



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Natural Heritage Program

Dendroica cerulea Cerulean Warbler



Photo by Dan Lane

Identification: A small warbler (length 11.5 cm); pointed wings; short tail over long undertail-coverts. Mature males: blue back; white belly; narrow black band across neck; two white wing bars. Females and immature males: bluish green back; belly white with yellow washes; white stripe above eye; two white wing bars.

Voice: Three quick trill like notes followed by a longer higher pitched note: “zray zray zray zreeeee.”

Taxonomic comments: No recognized subspecies.

Status: Global rank is **G4** and state rank is **S1B**.

Habitat: Mature forests next to river valleys. Frequently found in willow thickets near the Mississippi River.

Range: Breeding range: widespread in east and central U.S. Winter range: in mountains of South America in Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru y Bolivia. Only breeds in a small portion of Louisiana.

Food habits: Primarily insectivorous; foraging on insects in foliage. Also eats small amounts of plant material including fruits rich in fat are consumed during migration.

Life expectancy: No longer than 5-6 years.

Reproduction: Individuals can begin breeding at 1 year old. In April males and females migrate from tropical wintering habitats to breed in the United States. Females are the sole constructors of the nest and after completion lay a clutch of 3 to 4 eggs. Eggs are off-white or sometimes pale green in color and often have splotches of auburn or dark brown scattered throughout. Females incubate the eggs for about 12 days until they hatch. Both parents participate in feeding young until they fledge.

Reason for decline: Land-use changes brought about by increasing human populations in areas used for breeding, wintering, and migration are the main cause of population decline for the cerulean warbler. Loss of preferred tree species and mature forest habitat as a result of habitat fragmentation and clearing for agriculture and livestock are direct threats to suitable habitat for this species.

Interesting facts: Historically the cerulean warbler's preferred habitats were the mature bottomland forests in the Mississippi River Valley and dry upland forest. Today these habitats no longer exist or are very rare. As a result, this bird resides in flood plains as a last resort. It has been suggested that >8,000 ha of ideal habitat would be required in the Mississippi River Valley to support a viable breeding population.

Known distribution in Louisiana:



Dates of documented observations are: 1993

References

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