

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

PHILADELPHIA VIREO

Vireo philadelphicus

Location: Lamar Community College/Willow Creek; Lamar; Prowers County, Colorado

Date: September 5, 1998

Background:

I was birding this area alone in the late morning. A number of eastern vagrants, including Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackpoll, Tennessee Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, Nashville Warbler and Red-eyed Vireo were present. I had made several passes through the area when I came upon the Philadelphia Vireo in company with a Red-eyed Vireo. It was feeding silently about 6-10 feet high in cottonwoods. It was moving very slowly. I watched it for less than five minutes at about 11:00 a.m., but conditions were good and I observed it at a range of about 20 feet with my B & L Elite 10x40 binoculars. This area is a riparian woodland with heavy understory. It was very overgrown with rank, head-high weeds in September.

Description:

This was a medium-sized bird, about 4 1/2 - 5" long -- it was about the size of a Warbling Vireo. It was stubby, short-tailed and bull-headed. The bill was stout, blunt and slightly hooked, but without a pointed tip. The cap was gray, contrasting with the greener back and wings. There were no wingbars. There was an indistinct, up-curving, white supercilium. There was a dark, blackish line from the bill to just through the eye. The undersides were bright yellow, including all of the throat, breast and belly -- this included the flanks, not just the center. This yellow color was paler on the undertail coverts.


Similar Species:

The small size, slender build, small bill and general coloration and pattern indicate a warbler or vireo. Warblers have slender, sharp bills that lack the blunt tip of this bird's bill. The contrasting gray crown, dark line through the eye and lack of wingbars eliminate Bell's Vireo. Warbling Vireo is most similar, but it has light lores, and lacks the yellow center to the breast and throat.

Experience with Species:

I have seen all of the Colorado vireos and most warblers. I have seen several Philadelphia Vireos in other states and twice before in Colorado.

This report was prepared from notes made immediately after observation.


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