

Why We Wrote This Book

There are five reasons that we wrote *The Warbler Guide*, all of them based on one primary issue: the books we had were not closely matching the way we actually birded.

The first reason came to light during many study sessions spent learning new species for travel to foreign countries. Time after time, we found that we were leafing through all of a book's plates in search of species similar to the one we were studying. Once we found them, we were constantly folding down pages to compare and review any important identification (ID) differences. In *The Warbler Guide*, all similar species are included in each warbler account, so there is no undue hunting for possible confusion species.

The second reason is the difference between field-guide illustrations and the actual views we have in the field. Of course, beautiful paintings of a bird from the side can help one learn to ID the species, but they are not as effective with birds like warblers that are seen most often from below. In our book, each warbler is shown from three main angles: side, underside, and 45-degree, with relevant ID points included for each view.

This led us to the third motivator, which came from leading birding groups over the last twenty-five years and encountering questions like "Is that a Yellow Warbler or a Wilson's? I haven't seen the top of its head yet." Birders of all levels are often "blinded" by the habit of using only one or two colorful field marks for each species. They are thus prone to missing less-obvious, but more important, ID points, such as tail length and color, or a bird's overall shape. Again, by showing all angles, and the critical ID points for each angle including those less obvious or colorful, we remove the need to see one specific mark, making every view of the bird a good view.

Our fourth reason: song is particularly important in locating and identifying warblers, but trying to figure out if a song is "weeta weeta weecoo" or "seeta, seeta, seeoh" in the field guides never worked well for us. In this book, there is a new and objective system for studying and learning, not just warbler songs, but all bird vocalizations.

Fifth and finally, identifying a bird's age and sex is an important process that adds an additional layer of interest and study and, when reported through a database like eBird, can be of use to researchers and scientists. We found that many books were not separating ID points for inter-species identification from those needed to age and sex birds within the same species. Was that plumage note about streaking on the crown of a male useful for separating the bird from other species, or just a key point for separating it from females of the same species? And were some ages left out because it wasn't possible to ID them, or just due to lack of space? This book has a complete aging and sexing guide for each species that is designed specifically for birding in the field. It not only indicates the important separating points between ages and sexes, but also makes it clear when separation can't be done reliably.

These five reasons are the foundations of *The Warbler Guide*, which we designed to match our own needs in birding; this is the guide that we felt was missing. We trust it will make studying and identifying warblers easier, more complete, and more rewarding.

We hope you enjoy *The Warbler Guide* and that it will provide new and useful ways of seeing and identifying one of the most beautiful groups of birds in the world.