COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

ACCEPT 70

MOURNING WARBLER
Oporomis philadelphia

Location: Grove at the northwest edge of Lake Henry; Ordway; Crowley County, Colorado

Date: May 28, 1995

Setting:

I was birding with Miriam Friggenes of Boulder and saw this bird about 10:45 a.m. in the grove on the north side of Lake Henry. It was a fantastic day with several good warblers (Bay-breasted, Golden-winged, two Parulas, Blackpoll, Nashville, Redstart, Waterthrush) and other birds (Great-crested Flycatcher, "Baltimore" Oriole, Veery). We were walking along the edge of a tangled seep with low grass and weeds with a thicket of very small willows. I saw this bird foraging, hidden, on or near the ground in front of us. I stood and watched quietly with my binoculars (B & L 10x40s), waiting for the bird to appear. The secretive behavior and low, tangled habitat made me suspect that I was watching a MacGillivray's Warbler. After about a half a minute the bird popped out into clear view. It hopped up to perch almost sideways on a small willow trunk (about 1" diameter) about 6 inches off the ground. I focused my binoculars on it and was astonished to see a breeding-plumaged male Mourning Warbler. I announced this to Miriam but she was unable to get onto the bird before it flew. Within the next two minutes we saw it two more times — once more in my binoculars and once by eye. I don't think that Miriam ever got her binoculars on the bird. Each view was very brief (none were over 5 seconds long) with the first view the best for me. I was able to observe the bird clearly at about 20-30 feet. Unfortunately I saw it mainly from the top and obliquely from the side. I saw the face and head directly from the side when it cocked its head and looked right at me. I did not have time to see the undersides or tail clearly. The two subsequent views were of the bird momentarily perched about 6 feet high in a bare, dead tamarisk. The bird flew off and we could not re-locate it. It was silent.

Description:

The bird was a breeding-plumaged male. It was about the size, shape and pattern of a MacGillivray's Warbler, being about 5-6" long, rather heavy-bodied and long-tailed. It was uniformly dark olive-green above. It had a large, low gray-black hood that came well down onto the chest. Although the bib was darkest at the bottom I could not see if it ended in black feathers against the yellow belly. The undersides were otherwise a deep yellow color. The face was dark gray, nearly black in front of the eye. The clearest feature was that there was no eyering, nor any white eye crescents, nor any trace of white or gray around the black eye. The face was a pure, unmarked dark gray and black. Although this was a very brief view, it was clearly a male Mourning Warbler.

Similar Species:

This is really not a difficult I.D. with a good view of a male in breeding plumage. My view was painfulty brief. The only other ID contenders are MacGillivray's Warbler (smaller bib; dull to bright white eye crescents) and Connecticut Warbler (less extensive, grayer hood; complete white or buff eyering; gray, not black, lores).

Experience with Species:

I have seen all <u>Oporomis</u> sp. in Colorado and/or elsewhere in the U.S. The most recent Mourning Warblers that I have observed were 9 during 1979 in northern Illinois and a female in September 1993 at Lake Henry.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

Marlefanos

Mark Janos 10 Sedum Ct. Pueblo, CO 81001