

DOCUMENTATION --
RARE BIRD SIGHTING

RWS

MOUNTAIN WEST REGION
AMERICAN BIRDS

A

Species: Kentucky Warbler
(Vernacular name)Oporornis formosus
(Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): 5/16/79 Time Bird Seen: 9:00 AM to 9:30 AMLocality: University of Colorado, Boulder Campus--in the back yard of the Koenig Alumni Center at the corner of Broadway and University Ave., near Varsity Pond.
Nearest town, county and state: Boulder, ColoradoOptical equipment: 7 X 35 Bushnell Sport View wide angle binoculars.

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: _____

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: Male Plumage: BreedingLight conditions: Excellent--a sunny day.Distance from bird, and how measured: 20-30 feet--paced off.

Describe the bird's overall behavior: It stayed low to the ground in shrubbery along a wooden fence. Usually seen only when it flew from one bush to another; quite sedentary when perched. I saw the bird well when it perched on a bare branch low in a conifer, where it remained stationary for 15-30 seconds. The bird sang on numerous occasions, but never when it was in view.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird: A well manicured garden with scattered shrubbery along a solid wooden fence about 5 feet in height.

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):
Steve Larsen (Larson ?), Boulder, Colorado

Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. Emphasize particularly the field marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field.

The bird was large for a warbler, appearing almost the size of a waterthrush or ovenbird. The upperparts were uniform olive, with no wingbars, and the underparts were uniform bright yellow, including the undertail coverts. The most striking pattern was on the head; there was a black mask extending from the beak back through the eye and then curling down under the eye to give an effect like sideburns. A very wide yellow eyering with an extension forward to the beak was very noticeable, even more obvious than the white "spectacles" of a solitary vireo. The bill, wings, and tail all seemed normally proportioned for a warbler of its size, although the tail did appear somewhat short because of the long undertail coverts. I do not particularly remember the color of the bill or the legs as I saw them in the field. I should add that the throat of this bird was bright yellow (clearly seen in the field).

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

We originally located the bird because of its song, which we heard from about 50 yards away on the opposite side of the fence. I assume the bird sang from a low perch, but perhaps from the ground. The song was loud, and reminded me of a Carolina Wren. It consisted of 3 consecutive phrases of 2 syllables each, with the accent on the first syllable. A ringing quality to the

Yellowthroat: This bird was too large, different song, and had the yellow eyering.

Wilson's warbler: The criticisms above, plus Wilson's warbler lacks the black mask.

Other Oporornis warblers: They all lack the yellow throat and the black mask and yellow eyering.

Yellow-breasted chat: This bird was too small, had a very different song, and lacked the chat's white eyestripe.

Prior experience with this and similar species:

I have seen all of the "similar species" listed above, but this was the first time that I had seen a Kentucky warbler. The bird was so distinctive, however, that I am certain of my identification.

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

NAME (print): Michael Manson

Mailing address: 1300 Sumac Ave., Boulder, Colorado 80302

Signature:

Return to:

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