

Extinct bird reveals evolutionary surprise

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Online Desk: Even though declared extinct in 2022, scientists are unlocking secrets of the Bachman's warbler. This tiny songbird, once found in the southeastern US, vanished from the wild decades ago.

The last confirmed sighting was in 1988, but a Cornell University specimen collected in 1890 offered a chance to study its DNA. Researchers were particularly interested in its relation to two similar warbler species – the Blue-winged and Golden-winged warblers.

New genetic analysis revealed the Bachman's warbler as a distinct lineage, with no evidence of hybrid ancestry. While it likely shared a common ancestor with its relatives, the Bachman's warbler had a unique evolutionary path.

This discovery adds another layer of sadness to the extinction. The cause remains unclear, but habitat loss is a prime suspect. With only a handful of eyewitness accounts and one good photograph, the Bachman's warbler has become a memory.