

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

HERMIT WARBLER
Dendroica occidentalis

Rec'd 1/20/00 by JCI
 ACCEPT 7-0

Location: Hasty Campground; Lake Hasty; Crowley County; near Las Animas, Colorado.

Date: April 24-25, 1999.

Setting:

I was birding with Brandon Percival and Vic Zerbi at the Hasty Campground. We were birding the larger trees of the campground. I was first drawn to the presence of an unusual "chip" note of a warbler. Brandon heard it too, and we thought that it might be a Black-throated Green. We first found the bird about 15 feet high in an elm. The bird flew from tree to tree as we observed it, traveling a total of about 400 yards during the 15 minutes or so that we observed it in the northeast part of the campground. It was very active and foraged by gleaning in foliage and sometimes out on bare branches, usually low to mid-level in the trees, only sometimes ascending higher in the crowns. It sometimes waved its tail back and forth as it fed on twiglets and small branches, probing cottonwood flowers and sometimes hanging chickadee-like from small twigs. It was quite easy to observe and the chip note (high, flat "tsik", given often) gave it away when we would lose it. We watched it from 5:33 - 5:51 p.m. in perfect, conditions (though heavy overcast). We all used binoculars (mine are B&L Elite 10x40s). We were 15-40 feet from the bird. This description is prepared from notes of the April 24th observation, but the bird was re-seen on April 25th.

Description:

It was an adult male. It was small, about 4 1/2" long, with a medium-long tail and small, thin, sharp, dark-colored bill. Legs and eyes were black. The upperparts were dark gray; the back vaguely streaked with black on dark gray. It had two thin, distinct white wingbars on dark gray wings. The nape was sooty black, but this color did not extend much at all up the back of the crown. The head was overall gleaming, pure, bright yellow, without any black on the forehead or crown. The eye was black and stared starkly from the middle of the bright yellow, spotless face. There was a small black throat patch, or bib, connecting to the lower mandible underneath. The lower edges of the black bib did not connect at the sides to the dark shoulders and back, but was framed by the white underparts. The lower edge of the bib was diffuse, lacking a perfectly clean border. There was no black streaking against the flanks or edges of the breast. The underparts were off-white and white, whiter on the lower belly, vent and undertail coverts. The outer tail feathers were white; the upper surface of the tail was blackish. The tail had a slight notch. There was no yellow at all below the bib and no streaking underneath.

Similar Species:

The small size, thin sharp bill and behavior indicate a warbler. The only close contenders are other *Dendroica*s (Hooded Warbler is yellow underneath, has black crown; Prothonotary lacks black bib and is yellow underneath); Townsend's has a blackish face patch, is yellow underneath, has a greenish back, and extensive flank streaking. Black-throated Green has a face pattern, greenish back, and flank streaking. Golden-cheeked has a black eyeline, black crown and flank streaking. This bird's lack of flank streaking, pure white underparts and gray back indicate it is not a Townsend's x Hermit hybrid.

Experience with Species:

I have seen several Hermit Warblers in California and Arizona. I have seen a male Hermit Warbler once before in Colorado, in 1991 in Pueblo.

This report is prepared from notes made at the time of observation.

Mark Janos
 10 Sedum Ct.
 Pueblo, CO 81001

Mark Janos