

HABITAT USE AND SINGING ACTIVITY OF  
THE COMMON YELLOWTHROAT

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## ABSTRACT

A common assumption in territory establishment is that individuals evaluate the qualities of various potential breeding sites and then choose the best. I determined whether early-arriving Common Yellowthroats (*Geothlypis trichas*) settled in breeding habitats that differed from those of late-arriving individuals, whether Common Yellowthroats selected breeding habitats in proportion to habitat availability, and whether the singing rate and singing detectability of early-arriving Common Yellowthroats differed from those of late-arriving individuals. Early-arriving Common Yellowthroats selected territories differing from those of late-arriving individuals. The territories of the early-arriving birds had shrubs that were taller and slightly denser, with greater percent canopy coverage, and less dense common reeds (*Phragmites australis*) with smaller basal area and less percent canopy coverage than those of the late-arriving birds. The territories of the early-arriving birds included more shrub, shrub-reed, and reed-shrub vegetation types than expected by chance, while the territories of late-arriving birds included more shrub-reed and tall reed. Forty-three percent of early-arriving birds and 14% of late-arriving birds had territories including more shrub vegetation than expected by chance. None of the early-arriving birds and 43% of late-arriving birds had

territories including more tall reed than expected by chance. The territories of the early-arriving birds were in larger shrub patches than the territories of the late-arriving birds, but there was no significant difference between early- and late-arriving birds in the total length of edge between shrub and reed habitats within territories. When all individuals were pooled, Common Yellowthroats did not select territories in proportion to habitat availability, and vegetation types with a shrub component were preferred. The probability of singing at least once during a 3-min period and the number of songs per hour were not significantly different between early and late-arriving birds.