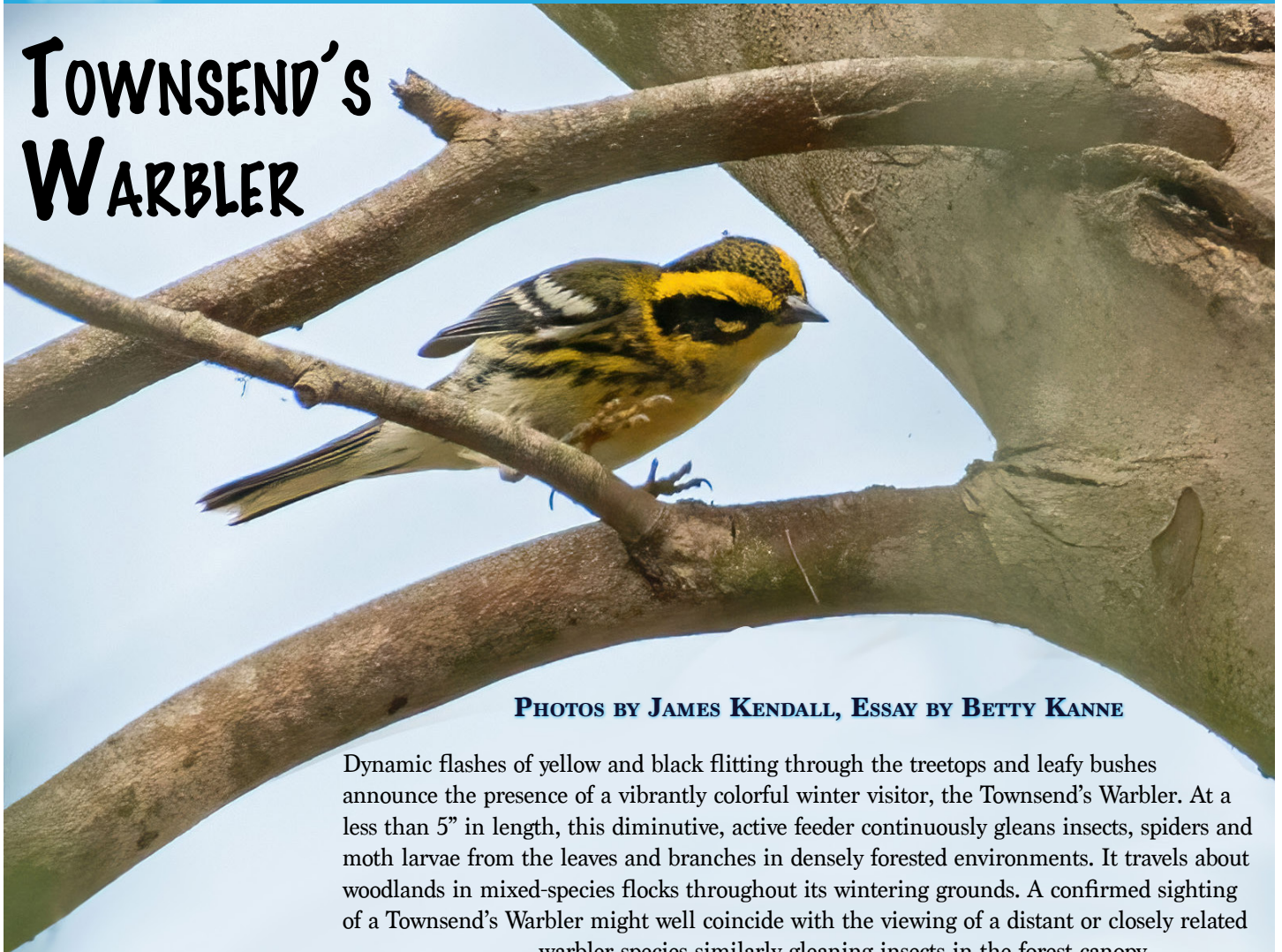




BIRD OF THE MONTH - October



TOWNSEND'S WARBLER



PHOTOS BY JAMES KENDALL, ESSAY BY BETTY KANNE

Dynamic flashes of yellow and black flitting through the treetops and leafy bushes announce the presence of a vibrantly colorful winter visitor, the Townsend's Warbler. At a less than 5" in length, this diminutive, active feeder continuously gleans insects, spiders and moth larvae from the leaves and branches in densely forested environments. It travels about woodlands in mixed-species flocks throughout its wintering grounds. A confirmed sighting of a Townsend's Warbler might well coincide with the viewing of a distant or closely related warbler species similarly gleaning insects in the forest canopy.

It has been noted that the Townsend's Warbler can often switch to a nectar-rich diet on its wintering grounds, particularly favoring "honeydew," a sugary substance produced by scale insects. Individuals will fiercely defend territories around trees infested with these insects. These warblers can also feed on berries, and sometimes visit bird feeders for suet and occasionally seeds.

The male Townsend's Warbler is distinguished by its striking black and rich yellow head, yellow underparts and striped sides. The female is separated by its largely yellow, not black throat and a well defined dark patch on a yellow face.

The Townsend's Warbler's northern, summer breeding grounds range from Alaska to Washington, Idaho and Wyoming. It overwinters from Oregon south to Central America with a significant presence in Coastal California forests and parklands. We find it in our own tree filled neighborhoods and parks from late September through April when hormonal changes compel a hasty return to northern and mountainous coniferous forests to breed anew.



To learn more about the fascinating range of distinctive birds appearing in the Urban Forest and along the Shipley to Shore Nature Trail, visit:

hbtrees.org/urban-forest-2/bird-watching-in-the-urban-forest