

RARE BIRD SIGHTING

A

Species: Golden-winged Warbler - *Vermivora chrysoptera*

Date: May 12, 1985 Time Bird Seen: Did not note the hour at the time, but it was probably between 11:00 am and noon.

Locality: Bonny Reservoir, Yuma County, Colorado. Near Wagon Wheel Campground at southeast corner of reservoir.

Optical Equipment: 8x40 binoculars

Number of birds seen: One Sex: Female Plumage: Spring

Light Conditions: Good; sun and light shade. Sun behind observers.

Distance from Bird: 30 feet at closest, 50 feet most of the time; estimated.

Behavior: Bird was moving about among and along branches of trees 10 to 20 feet (estimated) above ground, searching for insects. Did not seem disturbed by observers' presence and allowed unobstructed views. Its movements were quick, but not exceptionally so for a warbler.

Habitat: A strip of willows and some cottonwoods leading from the lake along low and locally boggy ground. There are a few shrubs in the understory, but the cover was not dense. Ground cover was grass. Bird was mostly in the willows.

Other Observer: Vic Zerbi, Glenwood Springs, Colorado

Description: Size and shape were typical of most warblers, bigger than a kinglet, smaller than most sparrows, slenderer than either. Moderate length tail extended beyond tips of folded wings. Overall color was gray and white, except for a broad, conspicuous light yellow patch on the wing, formed from two wing bars so wide they pretty well merged into one. Forehead and part of the crown were greenish yellow. Dark ear patch extending forward through eye, separated by white from dark throat. These markings were not dark black and clearly defined as in pictures of the male, but rather were a bit fuzzy, possibly because of gray feathers mixed with the black. Bill was straight and slender.

Voice: This bird was silent.

Similar Species: Yellow-rumped warblers were present in the vicinity, readily distinguished by yellow on rump and throat (especially throat), black or streaky breast band, and white on wings. Combination of black throat and yellow wing patch is diagnostic of golden-winged warbler.

Prior Experience: When I lived in the east (until 1954) I was familiar with quite a few warblers, including myrtle and magnolia and black-throated green. The golden-winged I saw only once or twice back there. Since coming to Colorado the only warbler I see regularly that at all resembles the golden-wing is the yellow-rump; I also see black-throated grays occasionally, and despite a black throat and gray back, they don't look much like the golden-wing.

This report was written a week after the observation from memory.

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