

138 • AMERICAN REDSTART

## AMERICAN REDSTART

*Setophaga ruticilla*    Adult Male - All Seasons



- Black head and throat
- ✓ Orange sides of breast, base of wings and base of tail
- Flashes and droops wings, fans tail and holds open
- Sallies frequently
- Often vocal

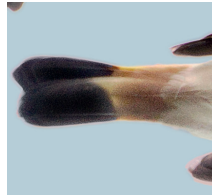
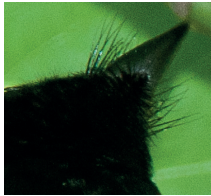


- ✓ Black throat and breast with orange shoulders and tail base
- White belly contrasting with black throat and upper breast
- Broad-based bill
- Rectal bristles often conspicuous

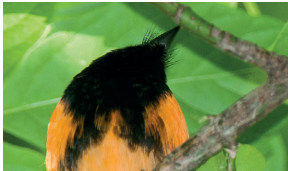


- ✓ Black terminal band, orange base
- Undertail coverts white with black smudgy tips
- ✓ Long tail, narrow base creates unique wedge or clublike shape
- General elongated shape

## Distinctive Views



## Additional Photos



Note distinct rictal bristles (hair-like feathers) around the broad-based bill



Often holds tail loosely, creating a clublike appearance



Some birds have extensive orange wash on the breast and underside



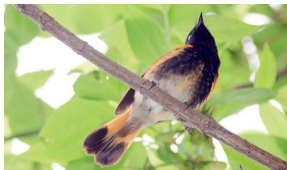
Often fans tail and droops wings, spinning 180 degrees back and forth to kick up insects



Note distinct pattern even in flight



Orange-based tail/flight feathers unique; visible above/below; only Blackburnian shares orange/black plumage



Amount and pattern of black extending into breast can vary



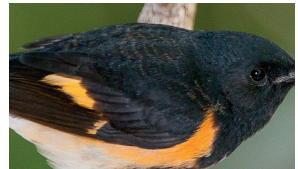
Frequent tail fanning and sallying are typical behaviors



Redstarts are often inquisitive and responsive to pishing



Some past nicknames have been Hal-loween Warbler and Red-tailed Motheater



Some birds may show orange fringing on edges of back feathers, especially in fresh fall plumage

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Black head and throat  
Orange shoulders, wing patch  
Long, club-shaped tail  
Orange tail base  
Actively fans tail



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## Comparison Species



**Blackburnian** Only other U.S./Canada warbler with black and orange plumage; orange on face, throat, and breast (vs. black); black, triangular face marking (vs. solid black); streaking: white undertail (vs. orange/black); white back braces



**Black-throated Blue** Dark head and body but blue upper body (vs. black); no orange anywhere; different tail pattern



**Painted Redstart** Striking red belly (vs. orange); white wing patch (vs. none); eye-arc (vs. none); longer, white tail (vs. black/orange); range rarely overlaps

## Aging and Sexing

Spring AdM 1yM AdF 1yF Fall AdM 1yM AdF 1yF

**Races: 1 Summary** *Spring*: AdM separable, 1yM sometimes separable, females sometimes separable but not ageable *Fall*: AdM separable, AdF, 1yM, 1yF sometimes separable **What to Notice** *Spring*: Black/orange plumage, black flecks in breast/head, contrast of head and back, orange vs. yellow shoulder patches, uppertail covert color *Fall*: Contrast in head and back, intensity of yellow patches, presence of orange in patches, uppertail covert color



**AdM Sp/Fa** *Diagnostic*: black and orange pattern year-round.



**1yM Fa** Same as 1yM Sp, but no black spots in face or breast, no dark in lores; *Diagnostic when present*: deep orange shoulder patches, black uppertail coverts; *Overlaps female*: yellow shoulder patches, pale lores, no black in face.



**1yM Sp** Dark lores, gray head often shows more contrast with back; *Diagnostic when present*: black flecks in head/breast, deep orange shoulders, all black uppertail coverts; *May overlap female*: yellowish shoulders, darkish uppertail coverts.



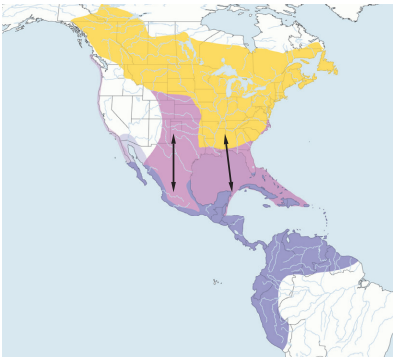
**AdF/1yM Fa** *Diagnostic when present*: pale or olive uppertail coverts indicate female; *Overlaps 1yM Fall*: shoulder patches range from yellow to yellowy-orange, pale lores.



**AdF/1yF Sp** 1yF not separable from AdF *May overlap 1yM*: yellow shoulder patches range from yellow to yellow-orange; *Diagnostic when present*: pale lores indicate female (some AdF have dark lores).



**1yF Fa** Often paler than AdF/1yM *Diagnostic when present*: little or no yellow on shoulders (never orange); *Overlaps AdF*: yellow shoulders, pale lores, pale uppertail coverts (many birds not separable).



### Spring



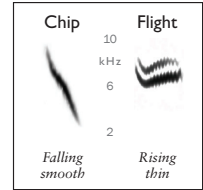
### Fall



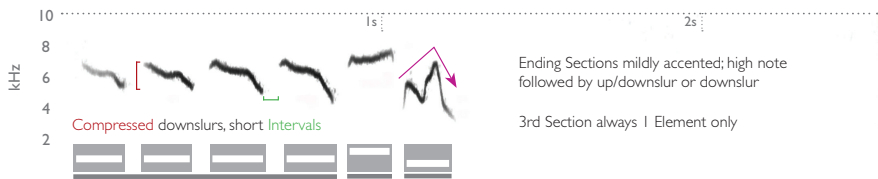
## American Redstart

American red start starts with 4 running steps, then jumps up/down for success

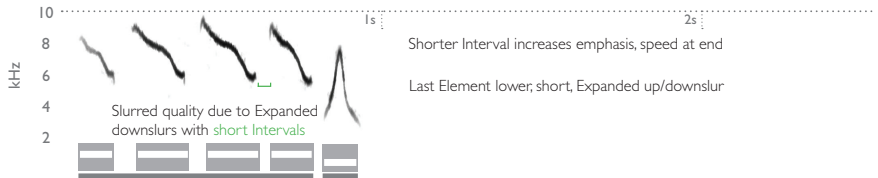
**Summary** Highly variable; higher, thinner than many similar species; 1st Section many (4–7) Compressed, 1-Element Phrases. Short, even-tempo songs with slightly faster ending. Often sings throughout day, even when other birds are silent. **3 Types: A**, 1st Section *always 4 or more Elements*, followed by 1 or 2 single-Element Sections; endings accented; **B**, Only 1 Section, short; 1- or 2-Element Phrases. *Often alternated with A or C (good ID point)*; **C**, unaccented, 2 Sections, 2nd higher; a bit longer than Type A or B; usually repeated Phrases similar to those found in A/B type songs.



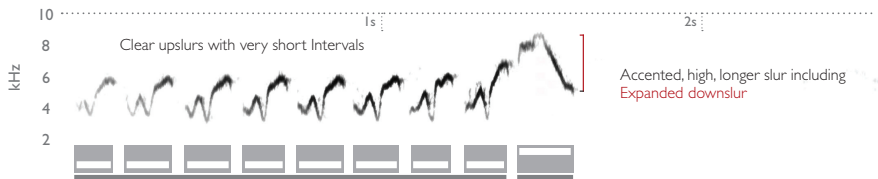
### Type A1 Many Phrases in 1st Section (4–7) (important for all Type A songs).



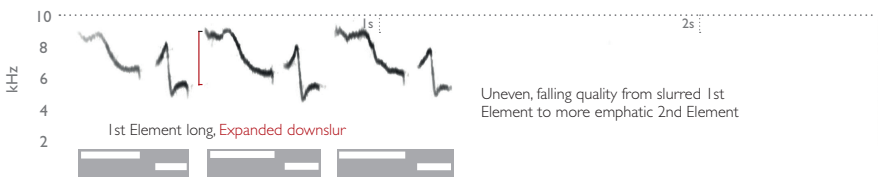
### Type A2 Common, 2-Section form. High, thin. Last Element can sound Buzzy.



### Type A3 Less common, longer song with very high accented ending. Could be confused with Blackburnian, **but** simple, slurred Phrases lack Blackburnian's Complexity and last Element is a lower, longer downslur.

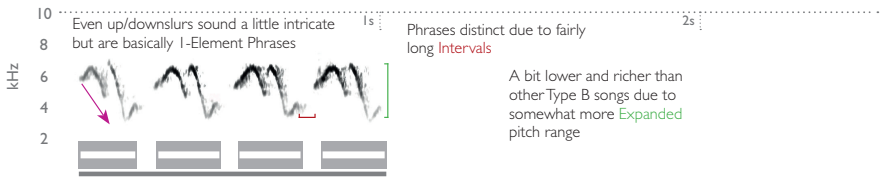


### Type B1 Very short song with even tempo and easily countable speed. Rhythm clearer and more regular than Bay-breasted.

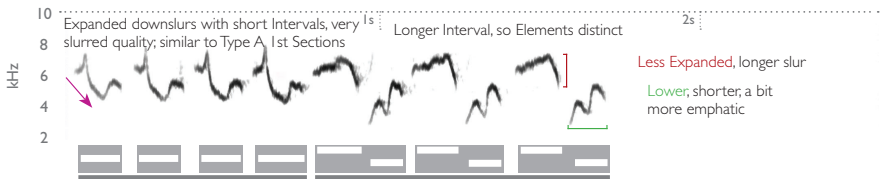




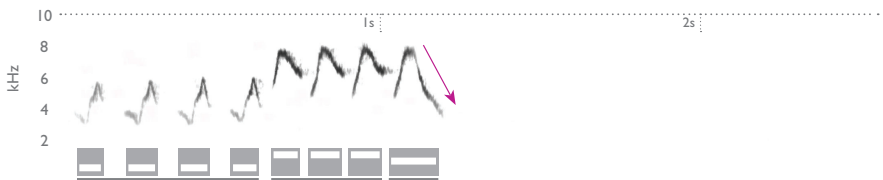
## Type B2 Short, thin and high; 1- or 2-Element Phrases, short Intervals.



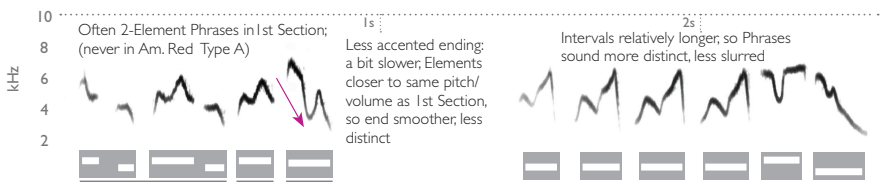
## Type C1 2nd Section similar to Type B songs, with either 1- or 2-Element Phrases; slurred quality of 1st Section contrasts more emphatic 2nd.



## Type C2 Slightly more emphatic with high, thin ending.

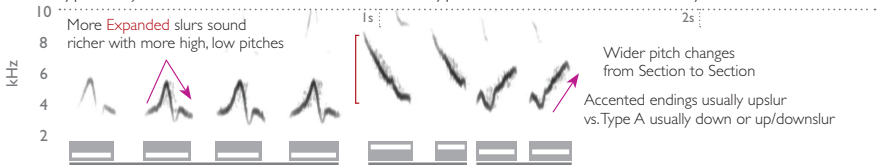


**Magnolia Warbler (2 songs)** Very similar; variable; can be hard to differentiate. Usually sounds richer, lower. Never 1-Section song (common in Am. Redstart). Rarely 4 (never more), Phrases in 1st Section; Am. Redstart always 4 or more. Over half of songs 3 Sections, often 4 Sections; Am. Redstart rarely 3 Sections (~17%), never 4 Sections.

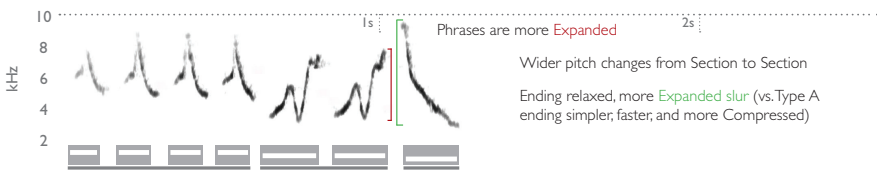


## American Redstart (cont.)

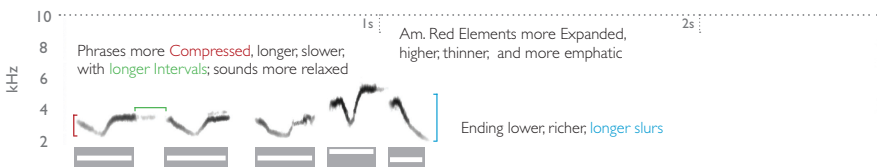
**Yellow vs. A** Richer; with more high and low pitches; always 3 or 4 Sections (eliminates Type B/C); each Section at least 2 Phrases, vs. Type A 2nd/3rd Section with only 1 Phrase.



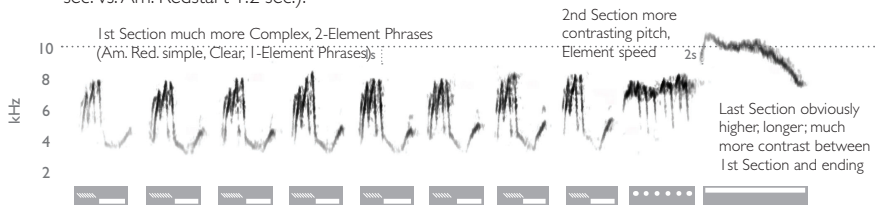
**Chestnut-sided vs. A** Usually obviously lower pitched; never sings 1 or 2-Section songs (eliminates Types B/C); often 4+ Sections (vs. Type A max 3 Sections); always 2 or more Phrases in 2nd Section (vs. Type A with only 1 Phrase in 2nd/3rd Sections).



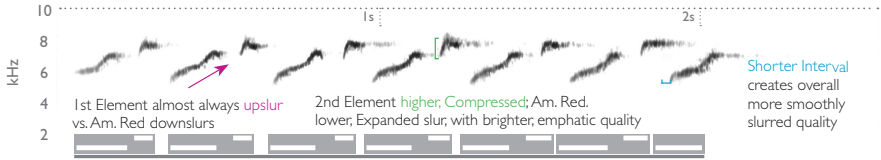
**Hooded vs. A** Lower; richer sound; always at least 3 Sections (eliminates B/C); Fewer Phrases in 1st Section (avg. 2.4 vs. Type A avg. 5); never alternates with 1-Section songs like Am. Redstart.



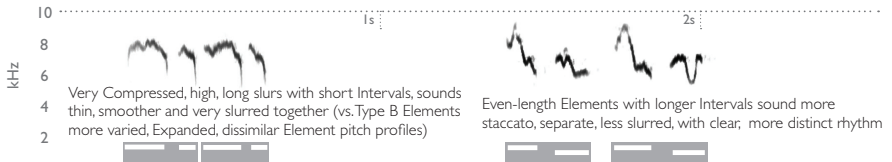
**Blackburnian vs. A** Similar to some Type A accented songs, **but** much longer (avg. 1.9 sec. vs. Am. Redstart 1.2 sec.).



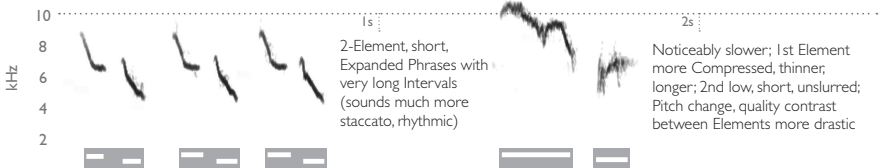
**Black-and-white vs. B** I-Section songs with 2-Element Phrases, similar to some Type B songs; never 1-Element Phrases as in some Type B; Phrases have rising pitch and uneven rhythm vs. Am. Redstart even rhythm and falling pitch; full songs always longer (avg. 2.1 sec. vs. 1.2 sec.).



**Bay-breasted / Cape May (excerpts) vs. B** Both species higher; thinner; slower; Type B Elements have different qualities and lengths that sound much different than either. **Bay-breasted** doesn't sing nearly as often during migration; Elements often less regular, so can sound clumsy or uneven vs. Type B more even, active rhythm.



**Nashville / Blackburnian vs. B (excerpts)** Nashville longer with more Phrases (avg. 9 vs. Type B 5); 2 Sections, with strong pitch and speed difference (easily separable); sometimes sings only 1st Section of song (similar sounding to Type B), but usually will eventually sing full 2-Section song.



**Prothonotary / Yellow-rumped vs. B (excerpts)** Both songs longer; more Phrases (Prothonotary avg. 8, Yellow-rumped avg. 10 vs. Am. Redstart avg. 4.6).

