



# Cerulean Warbler Facts



## Identification

The cerulean warbler is a small wood warbler with long pointed wings, short tail, and long under tail covert feathers. Males are blue above and white below with black streaking on their back and upper tail coverts. Females are bluish-green to olive-green above with white under parts and a white or yellowish eyebrow stripe. Both sexes have 2 white wing bars and white tail spots. Juvenile ceruleans are similar to the female with brownish/gray upper parts, white under parts and a pale crown stripe.



## Life History

Ceruleans are often found high in the canopy of mature forests.

This warbler is an early migrant and arrives on breeding grounds up to 2 weeks before other wood warbler. Males arrive one week before females and pairs form as soon as females arrive. Ceruleans first breed at one year of age. Both sexes participate in nest site selection but construction is carried out by the female, who may take up to a week to construct the nest. The nest is a shallow cup consisting of grasses, weeds and mosses, bound on the outside by spider web silk and decorated with white lichens. The nest is usually located in mid-story canopy and is concealed above.

Cerulean warblers lay 2-5 eggs. Incubation is done entirely by the female and lasts 9 to 12 days. Both parents feed the young, which fledge after 10 to 12 days.

Ceruleans' diets consists primarily of insects gleaned from the upper canopy. Fall migration occurs early and most cerulean warblers return to their wintering grounds by August.

## Range

The cerulean warbler's breeding range extends from the southeastern and south central United States north to southeastern New York and Ontario and west to the Mississippi Valley. It prefers large forest tracts of tall, deciduous, broad-leafed tree species. Territories often occur in the closed canopy of old growth forests near stream bottoms, lakes or rivers. Two principal breeding areas for the cerulean warbler remain in New York: the Finger Lakes highlands and the lowland plain south of Lake Ontario.

Cerulean warblers nest throughout the Montezuma Wetlands Complex; visit forested areas for a chance to see or hear them.



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## Status

The cerulean warbler was designated a species of continental importance for the United States and Canada by the Partners in Flight program. In the late 19th century it was one of the most abundant breeding warblers in the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys. By the mid 1900s, however, it had largely disappeared from most of its former range as a result of habitat loss due to forest fragmentation. In New York it is mostly rare, but locally common in areas where suitable habitat still exists.

## Interesting Facts

- On the wintering grounds in South America the cerulean warbler usually is found in mixed-species foraging flocks.
- When re-nesting after a failed first nest, the female often uses spider web from the old nest to start construction on the new nest.
- Some people refer to the way the female cerulean leaves the nest as "bungee-jumping" because she drops from the side of the nest, keeping her wings folded to her sides, and opens her wings to fly only when she is well below the nest.



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