

Prairie Warbler (*Setophaga discolor*)

Description: The Prairie Warbler is a small yellow warbler with black streaks on its side. It is olive-gray on the upper part of the body and wings. Male Prairie Warblers are more vibrant than females and immature Prairie Warblers (which have olive streaks). The face pattern is sharp in adult males and fainter in female and young. It will bob its tail up and down almost constantly. A Prairie Warbler's song is made up of ascending sudden jerky buzzing notes often transcribed as a zee noise.

Trend: Declining - Conservation Tipping Point Yellow Alert

Habitat: Unlike its name, it is not a bird of open prairies; this warbler nests mainly in young second growth scrub and densely overgrown fields in eastern North America. Such habitats are often temporary, and colonies may shift around from year to year.

Breeds in dry old clearings, edges of forest, and sandy pine barrens with undergrowth of scrub oaks, especially on ends of slopes and ridges. Prairie warblers like thick second-growth of hickory, dogwood, hazel, or laurel with blackberry vines.

Ways You can help with Conservation: Prairie warblers declined by an estimated 1.9% per year between 1966 and 2023, resulting in a cumulative decline of 67% over that period. The main driver of population declines is likely the loss of its ephemeral habitat. Previously, deforestation led to an abundance of habitat suited to the Prairie Warbler, which improved the Prairie Warbler's abundance. However, urbanization practices that allow forest regeneration (suppression of fire) have led to a population decline in some areas. *Conservation measures include creating young secondary growth and using fire to improve habitat.* Support municipal parks and land trusts that manage land with sustainable forestry practices.



Prairie Warbler photo by Karla Schmidt



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Do not use pesticides or pest control services, especially mosquito-spraying. Prairie warblers feed on many insects including caterpillars, moths, tree crickets, lacewings, true bugs, beetles, ants, flies; also spiders and millipedes. [Reduction in the use of pesticides will help all birds.](#)