

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

CFO-ORC FILE # 2001-123

NEW STATE RECORD ☐ UNUSUAL RECORD ☒

**Species:** Worm-eating Warbler (*Helminthos vermivora*)

**Date:** 22 April 2001

**Number seen:** one

**Sex:** ?

**Plumage:** Alternate

**Locality:** Ft. Lyon Wildlife Easement

**Elevation:** about 3870'

**Nearest town:** Ft. Lyon

**County:** Bent

**Time observed:** mid-morning

**Duration of observation:** off and on for about 3 minutes

**Description:** Larry and I arrived at Ft. Lyon Wildlife Easement to find Mark Janos' car in the parking area, so we knew that Mark and Brandon were there. I called Brandon on the radio and Mark responded that we ought to get our butts to the 'Tornado Grove' as the two of them had a large number of 'good' birds, including a Worm-eating Warbler (WEWA). Larry and I drove into the Tornado Grove and hurried to where they were on the east side of the Grove. We eventually both got to see the bird fairly well as it foraged in typical WEWA fashion: inspecting dead leaves suspended in the vegetation in both understory and canopy layers, particularly the former.

The WEWA was a smallish warbler that was mostly an odd, warm, brownish-tan color below, a medium brown above, and with a strong head pattern of black lateral crown stripes and eyelines. The bill was somewhat substantial for a warbler, but I didn't see it well enough to determine its color pattern. I actually saw well the diagnostic undertail coverts: buffy with grayish centers. The wings were plain, as was the tail. The eyes were dark.

Similar species eliminated by description: There really aren't any confusion species with WEWA, at least not in the regular North American parulid fauna. All sparrows are easily ruled out by bill shape (it was thin and pointed, unlike the thicker, more conical bills of sparrows). Additionally, the odd coloration, head and undertail coverts patterns, and foraging strategy eliminate any exceedingly unlikely parulid possibilities (e.g., Three-striped or Golden-crowned).

**Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):** I did not hear this bird.

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species?** I have seen >70 WEWAs. Since there really aren't any similarly-appearing species....

**Light conditions:** sun obstructed by heavy canopy cover

**Optical equipment used:** Swarovski 8.5x42

**Distance, and how estimated:** estimated closest distance at ~7 meters

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Brandon Percival, Mark Janos, Larry Semo

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** none?

**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** I did not photograph; I think Larry videotaped it


**List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:**

**a) at time of observation:** none

**b) after observation:** none

**Reporting observer:** Tony Leukering

**Signature:**



**Address:** Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80601

**Date report was written:** 9 December 2001 from brief notes I wrote the evening of the sighting



# Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

(This is a two-page report. Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.)

Each table cell will automatically enlarge as you type!

CFO-RC FILE X:

RESULTS:

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Species:(Common Name): <b>Worm-eating Warbler</b>   |   | (Scientific Name) <b>Helmitheros vermivorus</b> |
| Date(s) of occurrence: <b>April, 22, 2001</b>   |   |   |
| Number of birds seen: <b>One</b>  | Sex: <b>Unknown</b>   | Plumage: <b>Alternate</b>                       |
| Exact Location: <b>Fort Lyons State Wildlife Area</b>   |   |   |
| County: <b>Bent</b>   | Nearest town: <b>Fort Lyons</b>                                 | Elevation: <b>XX msl</b>                        |
| Length of observation: <b>Approximately five minutes</b>  | Time(s) of observation: <b>Mid-morning</b>                      |   |
| Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: <b>Brandon Percival, Tony Leukering, Mark Janos</b>   |   |   |
| Other Observers who independently saw the bird(s): <b>None known</b>  |   |   |
| Light Conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s); position): <b>Good. Bird was to east and sun was to slightly west of myself</b> |   |   |
| Optical equipment used: <b>7 x 42 Zeiss Bins</b>  |   |   |
| Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): <b>Varied. Closest distance was perhaps 20 feet</b>                             |   |   |
| Was bird(s) photographed? <b>Yes, Sony video</b>  | If so, have you submitted photos? <b>Yes, stills from video</b> |   |
| Who took the photographs? <b>Myself</b>   |   |   |

Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred: **Wooded area dominated by Siberian Elm and Cottonwood.**

Describe the bird's behavior (flying, feeding, habits, behaviors used in identifying the Species or in supporting the identification): **Bird was observed actively foraging low shrubs and trees, and also on leaf litter.**

Describe the bird in detail. This is the most important part of this report. Include the overall size and shape and how you placed the bird in the general group that you did. Give complete details of plumage, including head, throat, undersides, nape, back, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird(s). Describe other important details, such as color and shape of bill, legs, eye, (etc.) that were important in making the identification. (Fill out this portion even if photographs are submitted; you may attach additional sheets, drawings, field sketches or copy field notes):

Having heard Brandon and Mark on the radio telling us of the Worm-eating Warbler present near the "Tornado Grove" on the north edge of the wooded portion of the State Wildlife Area, Tony and I hurried to the location. It took a few minutes to find the bird, which was foraging continually in the leaf litter on the ground and also in shrubs and low trees. The bird actively foraged and it was difficult to obtain quality video footage during the observation.

The bird was obviously a warbler, being small, active, with a thin, relatively long bill. The bill was long for a warbler with a straight culmen and a somewhat upward angled lower mandible. The head was thick and flat-crowned. The neck was thick. The basal coloration of the head, neck and throat was a mainly buffy. There were two obvious dark lateral head stripes extending from the dorsal portion of the bill base rearward to the hindneck; the two dark lateral head stripes were separated by a buffy median crown stripe. There was also another dark head stripe that extended from the lores rearward through the black eye to the rear neck.

The breast, flanks, and vent seemed a creamy color, somewhat lighter than the basal color of the anterior ventral portions of the bird. The upperparts were a muddy olive-brown with no wingbars. The tail was similar in color to the rest of the upperparts. The tail was generally square-tipped, except when agitated when the tail exhibited a slight forked look. The legs were a dull pink.







Describe bird's call or song: **None heard**

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them: **The only other warbler species that has a somewhat similar appearance could be Swainson's Warbler, which has a thicker shape, has a rufous crown (lacking lateral head stripes), and a whiter vent.**

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? **I have observed numerous other Worm-eating Warblers in Wisconsin, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. This was my first observation of this species in Colorado.**

List books, guides, recordings or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): **None**

This report is from notes made during or after **XX** observation or later from memory

Date of written report: **02/12/03**

Reporting observer: **Larry Semo**

Signature:

*Larry Semo*

Reporting Observer's Address: **9054 Dover Street**

City: **Westminster**

State: **Colorado**

Zip: **80021**

Send report to:  
Colorado Birds Record Committee  
c/o Tony Leukering  
Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory