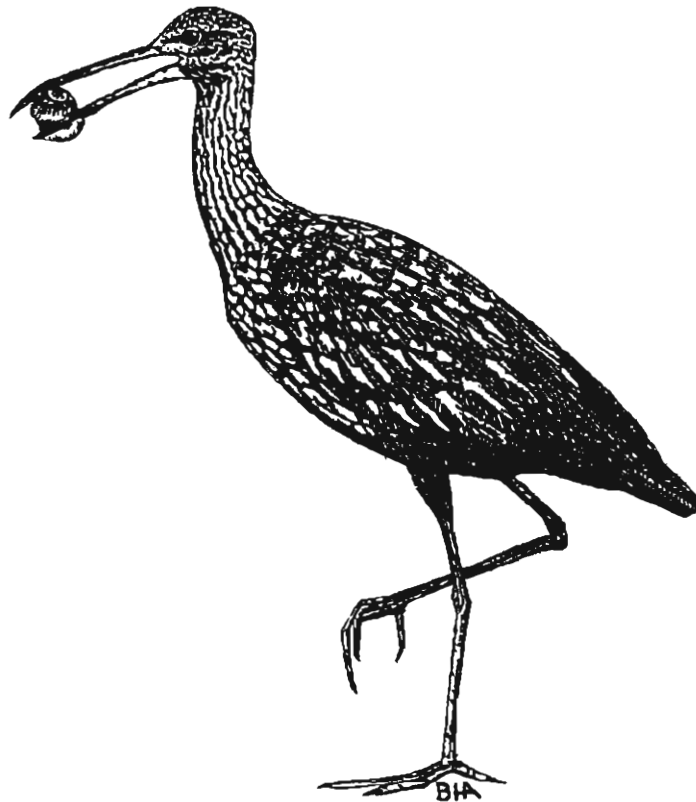


# The Birdlife of Florida

Henry M. Stevenson

Bruce H. Anderson



University Press of Florida

Gainesville / Tallahassee / Tampa / Boca Raton

Pensacola / Orlando / Miami / Jacksonville

1994

Mar (Crawford 1981a). By contrast, the peak at WDBO (Orange Co.), was short-lived, all 31 kills being in Oct (Taylor & Anderson 1973, 1974). The Vehicle Assembly Building took 2 birds, 1-15 Oct (Taylor & Kershner 1986). In field counts (Franklin/Wakulla cos.) the peak month was Sep.

**Breeding:** The Pine Warbler nests almost exclusively in pines, although Nicholson (*in* Howell 1932) located 2 nests under construction, Orlando, 12 Mar 1911, 1 of which was in a Bald Cypress. Grimes (1931a *in* Howell) observed prs. building, 20 and 21 Mar 1930 near Jacksonville; 3 sets of eggs he collected, Duval Co., range from the earliest date in the state, 24 Mar 1935 (WFVZ 79614), to the latest, 4 Jun 1934 (WFVZ 79617), and yg. were out of the nest, St. George I., 20 Apr 1968. Ralph collected 3 sets, San Mateo, 2 on 1 Apr 1893, and 1 on 19 May 1891 (USNM). Nicholson obtained a set near Orlando, 12 Apr 1909 (DEL 9330), and another there, 26 May 1939 (AMNH). C.R. Mason (1937c) observed ads. feeding yg., 9 May 1933 & 19 May 1935, Seminole Co. W. Baker collected a fledgling, n Leon Co., 4 Jun 1968 (TTRS 2593), and another fledgling was taken there by R. Norris, 14 Jul 1965 (TTRS 1337). Weston (1941) recorded fledged yg., Pensacola, 13 Jul 1941.

Usually the Pine Warbler builds its nest 8-80 ft high (sometimes to 130 ft or more), saddled on a limb and concealed by a clump of needles and often cones. The nest is made of twigs, pine needles, weed stems, and bark, bound on the outside by spider webs, and lined with plant down, feathers, and sometimes hair. Of 11 sets collected in Florida, the avg. number of eggs was 3.2. Probably both sexes work at building the nest and the female incubates, but possibly not exclusively; the incubation period is thought to be 12-13 days (Harrison 1975). Probably 2 broods are raised in Florida.

**Haunts and Habits:** The Pine Warbler inhabits pine flatwoods and hardwood-pine forests. It prefers the various long-leaved varieties of pines and is less frequently encountered in Sand Pines except in winter. So partial is the species to pines that it is seldom seen in other types of trees, even while migrating. While primarily a treetop species, occasionally it will forage at lower levels, especially during winter, when it descends to the ground with some regularity. At this season it travels in family groups, sometimes with titmice, chickadees, and other small woodland birds. Although mainly insectivorous, it also eats wild fruit and berries, pine seeds, and grass seeds during winter. Howell (1932) examined the stomachs of 7 individuals from Florida (locale and season unknown). He recorded grasshoppers, moths and their larvae, beetles, ants and other Hymenoptera, bugs, flies, scale insects, and small quantities of plant debris. The male sings from a high perch,

infrequently in early winter, becoming more regular, Feb-Jun, later resuming to a lesser extent in Aug, as it recovers from its molt. The song is a trill, usually on 1 pitch—slower, softer, and more musical than the similar sounding Chipping Sparrow's. Nesbitt & Hetrick (1976) studied contents of 21 stomachs from Duval Co., 52.4% of which contained Orthoptera, 28.6% Hemiptera, 57.1% Homoptera, 80.9% Coleoptera, 38.1% Lepidoptera, 57.1% Hymenoptera, and 76.2% spiders.

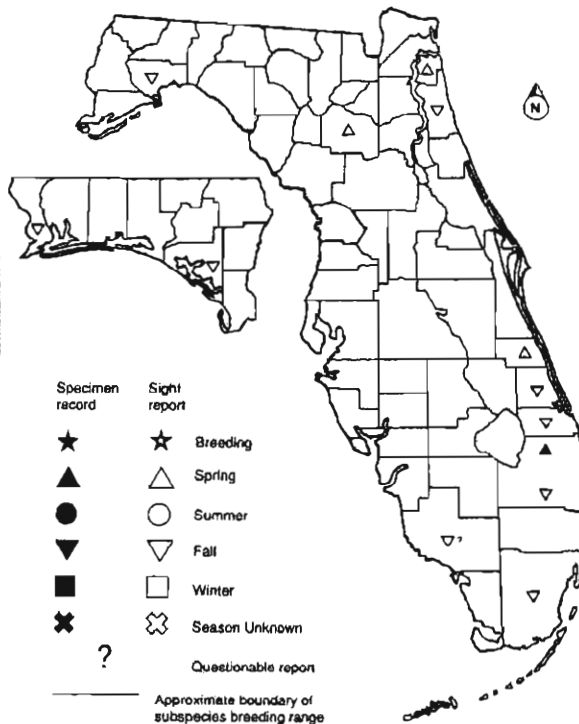
**Adverse Factors:** A potential threat to the abundance of Pine Warblers is the excessive cutting of pine woods, but the forest industry strives to replace trees in most instances. This warbler is subject to the same Florida predators as other birds of similar size, and some nest parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird is known. Quantitative field data in Leon Co. show reduced frequencies during and after the severe winter 1957-58, but similar data, Franklin & Wakulla cos., show frequencies near normal. Detrimental spraying probably occurs less often in this species' habitat than in that of some other warblers.

**Problems of Identification:** The ad. male is a fairly large, large-billed warbler with a grayish-green dorsum, bright yellow throat and breast with dark streaks, and prominent white wing bars. Ad. females are similar but duller, especially below. Imms. are quite difficult, although the male may show a tinge of yellow on the breast. Imm. Pine Warblers must be carefully distinguished from imm. Bay-breasted & Blackpoll warblers. The fact that the bird is in a pine suggests only a probability of *D. pinus* but surely not a certainty. Pine Warblers visit other kinds of trees and often feed on the ground in winter. The song—simple trill usually without change of pitch—is of help, but it bears some resemblance to the songs of the Worm-eating & Orange-crowned warblers.

**Variation:** *D.p. pinus* occupies nearly the entire breeding range of the Pine Warbler, but Maynard in 1906 described a population of birds from Volusia Co. (and in c and s Florida) that differed in having a longer bill, duller coloration, and little or no ventral streaking. The bird was appropriately named *D.p. florida*. We examined and measured 11 specimens from Alachua & Levy cos. northward and 10 from localities farther south; the avg. bill length (exposed culmen) of the n group was 10.83 mm; for the s population, 12.02 mm. The color differences were also noticeable, some specimens from s Florida being nearly devoid of ventral streaking.

**Distribution:** Breeds in c Michigan and possibly in wc Wisconsin and s Ontario (AOU 1983). Winters in the Bahamas.

**Florida Status:** A casual spring and fall migrant;



### 369. Kirtland's Warbler, *Dendroica kirtlandii*

known from at least 1 specimen and *ca.* 15 other reports through 1992. Howell (1932) mentioned 2 reports of Charles Cory's, "West Jupiter," 19 & 27 Apr 1897, "1 of which was collected." Apparently it was the bird of 27 Apr that was collected (a male), although the year of collection was 1896 (FMNH 20515) and the locality was Jupiter Inlet. Howell also listed sightings by H. Schroder, Ft. Pierce, 1 Nov 1918; J.B. Ellis, Chokoloskee, 11 Oct 1915 (but see HMS 1987); and Mrs. Hiram Byrd at Princeton, 25 Oct 1915. Sprunt (1954d) published 2 reports later than the coverage of Howell's book; 1 seen by McClanahan (1935a), Gainesville, 26 Apr 1934, and a remarkably late sighting near Pensacola, 26 Nov 1953 (Weston 1965a). Three other early reports not known to Howell or Sprunt: 1 seen, East Goose Creek (Wakulla Co.) by L. Griscom & J.T. Nichols, 9 Sep 1919 (Mayfield 1960); a "specimen" taken by R. Hallman (journal), St. Johns Co., 13 Oct 1935; and 1 shot by S. Grimes, e Duval Co., early May 1930 or 1931 (Mason 1960j). Hallman was uncertain as to the disposition of his specimen, and Grimes' attempt (his first) to prepare a bird skin was unsuccessful; Hallman's sighting, Bay Co., 1 Oct 1946 (Loftin *et al.* 1987), was not documented. Subsequent reports: Cunningham & Schaffner, 1, Miami, 21 Sep 1958 (detailed description); V. Carmen, West Palm Beach, 2-3 Nov 1961 (no details?); R. Wallace, Gainesville, 12 Apr 1970, "verified" from a sketch (made in the field?) and

sent to O. A. Austin, Jr.; Lorne Malo, Jonathan Dickinson SP (Martin Co.), 27 Oct 1978 (Edscorn 1979a); Alan Barron, Lower Saddlebunch Key (sketch made "in the field"), 1 Aug 1981 (A&A 1982); not accepted by FOSRC, possibly because of extremely early date, but 2 excellent observers saw 1, Nassau (Bahama Is.), 20 Aug 1970 (Robertson 1971); H.P. Langridge & G. Hunter, Hypoluxo I., 29 Apr 1982. \* Clench (1973) rejected the above reports at Ft. Pierce, Chokoloskee, Pensacola, and Princeton; she probably was unaware of Grimes' and Hallman's reports.

Howell (1932) called Kirtland's Warbler "the rarest of North American warblers"—a statement challenged by Sprunt (1954d), who suggested that Bachman's Warbler & Colima Warbler (*Vermivora crissalis*) might deserve equal consideration for that position. If Bachman's was as rare as Kirtland's at the time Howell's book was published, at least it was not known to be so, but by 1954 it may well have become the rarest. As to the Colima Warbler, Sprunt must have included, and Howell excluded, Mexico as a part of North America. Kirtland's Warbler is designated as an Endangered Species, FGFWFC & USFWS (Wood 1991).

**Migration:** M. H. Clench (1973) summarized the early and recent reports showing the route taken by Kirtland's Warbler in fall. The westernmost accepted reports were in ne Alabama and Wakulla Co., the easternmost in se Pennsylvania, Charleston (SC), and the Miami area. It was also suggested, based on a smaller number of reports, that the more recent route (post-1935) extended east-southeast to s Pennsylvania, then turned more southward to the Bahamas, touching Florida's lower e coast. In either case, the Florida Peninsula is at least partly in its line of flight, but probably the Panhandle is not. The species' route in spring is probably similar to that in fall; HMS saw 1 as far west as Birmingham, AL, 7 May 1936.

**Haunts and Habits:** The few Kirtland's Warblers seen in Florida were found in a variety of woodland and scrub habitats, fencerows, or wooded yards. It is a low-ranging species, inhabiting dense stands of yg. Jack Pines (*Pinus banksiana*) on its Michigan breeding grounds and thick scrub usually less than 5 ft tall on its wintering grounds. It forages on or near the ground, eating insects and occasionally wild berries. Like the Palm & Prairie warblers, the Kirtland's bobs its tail.

**Problems of Identification:** Of the 3 tail-bobbing warblers, Kirtland's is the largest and the only one with upper parts gray in spring, brownish in fall, and streaked with black (black streaks lacking in imm. female); the dorsum of Prairie & Palm warblers is greenish-olive to brownish and lacks noticeable dark streaks. The color pattern of the female Kirtland's suggests that of the

female Magnolia, but lacks the yellow rump patch and the white wing bars.

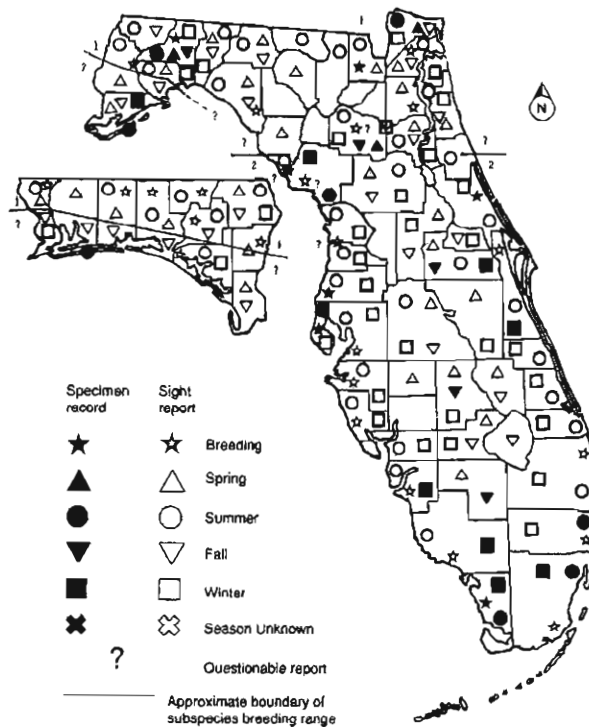
**References:** Anon. 1978d; Langridge & Hunter 1984; Mayfield 1960, 1988; HMS 1978f.

*Dendroica discolor* (Vieillot): **Prairie Warbler**

**Distribution:** Breeds from e Nebraska and Kansas, c Missouri, n Illinois, c Wisconsin, n Michigan, s Ontario, s Pennsylvania, se New York, Massachusetts, and s New Hampshire south to e Oklahoma, e Texas, n Louisiana, sw Alabama, nw Florida, most of the coast of the Florida Peninsula, and the Florida Keys. *Winters* from the n Florida Peninsula (rarely westward), coastal South Carolina, and the Bahamas south to is. off the coast of Quintana Roo, Belize, and Honduras.

**Florida Status:** A migrant throughout the state, uncommon to common in spring and rare (interior of Panhandle) to common (Keys) in fall. A common breeding summer resident on the Keys and uncommon to fairly common on the coast of the Peninsula north to Pasco & Volusia cos. (*D.d. paludicola*); a rare breeder in the extreme n parts (*D.d. discolor*). The s race is a rare breeder in heavily populated Palm Beach & Broward cos. Singing Prairies in the breeding season occur even farther north on each coast. A winter resident throughout the state except interior of Panhandle, increasing from very rare northward to fairly common in parts of s Florida. Extreme dates of specimens: earliest in spring, all 18 Mar-1918, Dry Tortugas; 1951, Cedar Key; and 1961, Alachua Co. (UF, USNM). Late spring: Paynes Prairie, 4 May 1961 (PB 21623). Fall extremes: Amelia I., 16 Jul 1906 (AMNH 383222); 2, WCTV tower (Leon Co.), 17 Oct 1974 (UF 19610 & 19739). A specimen from Dog I. (Franklin Co.) 19 Jul 1960 was also early if not a breeder there (FSU 6660b). Several specimens at UMRC were found dead, 23-25 Feb 1958, Miami, and were probably early spring migrants. Sight records: early spring—St. Marks Light, 6 Mar 1964; Jacksonville, 11 Mar 1960; Dog I., 11 Mar 1961; Tallahassee, 12 Mar 1948. Late spring—Sombrero Key, 12 May (yr.?); Tallahassee, 17 May 1967; Jacksonville Beach, 23 May 1970; Dry Tortugas, 24 May 1962 & 7 Jun 1965 (also see **Breeding**). Early fall—Santa Rosa I., 2 on 10 Jul 1982; Pensacola, 13 Jul 1941; WCTV tower, 15 Jul 1963; Alligator Point, 19 Jul 1949. Late fall—Fowey Rocks Light, 7 Nov 1891; Lake Jackson (Leon Co.), 8 Nov 1958; Alligator Point, 9 Nov 1984; St. George I., 15 Nov 1969; St. Marks Light, 21 Nov 1986 (rarely winters). Maxima on multi-party migration counts, Franklin/Wakulla cos.: spring—38 on 11 Apr 1964 & 16 Apr 1969; fall—21 on 13 Oct 1956 & 16 on 24 Sep 1966.

Howell (1932) listed winter specimens n to New



370. Prairie Warbler, *Dendroica discolor*,  
1. *D.d. discolor*, 2. *D.d. paludicola*

Smyrna, Hastings, and Gainesville, but we did not find these. The northernmost recent specimens taken in winter: Alligator Point, 26 Dec 1956 (TTRS 2896); Cedar Key, 18 Dec 1957 (UF 3236); and Orlando, 7 Jan 1931 (UMMZ 193652). Northerly sight reports: Mashles I. (Wakulla Co.), 30 Dec 1949; Jacksonville, 28 Dec 1958 (and in later years); Pensacola, 1 Dec 1965 to 1 Jan 1966, Colehour; St. Marks Light, 2 Jan 1971 and (2 mi east) 30 Dec 1974; Gainesville, 9 CBCs through 1983; Bay Co., 28 Dec 1979, 2 Jan 1981, & 30 Dec 1983; Lake Seminole (Jackson Co.), 7 Dec 1978, R. Carter. **CBC maxima:** Coot Bay, 277 in 1977, 257 in 1965, and 222 in 1981; Lower Keys, 74, 1963; Key Largo, 74, 1967; Ft. Pierce, 71, 1967.

**Relative abundance, CBCs:** Bay Co. .004, Cocoa .09, Coot Bay .84, Dade Co. .06, Ft. Lauderdale .16, Ft. Pierce .23, Gainesville .01, Jackson Co. .001, Jacksonville .003, Key Largo .79, Lakeland .06, Lake Wales .01, Lower Keys .06, Mt. Dora .02, Myakka .01, Naples .09, Orlando .03, St. Marks .001, St. Petersburg .06, Sanibel .13, Sarasota .16, South Brevard Co. .09, Stuart .08, Tampa .07, Titusville .05, West Palm Beach .09. **CBC trends (incr.:decr.):** early 0:1, recent 4:4. **BBS trends:** Fla., sharp decrease after 1971 (86:42); 23 routes, 0:2. **Big Bend:** decreases in Leon & coastal cos.

**Migration:** The Prairie Warbler is among the more abundant species striking the WCTV tower (Leon Co.),