, yellow birch, and black cherry) is the most common type. We list ten of the most abundant migratory songbirds found in our forests, grouped by their preference for forests that are more **mature** or those that are **younger**. *Mature* forests have a mostly-closed canopy of tall trees with relatively large diameters, which indicates that an area has not experienced a major disturbance (such as windstorm or heavy logging) in many years. *Younger* forests are more open and have a low canopy with few or no large trees, because of either natural events (such as fire, wind, or insect damage) or logging.

Birds Preferring More Mature Forests



Ovenbird—It looks like a small thrush with an orange “racing stripe” on its head. It spends most of its time on the ground, where it forages in leaf litter and builds a covered “dome” nest (resembling an old clay oven).



Black-throated Green Warbler—This bird favors forests with some evergreen species such as hemlock. It forages and nests high up in the canopy, and is uncommon in stands that have been logged.



Red-eyed Vireo—This migratory bird is common in mature forests, especially those with some evergreen species such as hemlock. Like the Ovenbird, it’s most abundant in older forests, and is less abundant in stands that have been logged.



Blue-headed Vireo—This bird favors forests with some evergreen species such as hemlock or spruce. It builds its nest in smaller trees, often within 8’ of the ground.

(Over)

Birds Preferring Younger or Disturbed Forests



Chestnut-sided Warbler—This bird is very abundant in regenerating clearcuts. It prefers open canopy conditions, and nests in the dense foliage of young regrowth, 5-10' from the ground.



Common Yellowthroat—This bird is most common in shrubby wetlands but is often abundant in regenerating clearcuts too, especially where there are wetter areas. It nests near the ground in shrubs or raspberry bushes.



Black-and-white Warbler—This bird is usually seen creeping along tree branches or trunks upside down, like a nuthatch. It builds its nest on or near the ground at the base of a small tree or on a stump. It may be found in mature forests but prefers disturbed or younger forests.



Veery—This thrush is reddish in color all over. It prefers dense thickets common in regenerating forest patches, and is especially common near water bodies. It builds its nest near the ground.

Other Species Without Strong Habitat Preferences



Black-capped Chickadee—This songbird is a year-round resident of NY forests of all types and ages. It nests in cavities created by woodpeckers in dead "snags" or live trees that are diseased.



Blue Jay—This noisy bird is also a year-round resident that is found in a variety of forest types and ages. It is more common in agricultural and residential areas, and sometimes eats the eggs or young of other songbirds.