

2003-27

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2003

Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form (Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.) Each table cell will automatically enlarge as you type!

CBRC FILE #: 2

RESULTS:

Species: (Common Name) (Scientific Name) *Lucy's Warbler* *Vermivora luciae*

Date(s) of occurrence: April 13th, 2003

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: F Plumage: Breeding?

Exact location: Valco Ponds - 100 yds east of Fish Hatchery Ponds, in line w/ the westernmost power

County: Nearest town: Pueblo Elevation: 4600 grid lines, between the bluff (below power lines) & the river

Length of observation: 15 min? Time(s) of observation: about 9:00-9:30 AM

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: Rich Miller of Pueblo

Other observers who independently saw the bird(s): (They came later) Seetta Moss, Dave Silverman, Mark Yeage

Light conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s) and observers position: bright sun

Optical equipment used: my Leica bins - I didn't notice what bins Rich had

Distance to bird(s) (estimated, unless otherwise noted): between 25-30 feet & 100 feet maybe?

Was (Were) bird(s) photographed? If so, are you submitting photos? Not initially.

Who took the photograph(s)? Seetta Moss did later

Describe the general and specific habitats in which the bird(s) occurred: Russian olive, tamarisk shrubs & an elm tree or

Describe the bird's (birds') behaviors, particularly behaviors that were used in supporting the identification,

e.g., flying, feeding, habits: Constantly flitting & flying - gleaning insects? at farthest out edges of foliage in the elm, which was just starting to leaf out

DESCRIPTION -- This is the most important part of this report. Include in these details the overall size and shape of the bird and give as many plumage details as possible, even including those that you feel might not have relevance to the specific identification. Please fill out this portion even if photos are accompanying your report.

Describe the bird's (birds') call(s) and/or song(s), if noted: No call or song

SIMILAR SPECIES -- This is another critical part of your report. Please discuss how you eliminated similar species from consideration:

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? Have seen lucys in AZ @ Florida

List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how these influenced your identification wash, made (during and after observation): Kaufman, Sibley, Peterson Warbler guide, internet pics. Cany

This report was made from (check one) ___ notes made during observation ☒ notes made after observation ___ later from memory.

Date and time of written report: April 16

Reporting observer: Signature: Myron Ackley

Reporting observer's address: 4 Brooks Place

City: State: Zip: Pueblo CO 81001-1711

Send report to: Colorado Bird Records Committee Tony Leukering PO Box 660 Brighton, CO 80601

DESCRIPTION - DISCUSSION

Initially I wasn't planning to file any report, since the Lucy's Warbler had been subsequently identified by Brandon. But then he kind of urged me to do so, since Rich Miller and I were the first people to see it. So herein is an accounting of what transpired that day: (Sunday, April 13th, 2003)

I had gone out to Valco in hopes of maybe adding a swallow or two and perhaps the Osprey to my year list. I could tell right away that it was going to be pretty dead out there, since it was still fairly early for migrants. But I decided to walk the area anyway, before it got too hot. Then I saw Rich over in the bushes to my left trying to pin down what he thought was a kinglet. So I went over to help him find it. But when the thing finally slowed down and landed long enough for us to get a good look, it had no kinglet fieldmarks! Since the bird was so tiny, we couldn't believe that it wasn't a kinglet and thought that it must be either molting, or appearing in some weird plumage we weren't acquainted with. (Naturally we wouldn't think of something so outlandish as a Lucy's Warbler, since we were obviously NOT in Arizona!) Kaufman was all I had with me, and there were certainly no weird-plumaged Kinglets in there! The bill on the bird was definitely NOT a vireo's, so we started going through the warbler pages. When I covered up both the rump and crown patches with my finger, it looked exactly like our bird. (The Lucy's photograph, I mean.) But we STILL didn't believe it! However, by that time we were beginning to think we were definitely ON to something. So we walked up past the Fish Hatchery Ponds, eventually crossing the bridge and going on down the other side of the river into the Rock Canyon area right across from where we'd seen it--as it had subsequently flown over there. Unfortunately, we never saw it again.

I got back home about 2:00 P.M. and listened to the Thomas Jefferson hour. Then I took a nap. But I couldn't get that funny looking "Kinglet" out of my mind. So I went up to the library (USC campus) and got on the computer. After looking at several different pictures (photos) of Lucy's Warblers found on various websites, I became aware that the crown (particularly) doesn't often show, and sometimes even the rump patch isn't obvious. Factoring in the possibility that the bird could have been a female besides, I became more and more convinced that we HAD seen a Lucy's Warbler! I had sensed that Rich felt reluctant to report it--even to Brandon--so it was up to me. I quickly e-mailed Brandon our description and all the reasons why it couldn't be this and it couldn't be that. I briefly considered putting it on Co-birds, but without actually seeing the tell-tale fieldmarks, I felt pretty shaky. And Brandon was right here to refer to for help anyway.

When I got back home I looked up Lucy's in the fat Peterson guide. And there was the clincher: "The smallest warbler, KINGLET-SIZED (caps mine!), lightly built and very short-tailed." The red rump is not even very obvious on the Peterson photo and the distribution map shows Lucy's breeding quite close by now in southeastern Utah. I now felt quite urgent about having Brandon get out there and refind it--even considered sending him another e-mail. Fortunately I didn't have to, for he was out there at Valco the next day anyway and ran into Rich. (Before he'd even SEEN my e-mail!) Brandon didn't even find it that morning (April 14th) but he DID when he returned late that same afternoon! And of course the rest is history!

(I just realized I haven't really described the bird: all we saw was a tiny, plain gray bird about the size of a Kinglet (!) with a black eye against a gray face and lighter underparts. There were no eye lines, eye rings, wing bars--NOTHING. Even a Warbling Vireo would have had that lighter colored horizontal area above the eye--and the bill wasn't a vireo's anyway. So we had a kinglet-sized bird, flitting about frantically like a warbler with a warbler's bill, but no fieldmarks. And making no sounds--that we could hear anyway. (Neither Rich nor I hear very well!))

P.S. I note that most of the fieldguide drawings show somewhat of an eyering on Lucy's, but if there is one, it is so faint in the field that I'd hardly call it diagnostic. (As compared to a Gnatcatcher, say)

CBRC FILE #: _____

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS – SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD __X__

Species: Lucy's Warbler – *Vermivora luciae*

Date(s): 14 April 2003.

Number seen: one.

Sex: female

Plumage: adult.

Locality: West of Valco Ponds parking lot in Pueblo.

Elevation: unknown.

Nearest town: Pueblo.

County: Pueblo.

Time observed: 350-410pm.

Duration of observation: 20 minutes.

Description (including, habitats, and behaviors):

I was walking toward a leafed out elm tree, when I heard a warbler chipping. I got closer to the elm tree, and then saw a bird. I quickly was able to identify the bird as a Lucy's Warbler. The bird has no color on the upper parts or the under parts. The bill shape was thin and pointed like a warbler. The bird stayed in the elm tree the entire time, and then I left to call other birders. The bird showed off the rusty red rump patch, which was the only color I saw on the bird, other than the overall plain upper parts and under parts. Rich Miller showed me this tree in the morning, as he and Mymm Ackley saw this bird on 13 April 2003 in the same tree.

The description of the bird follows:

The bird was small and warbler shaped, with a small pointed bill. The head was plain gray with no noticeable eye ring. It had a very plain face. The wings were gray, with no wing bars. The back was gray. The upper tail coverts, which the bird showed off twice, were rusty in color. The tail was gray, and bird liked to flip the up and down. The tail did not show any color markings. The chin was washed out gray. The throat was washed out gray. The breast was washed out gray. The belly was washed out gray. The flanks were washed out gray. The sides were washed out gray. The undertail coverts were washed out gray. There were streaks or coloring anywhere on the underparts. The size of bird was a small warbler, not a bigger warbler like Yellow-rumped. The eyes were dark and the legs were dark. The bird was a female, because males have rusty caps, which I didn't see on this bird, and the bird was overall too dull looking for a male.

Similar species eliminated:

Virginia's Warbler can be quite dull, though this species always shows yellow undertail coverts, and eye ring. Nothing is as plain as this bird, with a pointed small warbler bill, with rusty red upper tail coverts.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

The bird gave a loud chip several times.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

I have seen Lucy's Warblers each of the past four years, 1999, 2000, 2001, & 2002 in southeastern Arizona. I have seen all other birds that might be confused with the bird.

Light conditions:

Cloudy, overcast sky, light breeze.

Optical equipment used:

I used 10x42 binoculars.

Distance and how estimated:

15-20 meters, it stayed in the elm tree at eye level the entire time.

Other observers who saw the bird with you:

No one was with me.

Other observers who saw the bird independently:

Rich Miller and Mymm Ackley saw the bird on the 13 April 2003, though they weren't sure about the bird, as they haven't seen them much, and weren't expecting it. SeEtta Moss, Mark Yaeger, Dave Johnson, and Dave Silverman all saw the bird from 530pm-615pm on 14 April 2003.

If photographed, type of equipment and film:

Not photographed by me. SeEtta Moss took some photos, which hopefully will turn out.

List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, ect. Consulted and how this influenced your identification:

None needed.

a) at time of observation:

b) after observation:

This report is from notes made from (check one) ☒ notes made during observation ☒ noted made after observation ☐ later from memory.

Reporting observer: Brandon K. Percival

Signature: *Brandon K. Percival*

Address: 835 Harmony Drive, Pueblo West, CO, 81007-2632

Report finished: 616pm 14 April 2003.

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Lucy's Warbler, Pueblo County, Photos by Seatta Moss

