

New World Warblers – 1

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New World warblers are one of the most colourful, popular, conspicuous and enigmatic groups of birds to be found in North and Central America.

- most of them are arboreal but some are primarily terrestrial.
- most of them are insectivorous.
- many of them undertake long and sometimes difficult migrations.

Well over 100 species have been identified, some with different plumages and some with geographical races. As might perhaps be expected, the precise number of species varies according to which authority is consulted!

More than 40 of these warblers feature on stamps. Each will be included and described in the several parts of this paper. To adopt a simple approach the species are considered alphabetically, starting with the American Redstart and ending with the Yellow-throated Warbler.

The ten value sheetlet issued by the British Virgin Islands in 2005 is included below to whet the appetite for what is to follow!



American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*)

The male redstart has prominent orange patches on its tail, wing and breast sides. The duller female has yellow wing patches. It breeds in northern and eastern North America and winters throughout Central America from southern Mexico south to southern Peru and also throughout the West Indies.

In common with other migratory species, the distinctive plumage allows the male quickly to reclaim breeding territory and advertise his presence to new mates each year. Stamps from Barbados (1979, \$2.50) and Cuba (1996, 15 cents) show pairs of American Redstarts.



American Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga aestiva*)

With over 30 'examples' this warbler features much more often on stamps than any of the other new world warblers. Until recently it was more simply known as the Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) and it is under this name that appears on most of the stamps, for example, Antigua & Barbuda (1994, \$4). Its current name is shown on Caribbean Netherlands (2016, \$0.88).



The American Yellow Warbler is one of the most widespread of all the warblers, breeding from Alaska south to north western Peru. It exhibits a bewildering variety of races but very few of these can be recognised on stamps. The 'familiar' male bird of North America is characterised by yellow head and underparts with rufous streaks on breast and flanks as in British Virgin Islands (2005, 35 cents). In the mangroves of the West Indies the warbler is similar but has a well-defined rufous cap as in Barbados (1991, 10 cents).

The birth bicentenary of John James Audubon was marked in 1985 by the issue of many stamps from many countries. One of the stamps, Nevis (1985, 60 cents) is also labelled Rathbone Warbler. Audubon proposed this name in remembrance of a family from Liverpool, who had been kind and friendly to him.



Arrowhead Warbler (*Setophaga pharetra*)

The Arrowhead Warbler is endemic to Jamaica, where it is locally common in forested areas. It takes its name from the black arrowhead streaks on throat, breast and flanks. It features on Jamaica (2004, \$10) under its earlier name of Arrow-headed Warbler (*Dendroica pharetra*).



Bachman's Warbler (*Vermivora bachmanii*)



The last sighting of this probably extinct warbler was in Louisiana in 1988. It was a migrant breeding in swampy thickets in south eastern USA and wintering in Cuba. It was discovered by the Reverend John Bachman in 1832 near Charleston in South Carolina. Its only example on stamps is in a sheetlet featuring extinct birds issued by Guinea-Bissau (2012, 900 West African francs).