

52-96-90

Accepted 6-1

**COLORADO
RARITY REPORT FORM**

Common Name: Mourning Warbler

Scientific Name: *Oporornis philadelphia*

Number of Individuals: 1

Sex: Female **Age:** Adult

March 8 - 22-96

Locality: **Colorado:** Washington **County:** Last Chance "Rest Stop"

Date(s) seen: May 27, 1996 **Time:** 9:00-9:30 a.m.

Reporting Observer: Christopher L. Wood, 600 Campus Dr. Unit # 744, Ripon, Wisconsin 54971. (414) 748-7641

Other Observers: Russ Wood

Light Conditions: Very good; cloudy sky.

Optical Equipment: Bausch & Lomb "Elite" 8x42,

Distance to bird: 10-15 feet **Duration of Observation:** 25 minutes.

Habitat: "Migrant Trap" composed mainly of low shrubs and small cottonwoods.

Behavior: We first spotted the bird as it flew up from low in a group of willows and into the base of a nearby willow. After moving towards it, we had fairly good looks of it as it skulked at the base of the willow, slowly hopping around. As we moved closer the warbler flew to some open dead twigs at the base of a young cottonwood where it remained for a few minutes allowing excellent observation from only 10 feet. During this time it only hopped around the dead twigs at the base of the tree and was often in full view. It then flew to a group of low shrubs where it sulked, called a couple of times, and eventually flew to the other side of the pool.

Description:

Same general size and shape of a MacGillivray's Warbler. Undertail coverts slightly longer; extending about halfway to the end of tail. Pale gray hood with indistinct edges, and a pale cream wash on throat. Faint narrow whitish eye-ring; almost complete except for break in front of and behind eye. The eye-ring tapered off near the edges, compared to the distinct edges of the eye-crescents of MacGillivray's Warbler. Upperparts olive-green; wings and tail more dark brown with narrow olive feather edges. Underparts mostly bright yellow except for pale cream wash on throat and olive-green wash on flanks. Undertail coverts same bright yellow as belly. Black eye. Bill black with fleshy-colored lower mandible. Legs fairly long and fairly bright flesh-pink.

Voice: Called twice. Both times a flat, low-pitched and wren-like "tcheck."

Similar Species:

From Nashville and Connecticut Warblers

Nashville Warbler may superficially resemble Mourning Warbler, but ~~it~~ has

very different habits, is smaller and less bulky, shows a full eye-ring, yellow throat, does not have a hooded appearance, and has black legs. Connecticut Warblers are plumper than Mourning Warblers, and generally remind me of an Ovenbird's shape. Connecticut Warblers usually walk rather than hop. Connecticut Warblers almost always have thicker complete eye-rings. In cases when they are incomplete, the breaks are much more abrupt than in this bird. This individual's incomplete eye-ring was too slim for any Connecticut. This bird's bill was also too small for a Connecticut Warbler, which have larger bills. Female and immature Connecticut Warbler's underparts are usually not so uniformly bright yellow. They generally show a more blotchy pattern, and are never as uniformly bright. Connecticut Warbler also has undertail coverts that are appreciably longer.

From MacGillivray's Warbler (eye-ring)

MacGillivray's Warbler bears a much stronger resemblance to this bird, overall appearing quite similar. MacGillivray's Warblers however, have different appearing eye-ring than this bird. MacGillivray's Warblers are also not nearly as variable as Mourning Warbler in eye-ring width, extent, color and abruptness. Even the dullest MacGillivray's Warbler shows a *broad* and more *abbreviated* eye-ring than this bird showed. In this individual the ends of the crescents were very indistinct and seemed to gradually disappear. MacGillivray's Warbler would never show this type of indistinct edge to the eye crescents. The eye crescents on this bird were also very narrow. This is another area that is not as variable on MacGillivray's Warbler, which shows broad eye arcs. This individual also showed a nearly full eye-ring, only tapering off and disappearing in front of, and behind, the eye. Female and immature Mourning Warblers are notoriously variable in the extent of the completeness of the eye-ring and can range from indistinct, to distinct but broken, to nearly complete. Luckily, MacGillivray's Warblers are not as variable in this respect and do not show eye-rings that are nearly complete.

Other Points vs. MacGillivray's

Another key difference from this bird and MacGillivray's Warbler are in the species' call notes. There is a clear difference between the two species call notes, though it is difficult for me to describe. This bird's call notes were a fairly flat, low-pitched and wren-like (or yellowthroat-like) "tcheck." The call could even be described as having a slight hint of a buzzy quality. MacGillivray's Warbler's call note is a more abbreviated and hollow sounding "tsic," that is quite different once learned.

While identification was largely based largely on eye-ring differences, and distinct differences in the call notes of the two species, other aspects also suggest Mourning Warbler.

It was difficult to tell, but the undertail coverts on this bird appeared to extend about half way to the end of the tail. MacGillivray's Warbler's undertail coverts extend less than half-way. The throat of this bird was pale creamy white, and undertail coverts were the same bright yellow as the belly and rest of underparts. While not as reliable as voice and eye-ring, both also tend to suggest Mourning Warbler.

Photographs? No

References:

NGS guide, and *Warblers of the Americas* by Jon Curson, David Quinn and David Beadle used during observation. After the observation I also read Peter Pyle and Phil Henderson's article "On Separating Female and Immature *Oporornis* Warblers in the Fall" *Birding*; October 1990. Also helpful were text from forthcoming warbler guide by Jon Dunn et al, and discussion with Tom Schultz (illustrator of this forthcoming guide).

Description from: x Contemporaneous notes; Later Notes; Memory.

Experience with this and similar species: I have experience with all *Oporornis* warblers.

Last summer I worked on the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas, where Mourning Warblers bred in three of my blocks. There, I became very familiar not only with plumage, but with the song, and call note of this species. I just returned (May 18) from Costa Rica, where I saw and heard calling Mourning, and MacGillivray's Warblers in the foothills near Providencia where I was making tape recordings of bird vocalizations. The previous week I had spent 4 days birding eastern Colorado, where I saw (and heard calling) more than twenty MacGillivray's Warblers. Prior to this I have seen many other MacGillivray's in spring, summer and fall in Colorado. I have observed Connecticut Warblers in Wisconsin. Nashville Warblers are very common migrants in Wisconsin, and are summer residents where I was working on the atlas last summer.

Are you positive of the identification ?: Yes.

Signature:

Christopher H. Wolf

Date:

August 18, 1996