

Yellow Warbler Female

Setophaga petechia

North America has more than 50 species of warblers, but few combine brilliant color and easy viewing quite like the Yellow Warbler. In summer, the buttery yellow males sing their sweet whistled song from willows, wet thickets, and roadsides across almost all of North America. The females and immatures aren't as bright, and lack the male's rich chestnut streaking, but their overall warm yellow tones, unmarked faces, and prominent black eyes help pick them out.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Yellow Warblers are small, evenly proportioned songbirds with medium-length tails and rounded heads. For a warbler, the straight, thin bill is relatively large.

Color Pattern

Yellow Warblers are uniformly yellow birds. Males are a bright, egg-yolk yellow with reddish streaks on the underparts. Both sexes flash yellow patches in the tail. The face is unmarked, accentuating the large black eye.

Behavior

Look for Yellow Warblers near the tops of tall shrubs and small trees. They forage restlessly, with quick hops along small branches and twigs to glean caterpillars and other insects. Males sing their sweet, whistled songs from high perches.

Habitat

Yellow Warblers breed in shrubby thickets and woods, particularly along watercourses and in wetlands. Common trees include willows, alders, and cottonwoods across North America and up to about 9,000 feet in the West. In winter they mainly occur in mangrove forests of Central and South America.



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Range data by NatureServe

Cool Facts

The oldest-known Yellow Warbler was banded in New York in 2001 and then caught again (and re-released) in 2011, also in New York. It was at least 11 years old at the time.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 4.7 - 5.1 inches
- Wingspan - 6.3 - 7.9 inches
- Weight - 0.3 - 0.4 ounces