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## CREATURE FEATURE

Prairie Warbler



(*Dendroica discolor*)

One of the most interesting bird species that nests at Fairview Farm is the Prairie Warbler. The suggestion of its name notwithstanding, this species barely reaches the American prairies. It breeds in all states east of the Mississippi River except Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The Prairie Warbler is a true snowbird – it spends the winter in the Bahamas, on Caribbean islands, and in southern Florida, and returns north each spring. Its preferred breeding habitat includes overgrown fields pocked with shrubs, second-growth woodlands and Pine Barrens. Populations are declining throughout much of its range largely due to a loss of breeding habitat through development and the natural change of shrubby habitat to forest.

The Prairie Warbler is a tail-wagging warbler with a yellow throat and belly and black streaks down its sides. Its hallmark characteristic is its distinctive "spectacled" facial pattern. The Prairie Warbler forages

deep in the interior of bushes and likes to stay low, often feeding just above the ground. Its preferred diet includes insects and spiders, but it will occasionally eat fruit and other plant matter. These birds spend most of their time less than 15 feet off the ground and some Prairie Warblers may go through their entire lives without ever seeing the canopy of a tree.

Other interesting facts: Singing males like to sit at or near the tops of shrubs and young trees, with a stance that is slightly angled, more horizontal than erect. Female Prairie Warblers commonly eat the eggshells after their young hatch, consuming the shells in 15 to 90 seconds.

For more information about the Prairie Warbler, go to one of the following links:

[Cornell lab of Ornithology](#)

[United States Geological Survey](#)

[National Audubon Society](#)