

Rec'd 1/8/02 (R)

2001-142

SPECIES: Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*)

DATE: September 1, 2001

TIME(S) OF OBSERVATION: 10:30-11:00am (total actual observation time was about 25 minutes)

LOCATION/COUNTY: Prewitt Reservoir; Washington County

HABITAT: Plains riparian habitat; the bird was in a grove of Russian Olives and medium-sized low willow trees; a stand of large, old cottonwoods was immediately south of the observers; ground cover in the immediate area was minimal.

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THIS BIRD:

Dick Schottler, 25 South Indiana Place #1A, Golden, CO 80401
Andrew Spencer, 3649 East Phillips Avenue, Littleton, CO 80122

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT I USED: Zeiss 10x40 binoculars

WEATHER CONDITIONS:

SKY: Mostly clear, clouds building on western horizon **WIND:** West 0-5MPH **TEMP:** 75F

BIRD/SUN ORIENTATION: Light direction varied as we watched this bird move around. Most of the time the light was from behind the observers. The bird stayed in the shade of the trees almost all the time and only a few times was it in direct sunlight.

DISTANCE FROM BIRD AND HOW MEASURED: 15-30 feet (estimate based upon my being 6 feet tall :☺)

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: 1 (one)

SEX: unknown to me

PLUMAGE: First year fall plumage

BEHAVIOR AND DEMEANOR:

The bird was feeding by hopping from branch to branch in the lower branches of the willow trees and occasionally in the Russian Olives. The bird was seen walking along larger branches (vice hopping) a few times and this behavior (walking, not hopping) was noted by all observers each time it was witnessed. The bird stayed in the trees almost exclusively and was only seen on the ground once. The bird seemed to stay in a "zone" of one to four feet off the ground and never was seen higher in the trees than four feet. The bird acted thrush-like and always kept itself "horizontal" (e.g. head, back and tail held parallel to the ground) as it fed. When feeding it would stretch and "crane" its neck to reach its food (presumably) insects on the undersides of leaves. Tail was periodically "flicked" up and down and occasionally sideways. Everytime this bird flew and landed on another branch it would hold its wings down below the level of the

tail giving a "cocked-tail" appearance. The bird showed no fear of us and we were able to move in to within fifteen feet of the bird and we all sat down to watch the bird for about eight minutes!

When I first discovered this bird I instinctively called out "Mac"

HEAD & NECK: Large headed; overall brownish in color when seen in the shade, but with slight grayish hues when the bird was seen in direct sunlight.

EYES & LORES: Eye color was black with bold, unbroken, cream colored eye-ring.

LOWER & UPPER MANDIBLES: Bill was pointed and long (for a warbler); upper mandible dark gray and the lower mandible flesh colored.

LEGS & FEET: Flesh-colored legs and feet.

UPPERPARTS: Back, wings and rump were brownish-green and unmarked (no wing bars).

UNDERPARTS: Throat pale yellow (not whitish); olive breast band extended completely across the breast separating the throat from the belly. This breast band consisted of "rays" or streaks that extended upward to the upper chest. Dick noted that this was likely part of the "hood" that his species shows in the spring. Olive flank color extended up the sides to the bend of the wing and blended in with the breast band. Golden-yellow breast, belly and undertail coverts; Undertail coverts were slightly brighter than the belly and were very long stopping just short of the end of the tail. Dick Schottler was the first to notice this,

RETRICES: Tail appeared short due to the long undertail coverts and the longish wings.

WINGS: On the standing bird the wings were relatively long stopping about halfway down the tail.

VOCALIZATION: The bird was relocated a few times by listening for a nasal, metallic, "CHit" note, which the bird gave infrequently.

ELIMINATION OF SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES: (in fall plumage)

MacGillivray's Warbler – smaller; much shorter undertail coverts; shows grayish or whitish throat in fall; has a "broken" whitish eye-ring.

Mourning Warbler – smaller; much shorter undertail coverts;

Nashville Warbler – smaller; white undertail coverts; head and crown color gray and contrasts with back color; bill not particularly longish.

Canada Warbler – smaller; steel-gray back and wings not brownish-green; this species shows spectacles vice a complete isolated eye-ring; bill not particularly longish.

Magnolia Warbler – females show a distinctive eye-ring but this species has wing bars that were not seen on the Prewitt bird. bill not particularly longish.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

Connecticut Warbler – I have no prior experience with this species.

MacGillivray's Warbler – Have seen hundreds in spring, summer and fall in Colorado.

Mourning Warbler – Have seen 5 in spring in Colorado (1 female, 4 males) and several in Ohio (Crane Creek).

Nashville Warbler – Have seen perhaps 20 in Colorado in the spring and fall.

Canada Warbler – Have only seen one in Colorado (fall) and several in Michigan (spring).

Magnolia Warbler – Have seen several in Colorado (interestingly all were spring birds).

BOOKS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND ADVICE CONSULTED THAT INFLUENCED THIS REPORT:

See comments below.

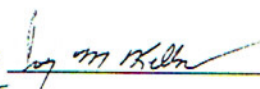
COMMENTS:

When we got back to the car we carefully wrote down everything we could about this bird and specifically did NOT look at any book until we had all the notes down. We then consulted "Warblers" by Dunn & Garrett and National Geographic Society's "Birds of North America", Third Edition.

The two references listed above were used to help me separate Mourning Warbler (since I've never seen one in fall) from fall Connecticut Warbler (since I've never seen this one either).

NAME:

Joey M. Kellner
9500 South Estes Way
Littleton, Colorado 80127

SIGNATURE:

2001-142

Andrew Spencer

rec'd 2/9/02

Species: Connecticut Warbler (*Oporonis agilis*)

Date: September 1, 2001, from 10:30 to 10:55 am

Other Observers: co-found with Joey Kellner and Dick Schottler.

Weather Conditions: sky was sunny, with a few clouds, slight wind, temperature was about 85 F.

Viewing Conditions: The bird was for almost the whole observation in the shade of the trees, only coming out into the sun for a few seconds near the end of the observation. The bird was about 20-40 feet away for the majority of the observation, coming as close as 15 feet occasionally.

Description: Shape: Overall shape was very thrush-like, somewhat chunky. The undertail coverts were VERY long, reaching very nearly to the tip of the tail. The wings were long, reaching at from about a third to half of the way to the tip of the tail when viewed from above. The tail appeared very short, further accentuated by the long undertail coverts. The head was chunky, and the bill was long and heavy. The overall profile of the bird was horizontal, with the head almost being an extension of the body, with the head barely, if at all, sticking above the back.

Plumage: The lower mandible of the bill was flesh colored, and the upper mandible was dark. The cap was a grayish-brown, and in good light (which was rare in those viewing conditions) it appeared to me to be entirely brownish. There was a bold whitish eye ring completely around the eye that to me appeared unbroken. The throat was a pale yellow. There was a grayish brown breast band that went completely around the chest, and with necklace like rays extending onto the upper chest. Dick pointed out that this was a continuation of the brown hood, separating the yellow chest and belly from the much paler throat. The flanks were a grayish olive green, and very striking, extending from the lower belly to the shoulder in the wing, and merging with the breast band, making the breast band look thickest near the wing. The belly and lower chest was a fairly bright yellow, and the undertail coverts were also yellow, and just a bit brighter than the belly, contrasting slightly in good light. The back and wings were and brownish olive. There were no wingbars on the wings. The rump, uppertail coverts and the upperside of the tail were an olive color, a little greener with less of a brown component than the back, and had no other markings. The underside of the tail (or the little of it that was not covered by the undertail coverts) was unmarked, and was an olive color. The legs were flesh colored.

Behavior: The whole time we saw the bird was on the ground only once, and would normally remain about two to four feet up in the dense foliage and branches of the trees. The bird would hop from branch to branch, but once on the branch it would walk along the branch. Interestingly, it would sometimes hop onto the barbed wire fence, and sit on it with its tail slightly cocked. The bird would often wag its tail gently down, and would hold its wings below the rump and tail for most of the time. It was unafraid of us, and would often come out into the open, affording repeated awesome looks.

Calls: The bird would call fairly often, a metallic and a little bit nasal "chit" with the emphasis on the "ch". It sounded somewhat like the Mourning Warbler on tape, but less raspy and a little bit more nasal. Often, we would locate the bird by this chip.

Similar Species: MacGillivray's Warbler was ruled out by a combination of the yellow throat, the complete eye ring, the brown colored cap and breast band, the overall shape and the overall behavior. It was much more difficult to rule out Mourning Warbler, as this bird showed many characteristics similar to a first fall female Mourning Warbler. Even though this bird had a yellow throat, it was still within the range of a first fall Connecticut, and it was pale, not a brighter yellow. Also, this bird showed a complete and brownish breast band that had rays extending onto the chest, unlike the broken breast band of a Mourning Warbler. The eye ring on this bird was bold and heavy and went completely around the eye, and was not thin and light like the eye rings of Mourning Warblers with complete eye rings. The overall shape of this bird was bulkier than a Mourning, and the profile of this bird has horizontal rather than the vertical profile of Mourning Warblers. The undertail coverts were longer than those on Mourning Warblers. The overall behavior was more like that of a Connecticut. Even though the bird would remain in the low trees it would walk on the branches rather than hop as a Mourning Warbler would. Common

Yellowthroat was ruled out by the shape, behavior, leg color, bold eye ring and the complete neck ring separating the yellow throat and underparts.

Previous experience: I have seen a few Connecticut Warblers on the east coast, though none well, and none in this particular plumage. I have seen many Mourning Warblers on the east coast in all plumages, and well.

I used a pair of 10X40 Baush and Lomb elites. This write up was made from notes taken during the observation.