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## Cape May warbler makes rare appearance at Curry Creek Preserve in Venice

Visitors to the Curry Creek Preserve in Venice this week were treated to a visit of the winged variety by a Cape May warbler on its way from the West Indies to New England. While the warbler is not a rare bird, it has not been documented before at Curry Creek Preserve, said Environmental Specialist Jeff Weber, who was leading a free nature walk for the county when the bird appeared.

“This is a beautiful species, one of several types of warblers passing through the area during the current spring migration,” said Weber. “Cape May warblers winter in the West Indies, and are currently on their way back northward to their summer breeding grounds in northern New England and Canada.”

According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Cape May warblers are larger than other such birds, with a unique curled tongue that allows them to collect nectar. They feed mostly on spruce budworms during their breeding season and nectar and insects in winter. Females lay between 4–9 eggs in nests of sphagnum moss, twigs, pine needles and bark, lined with hair and feathers, near the tops of spruce trees.

Weber says that in the next few weeks, similar sightings of the Cape May warbler are possible as they continue making their way north.

Curry Creek Preserve is located at 1075 Albee Farm Road, Venice. The 81-acre preserve was purchased in 2002 through the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program. It contains a variety of native habitats including mangrove forests, tidal marshes, scrub and pine flatwoods. Pond apple trees, a rarity in Sarasota County, can be found in forested areas upstream along the creek. Visitors may also encounter a variety of wildlife species such as gopher tortoises, alligators, river otters, eastern indigo snakes and an assortment of wading birds such as the roseate spoonbill and wood stork.

For more information about Curry Creek Preserve or any other county-owned natural areas, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for Natural Resources, or visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net).

**Media note:** Attached are two images of the Cape May warbler taken by Jill Ludbrook at Curry Creek Preserve April 27.

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