

Golden-winged Warbler

(*Vermivora chrysoptera*)

Appearance This small songbird is about the size of a chickadee. The male has black cheek patches and throat, a bright yellow crown, and golden-yellow wing bars, for which it is named. Its back is gray, with pale grayish-white underparts. Females are similar to males in appearance but with overall duller coloration. This species is one of several warblers that often feeds while hanging upside down at the end of a branch and searching for small insects.

Breeding Range Golden-winged warblers nest primarily in deciduous and mixed coniferous-deciduous forests in the north-central and northeastern United States and southern Ontario. Golden-winged warblers breed in much of Minnesota's forested region north of the Twin Cities. They are most common in areas of prime habitat in central Minnesota, but nesting also occurs in Mahanomen, Itasca, and southern St. Louis counties.

Habitat In Minnesota, golden-wings nest in a variety of early successional wooded habitats, including young deciduous forests and shrubby forest edges. In much of the state, alder shrub swamps and wet shrub-tamarack edges have been identified as important habitats. During migration, golden-winged warblers turn up wherever they find trees and shrubs, including city yards and parks.

Song The male's typical song is a thin, buzzy note followed by three (or two) repetitive buzzes at a slightly lower pitch. This song is most commonly heard during spring migration and early in the breeding season. A second song type, usually heard in the nesting season, consists of a more varied, jumbled series of buzzy notes.

Migration Neotropical migrants, golden-winged warblers winter in Central America and northern South America. In spring most pass through southern Minnesota and arrive in breeding areas during May. During spring and fall migration, they can be seen statewide, though less commonly in the west.

Status In much of its breeding range, the golden-winged warbler has suffered marked population declines. Due to this, the international bird-conservation group Partners in Flight has identified it as a species of continental importance. Though still relatively common in Minnesota, they have begun to show a decline in recent years (1990-2005), based on breeding bird surveys. Still, Minnesota is a stronghold for golden-wings, with an estimated 42 percent of the global breeding population. The golden-winged warbler has also been identified as a species of greatest conservation need in *Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*.

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