

## ABOUT THE COVER: Black-throated Green Warbler

"Then there came into view close by in a little opening, where the sun shone in, a brilliant male of this species, his green back, yellow cheeks, and black throat fairly gleaming in the morning sun, and the white markings of his wings and tail flashing in and out as he moved among the dark branches. I thought it the most beautiful bird in the world and longed to possess it. It was my first real introduction to the wood warblers—a day never to be forgotten—and since then I have always had an affection for the gentle bird." So wrote Edward Howe Forbush about his first look at a Black-throated Green Warbler.

This month's cover should call forth the anticipation and excitement birders feel in the month of April, when the first Black-throated Greens arrive, darting and flitting among the trees with other members of the family Parulidae, because they frequently travel in mixed flocks. These warblers belong to the genus *Dendroica*, which has twenty-seven species and is the largest within the family of American wood warblers. They winter mainly in the montane regions of Mexico and Central America and migrate through North America, chiefly east of the Rockies. The passage northward takes them through eastern Texas and up the Mississippi Valley, and also through the gulf states if they cross the Gulf of Mexico from the Yucatan. The breeding range encompasses eastern British Columbia to Newfoundland, parts of the Great Lakes states, the Alleghenies south to Georgia, and all of New England.

In sharp contrast to the coniferous tree preference of the northern Black-throated Green (*Dendroica virens virens*), there is a southern race (*D. V. waynei*) which breeds in the cypress swamp and magnolia habitat along coastal plains from southeastern Virginia to eastern South Carolina. Arthur T. Wayne was credited with the discovery after he sent a male specimen to the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard on April 25, 1918. In addition to the habitat differences, he noted the overall duller plumage and the smaller, more delicate bill.

The high-pitched, buzzy song of the Black-throated Green is a familiar one and conjures up images of lazy summer days. Commonly, the song pattern, "zee zee zee zee zoo zee," is delivered in two ways, one slower paced than the other but both having the same quality. The bird is a persistent singer. Margaret Morse Nice (1932) noted 466 songs in a single hour and more than 14,000 in ninety-four hours of observation. It is fortunate for the birder that they do sing a lot because when silent they may go unobserved in the higher branches of the trees.

The great migrating waves of wood warblers are among the most impressive annual features of New England birdlife, touching everyone in a personal way. Dr. Elliott Coues paid tribute to this in 1878: "We may seek warblers everywhere in their season; we shall find them a continual surprise; all mood and circumstance is theirs."

J. B. Hallett, Jr.