

A
52-93-65

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

WORM-EATING WARBLER

Helminthos vermivorus

Location: Willow Creek; Lamar; Prowers County, Colorado

Date: May 1, 1993

Setting:

Brandon Percival pointed out this bird as he walked along with Stephen Addinall and ^{me} at about 5:20 p.m. on May 1. The sky was overcast but brightening from the rain and low clouds from earlier. The bird foraged low in heavy bushes and we lost it after a few brief glimpses by two of us. I refound the bird about five minutes later as it foraged in leaf litter on the ground. The bird gradually worked up into view and gave us all about 20 minutes of superb looks from as close as 20 feet. We observed it in our binoculars as it fed in dense tangles and brush, sometimes in clear view and sometimes hidden, especially as it investigated dead leaf clumps. The bird moved quite slowly and could be hard to see because of its lazy, slow-moving feeding style. We never saw it above about 6 feet high. When it flew away it gave two buzzy "bzeet" flight calls that reminded me of a Lazuli Bunting call.

Description:

This was a medium-sized, slow-moving warbler that foraged in heavy tangles rather close to the ground. It was about 5" long overall. It had a prominent pinkish bill that was tapered and sharply pointed. It had pink legs and feet. The back, wings, rump and tail were a clear dull olive color without wingbars or other markings. The head, chin, throat and breast were a beautiful golden buff color. The lower breast faded to a duller buff color and the undertail coverts were pale buff. The golden buff head was overlain by 4 prominent black stripes: two lateral crown strips and two clear black eyelines. The four black stripes were separated by a buffy orange central crown stripe and by a buffy orange superciliary on each side. The black lines began at the bill and curved back over the crown and along the sides of the head to connect with the dull olive upper back. This gave the bird a very striking appearance for what is essentially a plain bird.

Similar Species:

Sparrows can be ruled out by this bird's slender shape and the long, slender, pointed bill. Vireos have heavy, slightly hooked bills. Warbling Vireo is chunkier, and lacks the head stripes. Philadelphia Vireo has yellow tones totally lacking in this bird and lacks the black head stripes. Tennessee Warbler has whiter underparts, a grey crown and lacks the head stripes. Orange-crowned Warbler lacks the crown stripes and is yellower below. Virginia's and Nashville warblers have yellow breasts and lack the head strips. Female Black-throated Blue Warbler shows a whitish spot in the wing and lacks the crown stripes. Swainson's Warbler lacks the golden or orange tones to the foreparts, has a rufous cap and possess a dark brown, not black, eyestripe.

Experience with Species:

I have seen one Worm-eating Warbler in Colorado, in May 1989 at La Junta. I have seen others, including many during spring migration on the Texas coast. I have seen all other similar birds discussed above.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

Mark

Mark Janos
10 Sedum Ct.
Pueblo, CO 81001

Colorado Field Ornithologists - Sight Record Form

- New State Record ----------
- X - Rare bird in CO ----------
Worm-eating Warbler
(Species)-----
Helmitheros vermivorus
(Scientific name)

Date(s):

May 1, 1993 5:20-6:00 PM 15 minutes.

Locality:

Lamar Community College in the woods behind the college,
Lamar, Prowers County.

Nearest town, county and state)

Optical equipment:

10X40 Bausch & Lomb Custom Binoculars.

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used:
not photographed.

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: unknown Plumage: adult

Light Conditions:

excellent

Distance from bird and how measured:

15-30 feet.

Describe the bird's overall behavior:

The bird stayed low in the bushes and trees and it once was about 6 feet above the ground when it flew above us across the trail to some other trees. The bird moved with a Wilson's Warbler at first and later it was near a female Chestnut-sided Warbler that Mark Janos found. The main reason for the birds in the area was due to a most of the day drizzle that put birds down however at this time it was clear.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

The bird was seen low in bushes and trees in the woods behind Lamar Community College. Trees were cottonwoods. The bird was seen on the ground twice.

Other observers who independently identified the bird

(Please list names and address):

Mark Janos 10 Sedum Court Pueblo, Colorado 81001
(719-544-5002)

Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. The field marks used to identify the bird. Include Size, overall shape, plumage, and color pattern; details on shape of bill, wings, and tail.:

I identified the bird by its warbler size and shape, by its four dark black stripes on the head over the buffy orange colored head. The bird seemed larger than the Wilson's Warbler by an inch. This warbler was about 5 inches in length. The bird's shape was typical warbler shaped. The bird was in adult plumage. The color pattern as follows: The bill was all straw colored. Black eyes. Four black stripes on the head. One stripe on each eye, one stripe on each side of the crown. Between the black stripes it was buffy orange, the crown was this color. The head, face, throat, breast, underparts, were all buffy orange. A white buff color on the undertail coverts, buffy orange color on legs and feet. The back and wings and tail were all olive green. The bird seemed to have a short tail. The bill was thin like warblers. The wings were typical warbler shaped. The tail was short and squared.

Describe the bird's calls or sounds if heard:

The bird gave seet-seet call twice when it flew over us.

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

None

Prior experience with this and similar species:

This is my first Worm-eating Warbler.

Field Guides used to determine sighting:

National Geographic Society's Birds of North American

This report was written from notes made during _____ after X;
from memory _____.

Name: Brandon K. Percival

Mailing address: 835 Harmony Dr.

Pueblo West, Colorado 81007-2604

(719)-547-3722

Signature: Brandon K. Percival

Return form to: Bill Prather

C.F.O. Official Records Committee

13810 Weld County Road 1

Longmont, Colorado 80504