

Warblers

By Libby Megna

In spring a retinue of jewel-like warblers parades past. Each day a new color meets the eye, a new sound hits the ear, and a new feathered personality remakes your acquaintance.

Behold gaily-colored Yellow Warbler. This sunny yellow fellow is in a perpetual state of happiness, as he searches for insects and loudly declares that he is "sweet-sweet-sweet."

Striped Black-and-white Warbler is a peculiar monochromatic clown, hitching along tree trunks in a most laughable manner as he mimics the nuthatches. His song is a high-pitched giggle.

Mr. Blackpoll Warbler, though similar to his humorous cousin, is decidedly businesslike. In his smart pinstripe suit, he stridently calls out business propositions. His fashionable black cap adds to his snappy demeanor.

Chestnut-sided Warbler is a jolly, mustachioed little elf, dressed in a quaint outfit and lemon yellow hat. Tail cocked skyward, he examines the foliage for arachnid treats.

A masked bandit haunts the shrubbery; every time you come close, he shouts out warnings to keep away. He is known as Common Yellowthroat, and dresses rather somberly, though he has a penchant for yellow shirt fronts.

A most flamboyant passerine, American Redstart is fond of dancing and flashy plumage. Occasionally he pauses in his tail-flicking dance to render a most melodious solo. But soon he is off again, always restless, his bright patches of orange gleaming out from jet black feathers.

I normally find Blue-winged Warbler proudly and loudly singing from the tip-top of a slender sapling. He may not be considered the finest or most enchanting singer among his fellow birds, but he never fails to perform with passion and fervor. Baby blue epaulettes complement his overall sunny color. The black line through his eye gives him a roguish air.

Speaking of rogues, here is the prince of knaves-Blackburnian warbler! Blue-blooded, vain, and spoiled, with gorgeous feathers which never fail to attract the ladies. Invariably he is seen with one on each wing, hanging onto every note which rises out of his throat. His voice is shrill with gossip.

Wilson's Warbler, far from being outgoing, always keeps his distance from the clamor which Blackburnian Warbler's arrival causes. Instead of proudly taking a place high in the canopy, Wilson's Warbler skulks in the bushes, as if hiding from a soiled past. He is clothed in the common color yellow, with only a black skullcap for ornamentation. His bright eye misses nothing. I can only speculate upon that which makes this warbler so nervous.

Rotund Cape May Warbler has nothing to hide, and is always friendly. His bright golden-orange color only enhances his sunny disposition. He never seems self-conscious, but only exists to bring happiness to every birder who sees him or hears his beautiful song. Every time you see him, it is like meeting an old friend unexpectedly.

The most peculiar of them all is Palm Warbler. Instead of foraging high up in bushes and trees like any self-respecting warbler, he walks right in the dirt and leaf litter. And he has an odd manner of wagging his tail. Palm Warbler is not much to look at either. Instead of possessing rainbow pigments he is an olive color, with a touch of reddish on his crown and a suffusion of yellow on his breast. Even so, he is one of the most amiable of the wood-warblers.

Black-throated Green Warbler is another gorgeous denizen of the forest. He is a poet; he dreams up verse as he flits among the leaves. His favorite poem must be "Trees, trees, murmuring trees," because I hear him reciting it often, in his buzzy voice.

Black-throated Blue Warbler is an eccentric bird, and he is constantly asking you to "Please, please, squeeze me!" He wears a blue and white suit every day of the week, and a black mask. He usually stays in the dark interiors of woods. He is somewhat forgetful, and looks at you as if trying to remember your name.

Prothonotary warbler is sunshine embodied. He possesses an intensity of yellow which cannot be matched by any other bird. Every time he appears, you gasp. He is a glowing ember in the eternal gloominess of the wooded riverbank. It is an oxymoron that such a being would choose to build his nest in the dark interior of a rotting log.

Who do you meet when you go walking on a warm May day?