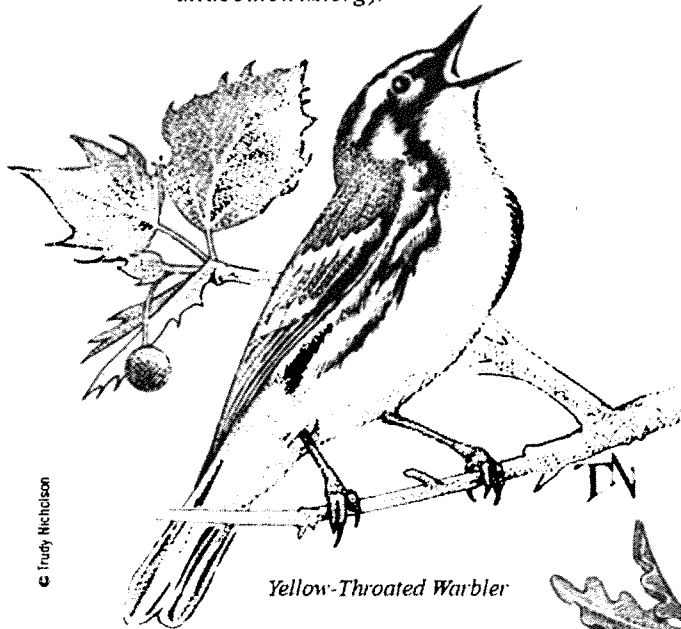


## Spring Singers Worth Watching

In the near two decades I have lived in Cabin John, the presence of nesting yellow-throated warblers has been a welcome constant, one of the many natural treasures to be found along our stretch of the Potomac. This brightly colored songbird is among the earliest of the migratory species to arrive from their winter homes in the Central American tropics and its melodious song—a loud sweet whistle of about seven steadily descending notes followed by three rising at the end—announces Spring to those more than ready to listen (see [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org)).




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Yellow-Throated Warbler

By mid-April, about a quarter of mile below Lock 8, plant your feet at the edge of the carpet of Virginia bluebells and locate the male singing from his perch high up in the tallest sycamores along the riverbank. The yellow-throated warbler, so named for its stunning **molten yellow throat set off** by elegant black and white facial markings, is a common breeder in the southeastern U.S. But in the D.C. area, they are

uncommon, even along its preferred habitat next to large rivers. Another bold streamside singer is the prothonotary warbler. This dazzling, saffron-colored bird exhibits a rare behavior among the 58 species of North America wood warblers: it's one of two that nests in tree cavities. Listen for the loud, somewhat metallic, five-note song: tsweet tsweet tsweet tsweet tsweet.

Hikers preferring the hilly Cabin John Creek Trail will encounter a different early arriving singer, the Louisiana waterthrush, a bird that prefers a bit of up and down bordering a narrow stream rather than the flat expanse of the Potomac flood plain. So named because it resembles a small thrush, this locally breeding warbler feeds in a canopy of oaks. When a Louisiana waterthrush pipes up, it offers a few clear introductory notes followed by a jumbled finale. I think of its song as that of a beginning flute student who manages the first part only to have awkward fingers mangle the crescendo. The wood thrush, the veery, the hermit, and the Swainson's thrush are the accomplished flautists of our eastern forest—but it's all relative. Compared to the metallic chant of a prothonotary warbler, the Louisiana is a veritable Jean-Pierre Rampal.

Look and listen for them now. — 



Louisiana Waterthrush