

Species Status Assessment

Common Name: Blackpoll Warbler **Date Updated:** 2024-3-4
Scientific Name: *Setophaga striata* **Updated By:** M. Oberkircher
Class: Aves
Family: Parulidae

Species Synopsis

(a short paragraph which describes species taxonomy, distribution, recent trends, and habitat in New York):

The blackpoll warbler, *Setophaga striata*, is a migratory bird species that breeds primarily in coniferous forests of Alaska and northern Canada and some regions of the northeast United States. This species overwinters in northern South America (DeLuca 2020). In New York, this species breeds in the Adirondack and Catskills mountains. It can also be observed throughout the state during its fall migration.

I. Status

a. Current legal protected Status

- i. **Federal:** Not listed **Candidate:**
- ii. **New York:** Not listed: protected native

b. Natural Heritage Program

- i. **Global:** G5
- ii. **New York:** S3B **Tracked by NYNHP?** On Watch List

Other Ranks:

New York 2025 SGCN status: Species of Greatest Conservation Need
COSEWIC: Not listed in Canada
IUCN Red List: Near Threatened
Northeast Regional SGCN: Watchlist [Assessment Priority]

Status Discussion:

II. Abundance and Distribution Trends

Region	Present?	Abundance	Distribution	Time Frame	Listing status or S-Rank	SGCN?
North America	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	BBS 1966-2022 not credible trend for US		
Northeastern US	Yes	Declining	Unknown	2011-2023 Mountain Birdwatch data		Watchlist [Assessment Priority]
New York	Yes	Decreasing	Unknown	2010-2024 Mountain Birdwatch data		Yes
Connecticut	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	SNA	
Massachusetts	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	SC; S1B,S5M	Yes
New Jersey	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	S4N	
Pennsylvania	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Endangered S1B,S4M	Yes
Vermont	Yes	Declining	Unknown	2010-2024 Mountain Birdwatch data	S4B	Yes
Ontario	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	BBS 1966-2022 not credible trend	S5B	
Quebec	Yes	Declining	Unknown	BBS 1966-2022 trend	S4B	

Column options

Present?: Yes; No; Unknown; No data; (blank) or Choose an Item

Abundance and Distribution: Declining; Increasing; Stable; Unknown; Extirpated; N/A; (blank) or Choose an item

SGCN?: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item

Monitoring in New York

Blackpoll warblers are a focal monitoring species for the Vermont Center for Ecostudies Mountain Birdwatch surveys in the Adirondacks and Catskills.

Trends Discussion

Mountain Birdwatch data shows a -5.79% mean annual trend for blackpoll warblers in the Catskills and a -3.55% mean annual trend in the Adirondacks from 2010-2024 resulting in a 42% population loss in New York state during that time period (Hill and Williams 2024). USGS Breeding Bird Survey data indicate a 2-4% annual decline in the number of blackpoll warblers in Canada where the majority of the population breeds. Much of their breeding territory is in far northern Canada and not covered by the Breeding Bird Survey making it difficult to estimate population trends precisely.

(insert map of North American/regional distribution and status):

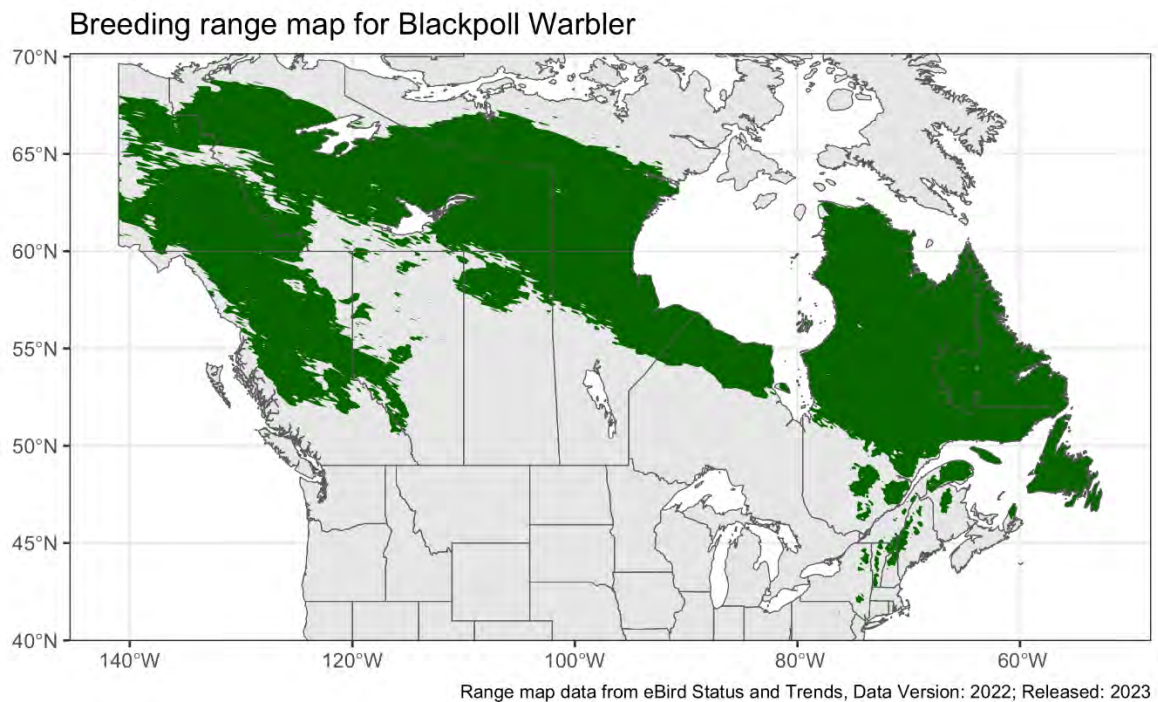
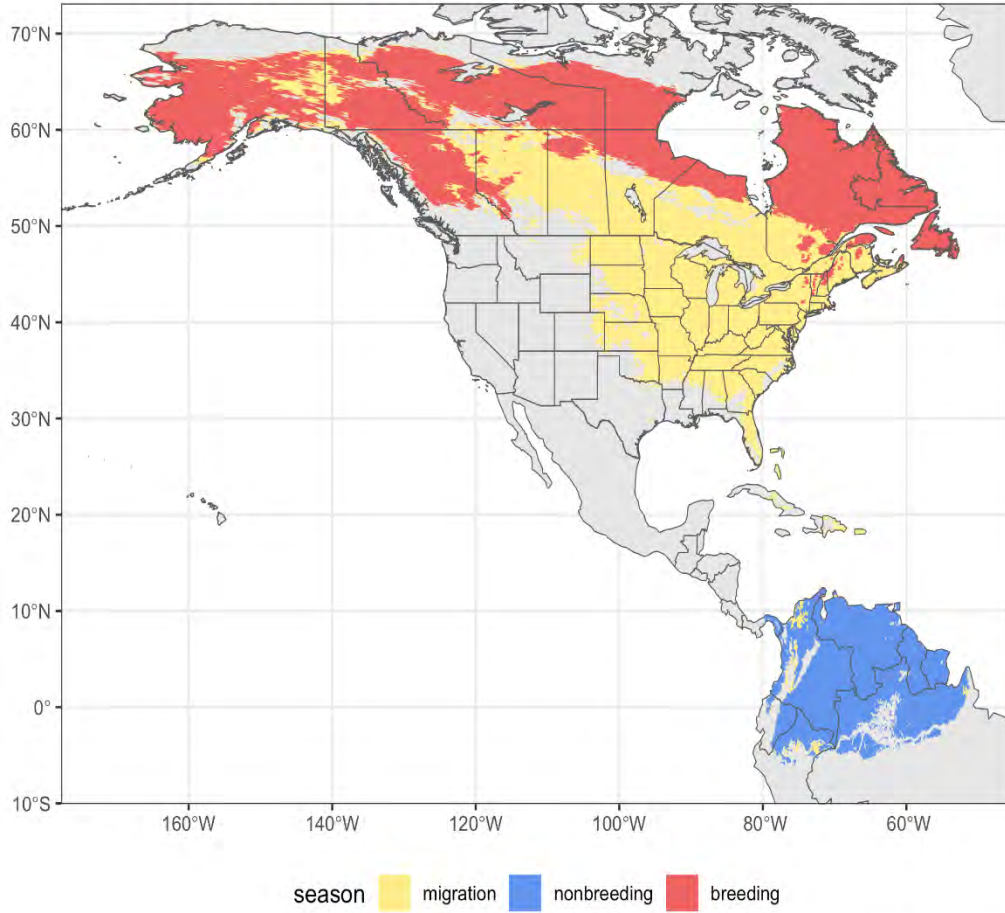


Figure 1. Breeding range of blackpoll warbler (eBird).

Year-round range map for Blackpoll Warbler



Range map data from eBird Status and Trends, Data Version: 2022; Released: 2023

Figure 2. Full (year-round) range of blackpoll warbler (eBird).

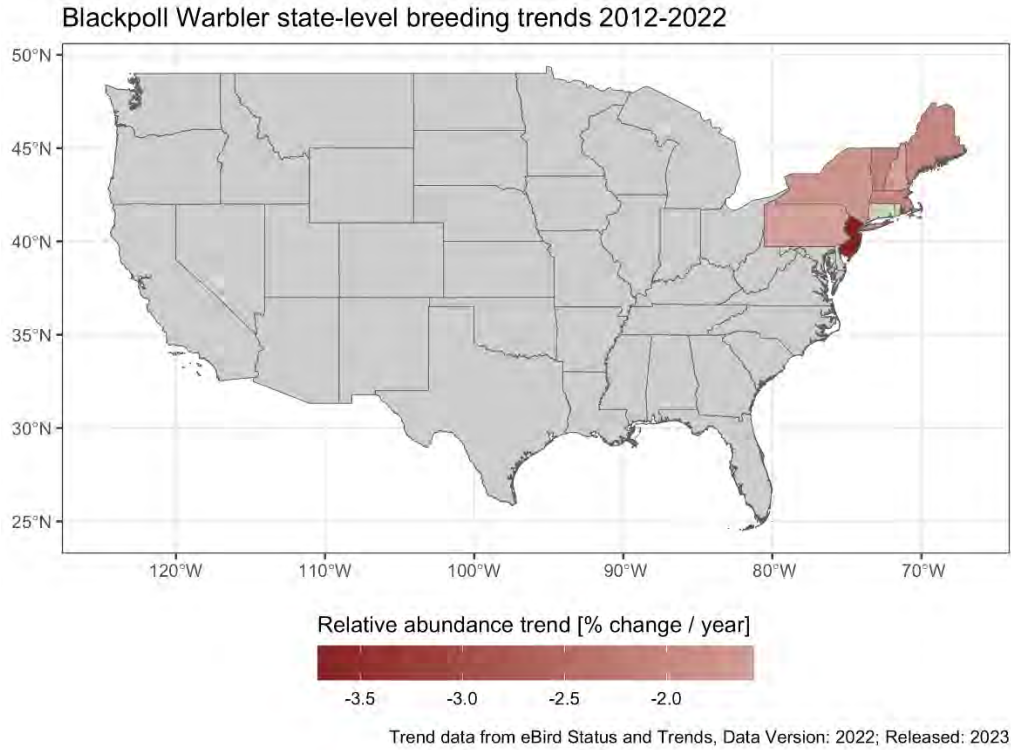


Figure 3. Trends, by state, for blackpoll warbler (eBird).

III. New York Rarity

(provide map, numbers, and percent of state occupied)

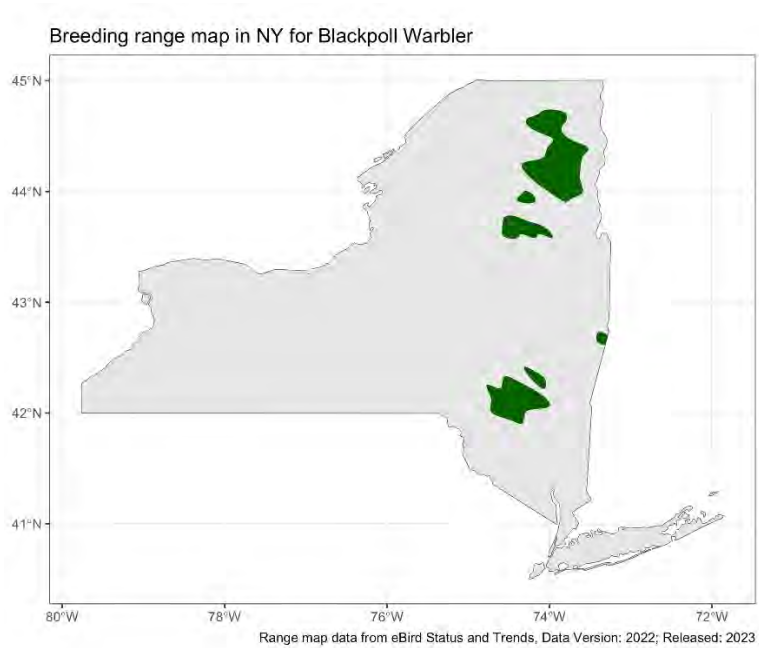


Figure 4. NYS breeding range for blackpoll warbler based on eBird data.

Details of historic and current occurrence:

The first Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) (1980-85) documented occupancy in 125 blocks, 2.3% of the survey blocks statewide (Andrle and Carroll 1988). The second BBA (2000-05) documented occupancy in 115 blocks, 2.2% of the survey blocks statewide (McGowan and Corwin 2008).

The third BBA (2020-25) is currently underway and utilizes a different number and layout of survey blocks across New York, making direct comparison with the first two Atlases difficult. There were 5,333 blocks in the first and second BBAs, and there are 5,710 blocks in the current BBA, of which 1,815 are considered priority blocks. To date, blackpoll warbler has been documented in 599 priority blocks, 14.3% of all priority blocks statewide during the third BBA (NY BBA III Overview, 2024).

New York’s Contribution to Species North American Range:

Based on eBird data, 0.14 percent of the population breeds in New York, while 0 percent of the non-breeding population occurs in New York. Among all states with breeding populations, New York ranks 4 of 5.

Percent of North American Range in NY	Classification of NY Range	Distance to core population, if not in NY
1-25%	Peripheral	

Column options

Percent of North American Range in NY: 100% (endemic); 76-99%; 51-75%; 26-50% 1-25%; 0%; Choose an item

Classification of NY Range: Core; Peripheral; Disjunct; (blank) or Choose an item

IV. Primary Habitat or Community Type

(from NY crosswalk of NE Aquatic, Marine, or Terrestrial Habitat Classification Systems):

1. Alpine Krummholz
2. Mountain Spruce-Fir Forest
3. Red Pine Rocky Summit
4. Spruce-Fir Swamp

Habitat or Community Type Trend in New York

Habitat Specialist?	Indicator Species?	Habitat/ Community Trend	Time frame of Decline/ Increase
No	No	Unknown	Unknown

Column options

Habitat Specialist and Indicator Species: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item.

Habitat/Community Trend: Declining; Stable; Increasing; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item.

Habitat Discussion:

In New York, blackpoll warblers are primarily restricted to upper mountain slopes above 3500’ in the Adirondacks and 3700’ in the Catskills. Blackpoll warblers prefer to breed in low, stunted spruce-fir forest found at these elevations.

Throughout the breeding range blackpoll warblers are found in cool, wet boreal coniferous forest (primarily spruce), usually dominated by low trees; and can also occur locally in mixed second growth, regenerating burns, peatlands, and alder thickets (AOU 1998). Nests usually are well hidden in small trees, to about 3 m above ground.

V. Species Demographics and Life History

Breeder in NY?	Non-breeder in NY?	Migratory Only?	Summer Resident?	Winter Resident?	Anadromous/Catadromous?
Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

Column options

First 5 fields: Yes; No; Unknown; (blank) or Choose an item.

Anadromous/Catadromous: Anadromous; Catadromous; (blank) or Choose an item.

Species Demographics and Life History Discussion

(include information about species life span, reproductive longevity, reproductive capacity, age to maturity, and ability to disperse and colonize):

Blackpoll Warblers typically raise 1-2 broods per breeding season and produce clutches of 3-5 eggs. Female blackpolls build the nest and incubate the eggs while both the male and female feed nestlings.

In Vermont, 58% of eggs produced fledglings and overall nest success was 43.7% (K. McFarland unpubl. Data). Nest success in New Hampshire was 42.7%. Older birds were more successful at fledging young than yearling birds.

Blackpoll warblers appear to display high natal-site fidelity compared to other passerines, perhaps because of the insular nature of breeding habitat where studies have been done. On Kent Island, 14 of 20 locally hatched birds (banded as nestlings) returned to the area in a subsequent season (Eliason 1986). Breeding site fidelity was also found to high in blackpolls breeding on Kent Island, Mt. Cardigan, NH, and Mt. Jefferson, NH with most returning birds using the same or a directly adjacent breeding territory as the previous year.

Blackpoll warblers make the longest overwater journey of any songbird, traveling nearly 1,800 miles over the Atlantic Ocean to their wintering grounds in South America.

VI. Threats

Threat Level 1	Threat Level 2	Threat Level 3	Spatial Extent	Severity	Immediacy	Trend	Certainty
1. Residential and Commercial	1.2 Commercial & Industrial Areas	(building strikes)	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
3. Energy Production & Mining	3.3 Renewable Energy	3.3.2 Wind farms	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
5. Biological Resource Use	5.3 Logging & Wood Harvesting	-	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
11. Climate Change	11.1 Habitat Shifting & Alteration	-	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
11. Climate Change	11.5 Storms & Severe Weather	11.5.1 Storms & severe weather	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Table 1. Threats to blackpoll warbler.

During migration to wintering habitat, blackpoll warblers often strike human-made structures such as buildings, lighthouses, and wind turbines. In a study of tower kills in the United States since 1949, blackpoll warblers were the seventh most commonly killed bird (of 230 reported species) with 6,304 documented dead at 32 towers (Shire et al. 2000).

Blackpoll warblers may be vulnerable to habitat loss as logging and other extractive industry increases in the boreal forests of Canada and tropical deforestation on their wintering grounds. Degradation of red spruce and subalpine spruce-fir forests from acid rain in the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada may adversely affect this species.

Blackpoll warblers are also likely to be impacted by climate change. The ecotone between northern hardwood forest and montane spruce-fir forest has been shifting upslope in the northeastern U.S decreasing the amount of suitable habitat available in the region.

Abundance of breeding blackpoll warblers from 1967-1996 was found to be negatively correlated with the number of days with storms over the Atlantic Ocean the preceding fall (Butler 2000), suggesting that oceanic storms may be a significant source of mortality.

Are there regulatory mechanisms that protect the species or its habitat in New York?

Yes: ✓ **No:** **Unknown:**

If yes, describe mechanism and whether adequate to protect species/habitat:

This species is included in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 U.S.C. 703-712) and is protected as a native species under the NYS Environmental Conservation Law.

Describe knowledge of management/conservation actions that are needed for recovery/conservation, or to eliminate, minimize, or compensate for the identified threats:

IUCN lists recommended actions for blackpoll warbler conservation such as population monitoring, climate change research, and investigation of offshore wind and oil activities impacts on the species (BirdLife International 2018).

Action Category	Action	Description
C.8 Research and Monitoring	C.8.1.1.1 Characterization, demographic study, population, or inventory	
C.8 Research and Monitoring	C.8.1.5.4 Climate change vulnerability assessment	
C.8 Research and Monitoring	C.8.1.5.3 Analyzing threats or their impacts	

Table 2. Recommended conservation actions for *blackpoll warbler*.

VII. References

This SSA drew heavily from these resources:

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