

Prothonotary Warbler Report 2025

Prepared by Shirley Devan

This report provides a summary of Prothonotary Warbler (PROW) nesting activity in 2025 at six sites in James City County, Newport News, Chesapeake and King and Queen County.



Male Prothonotary Warbler from Greensprings Interpretive Trail on May 22. Photo by Dixie Sommers.

Chickahominy Riverfront Park | James City County, VA

Monitored by Shirley Devan & Volunteers

The highlight of the year at this trail was the recapture of a female Prothonotary Warbler estimated to be at least seven years old. She was banded as an adult on June 12, 2019. Volunteers were only able to monitor the 11 boxes on the shore of this county park five times in 2025. The high tide schedule, extreme heat and volunteer schedules limited visits. Still, we estimated 29 nestlings fledged: 10 were banded and an estimated 19 fledged without banding.

Powhatan Creek Trail | James City County, VA

Monitored by Shirley Devan & Volunteers

This trail exhibited more activity in 2025 than in 2024. The female in box #5 was banded on May 25, incubating five eggs. Box 3 likely fledged three nestlings without banding; one dead nestling was removed from the box on July 11.

Greensprings Interpretive Trail | James City County, VA

Monitored by Shirley Devan



Recently fledged Prothonotary Warbler. Photo by Alex Holloway, taken June 19 at Greensprings Interpretive Trail.

All but one of the eight boxes installed in mid-April showed evidence of Prothonotary Warbler nesting activity. Box 2 had two successful clutches with a total of seven nestlings banded and fledged. The same female was responsible for these two clutches in box #2. She's a STAR! Three other boxes fledged 13 nestlings, which were banded. One box fledged four nestlings that were not banded. A total of twenty-four nestlings in the first season was quite exciting for the trail volunteers.



Six volunteers from CVWO and Historic Rivers Chapter of VA Master Naturalists install 8 Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes at the edge of the swamp at Greensprings Interpretive Trail on March 19. Photo by Linda Hughes

Newport News Park | Newport News, VA

Monitored by Dave Youker

It was another difficult year for Prothonotary Warblers at Harwoods Mill Reservoir. Dave Youker checked the boxes for the first time on April 19, 2025. As is typical, the early nesting Carolina Chickadees occupied three of the seven boxes. There were eight eggs between two boxes. The female remained on the nest in the third box, so an egg count wasn't taken. That nest was empty during a subsequent visit, but an exact reason, such as predation, could not be determined. Of the eight Carolina Chickadee eggs, five hatched and fledged.

The same box used by Tree Swallows last year was used again this year. Three eggs were laid, and all Tree Swallows fledged.

Prothonotary Warblers used only one box this year. Five eggs were laid, and all fledged. This is the second year in a row of extremely low numbers. Over the previous 13 years, the average number of fledged birds has been 23. At this time, no reason for the low utilization of nest boxes can be determined.

Thanks to Newport News Parks and Recreation for their continued support of this project.

Dragon Run | Middle Peninsula of Virginia

Monitored by Gary Driscole

For spring and summer 2025, Gary Driscole monitored 22 Prothonotary warbler boxes in two locations along the Dragon Run, primarily in King & Queen County. Gary started monitoring on March 11 and ended on July 27, 2025.

This season, there was a lot of rain and high water. Four young were killed when the box was flooded. The results were low, with fewer fledglings than last year. This year, there were 36 fledglings. Last year, the number was 39 fledglings.

Big Island | There was activity in six of 15 boxes. There were 24 Prothonotary fledglings.

Mascot Bridge | Four boxes out of seven had activity. There were 12 Prothonotary fledglings.

At both sites, for the first time ever, there were no nesting Carolina Chickadees.

Northwest River Park | Chesapeake, VA

Monitored by Shirley Devan & Volunteers



Prothonotary Warbler female at Northwest River Park
June 24. Photo by Linda Morse.

Northwest River, Chesapeake, VA: We estimated 66 Prothonotary Warblers fledged from the 82 nest boxes along the shore of the Northwest River. Forty-two were banded, and an estimated 24 fledged without banding. In 2024, we estimated 91 nestlings fledged. 2025 is the worst year for fledglings since 2022, when we estimated 67 fledged. The collapse of the nesting success of the Prothonotary Warblers over the last five years (2021 – 2025) at this location is a mystery we have not been able to unravel.

NOTE: All handling and banding of birds done with proper permits from the USGS Bird Banding Lab and Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.