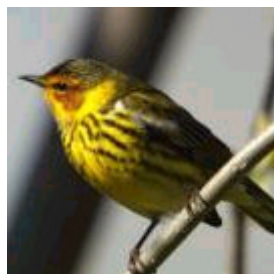
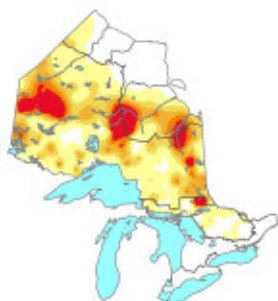


Cape May Warbler Factsheet

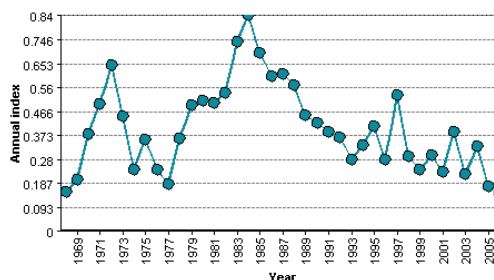
Boreal Bird Toolkit



Cape May Warbler



Relative Abundance



Breeding Bird Survey Index Trend 1968-2006 (Canada)

Description and biology: The Cape May Warbler is an attractive, medium-sized warbler (13 cm) which has yellow underparts streaked with black, olive upperparts, dark crown, rufous cheeks surrounded by yellow, and white patches on wings. Like the Bay-breasted Warbler, this species is a “Spruce Budworm specialist” whose population rises and falls with the budworm population.

Habitat requirements: The Cape May Warbler requires tall mature forests since it inhabits the upper canopy of coniferous forests, as well as mixed woodlands, of at least 10-12 metres in height. The presence or absence of Spruce Budworm will also determine what habitats are occupied most densely.

Natural history: The tongue of the Cape May Warbler is unique among warblers due to its semi-tubular structure. This allows it to feed on nectar during migration and on the wintering grounds in the Caribbean region and coastal Central America.

Conservation status: Of the North American and world population, an estimated 83% breed in Canada’s boreal forest. Breeding Bird Surveys show no significant trends in Cape May Warbler populations, with minor increases of 0.3% per year between 1968 and 2006 in Ontario and decreases of 0.8% per year across Canada. Regional results from the second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (2001-2005) show the species has decreased by a significant 35% in the Southern Shield region, and by a non-significant 1% in the Northern Shield, in the last twenty years. Partners in Flight suggest this species would benefit from both continental and regional stewardship.

Environmental threats: Spraying of insecticides to control Spruce Budworm has been shown to decrease the population of Cape May Warblers in some areas, with variation in spraying regimes being observed to reduce impact on this species. Where rotational logging prevents mature spruce-fir forests from developing, the amount of suitable habitat declines.

Conservation opportunities: This species’ preference for the upper canopy of mature forests highlights the significance and opportunity in Ontario to protect extensive breeding habitat in the northern boreal forest. Similarly, reductions in spraying regimes for insects can minimize impacts on this species. While the Cape May Warbler is known as a budworm specialist, the presence or absence of suitable nesting habitat of mature conifer appears to be a significant determinant of population and distribution also.

Boreal Bird Toolkit:

Toolkit and factsheet: © Wildlife Conservation Society Canada and G.G. Beck Ecological Consulting 2008

Breeding Bird Survey: courtesy Canadian Wildlife Service, volunteers & coordinators; www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/mgbc/trends

Abundance map and point count data: courtesy *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario, 2001-2005*; www.birdsontario.org

Photo: © John Kormendy. See toolkit for literature cited.