

= Black @-@ throated gray warbler =

The black @-@ throated gray warbler (*Setophaga nigrescens*) is a passerine bird of the New World warbler family Parulidae . It is 13 cm (5 @. @ 1 in) long and has gray and white plumage with black markings . The male has the bold black throat of its name , and black stripes on its head , as well as black streaks on its flanks ; the female is a paler version of the male , with a white throat and less distinct black markings on the flanks and wings . It breeds in western North America from British Columbia to New Mexico , and winters in Mexico and the southwestern United States . The habitats it prefers are coniferous and mixed forests and scrubland , especially those with pinyon pines , junipers , sagebrush , and oaks . Its nest is an open cup of plant fibers lined with feathers , built a few metres from the ground in the branches of a tree or shrub . Three to five eggs are laid , and young are fed by both parents . Common in its breeding range , it does not seem to be seriously threatened by human activities , unlike many migratory warblers .

= = Description = =

The black @-@ throated gray warbler has mostly black , gray , and white plumage , which is soft , lacking gloss . With its striping and the small yellow spot between its eye and bill , it is a distinctive bird . The sexes differ slightly , both having gray upperparts with black streaks , and white underparts with black streaks on the flanks . The adult male is striped with a black on the crown , throat , and below the eye , and has white around its chin and above its eye . The adult female has more dingy plumage on its head , with a white throat and dark gray cheeks . The most similar birds to the black @-@ throated gray warbler are the black @-@ and @-@ white and blackpoll warblers , which although marked in black have entirely different plumage patterns .

It is typically 13 cm (5 @. @ 1 in) long , weighing 8 @. @ 4 g (0 @. @ 30 oz) . Wing lengths are 5 @. @ 6 ? 6 @. @ 9 cm (2 @. @ 2 ? 2 @. @ 7 in) , tail lengths 4 @. @ 7 ? 5 @. @ 5 cm (1 @. @ 9 ? 2 @. @ 2 in) , bill lengths 8 @. @ 4 ? 9 @. @ 6 mm (0 @. @ 33 ? 0 @. @ 38 in) , and tarsus lengths 1 @. @ 66 ? 1 @. @ 88 cm (0 @. @ 65 ? 0 @. @ 74 in) , with females slightly smaller than males .

This bird gives a sharp tup or thick call , like that of Townsend 's warbler but flat and unmusical , as well as a high see flight call . The male 's song is a series of buzzy notes , with the earlier notes doubled and the next to last note high . This song has three variations , including a quiet " soft song " given by the males while following females gathering material for a nest .

= = Taxonomy = =

The black @-@ throated gray warbler was first described by John Kirk Townsend from a specimen collected near today 's Portland , Oregon . It was known to the Chinook inhabitants of the northwest coast , who called it Ah Kah a qual . Townsend described the species as *Sylvia nigrescens* , placing it with the other New World warblers and the unrelated Old World warblers in the genus *Sylvia* . It is now placed in the genus *Setophaga* along with about thirty other species , after having been classified in *Dendroica* for some time . Within its genus , it is part of a group with black throats and yellow face markings that includes the hermit warbler and Townsend 's warbler . It is usually considered an early offshoot among this group of species , but genetic studies suggest a close relation to Grace 's warbler .

Of these relatives , the range of the black @-@ throated gray warbler overlaps with those of Townsend 's warbler and the hermit warbler , but they occur in different habitats . While Townsend 's and hermit warblers commonly hybridize with each other , records of either species hybridizing with the black @-@ throated gray warbler are uncommon .

There are two subspecies , which are highly similar and of dubious validity . The nominate subspecies *S. n. nigrescens* occurs on the Pacific coastal region from British Columbia to northern California , while *S. n. halseii* , described by Giraud in 1841 , occupies the inland parts of its range . *S. n. halseii* birds are slightly larger and more gray in their upperparts .

= = Distribution and habitat = =

The black @-@ throated gray warbler breeds in western North America , its range extending from southwestern British Columbia along the Pacific coast to northern Baja California , and east to New Mexico and southern Montana . It winters mostly in Mexico , from southern Baja California to Oaxaca state . It has spread into parts of Wyoming and Montana only recently , as *Juniperus osteosperma* has expanded its range due to a warming climate . Vagrants have been recorded across eastern North America and in Cuba .

The black @-@ throated gray warbler breeds in open coniferous and mixed forest with a brushy understory , in dry open oak forests , and in chaparral and other scrubland . It is particularly associated with pinyon pines , junipers , and oaks . It migrates to the south late in the fall , returning north in mid @-@ spring . While migrating , it forages in any woodland or scrub it passes through . In its wintering grounds , it occurs in dry woodland and tall scrub . Though its status is not well known , it does not appear to be seriously threatened by habitat destruction or other human activities , unlike many migratory warblers . It is a fairly common bird , among the most common in some localities . Because it is common and not in rapid decline , it is assessed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List .

= = Behavior = =

The black @-@ throated gray warbler is usually approachable , and can easily be observed while foraging . Despite this , it is poorly known , especially in its breeding behavior , of which Birds of North America said " almost no information is available " . It forages , often in flocks with other species . It feeds on insects gleaned on low branches , especially caterpillars .

The nest is usually placed on a horizontal tree branch or in a shrub , a few metres above the ground . The nest is an open cup constructed of grass stalks and other fibres , and lined with feathers and hair . The female lays three to five pinkish eggs with brown dots from May to July . Incubation and fledging periods are unknown . This species has been recorded giving a distraction display , pretending to be injured to distract predators from its nest . Both parents feed the young , though the female may do so more frequently .