

The August mystery bird photograph shows an obviously small bird with a sharp-pointed bill, two prominent wing bars, and a well-defined broken eye ring. Although the underparts give no indication of being streaked, some sort of marking at the sides of the upper breast is suggested. In addition, the bird's tail appears particularly short, thus accentuating the bird's small size.

To unravel this tiny bird's identity, a few basic reminders are in order. First, the thin and sharp-pointed bill suggest that the bird is an insectivore. Gnatcatchers have longer tails than the pictured bird. Golden-crowned Kinglets have a distinctly different head pattern, while Ruby-crowned Kinglets possess eye crescents in front of and behind the eye, not above and below. The bills of vireos, some species of which have prominent wing bars, are thicker and hooked at the tip, unlike that of the mystery bird. By elimination, the mystery bird is a warbler.

The presence of wing bars at once removes many warbler species from consideration, and the absence of obvious ventral streaks removes several others. Ultimately, the conspicuous white eye crescents are the most useful features for identifying the warbler in the photograph. Only one warbler in North America possesses the combination of conspicuous eye crescents and prominent wing bars—Northern Parula (*Parula americana*). Thus, the markings on the sides of the upper breast are the outer edges of the reddish and black bands that cross the breast of the male Northern Parula. The male in the picture is attending young in a nest that is apparently made of burlap.



Northern Parula

Photo by Ralph Laurence, Courtesy of MAS.

AT A GLANCE

Photo by L. H. Walkinshaw. Courtesy of MAS.



Can you identify this bird?

Identification will be discussed in next issue's AT A GLANCE.

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