

A. Riedman

Observer: Steven Feldstein

Species: Pine Warbler (*Dendroica pinus*)

52-93-10

Date and time of observation: Nov. 20, 1992, 2:00 pm.

Weather: Overcast with scattered snowshowers

Duration of observation: Approx. 3 min

Bird-sun orientation: Sun not visible due to overcast conditions

Distance from bird: Approx. 2-10 yards

Optical equipment: No binoculars

Habitat: In Ponderosa Pines in a building on the University of Colorado east campus in Boulder.

The bird was observed outside my office window. Since I was at work, I did not have binoculars available. Nevertheless, the bird remained in close view as it perched in a branch of a Ponderosa Pine that is about two yards from my office window. As a result, I could obtain a good close up look of the bird for a period of about three minutes. The bird also remained in the same tree at a distance of about 5-10 yards for another 10 minutes. However, without the aid of binoculars, that distance was too far to further aid in identification of the bird. The bird and a single Black-capped Chickadee both appeared in the Ponderosa Pine tree at the beginning of a brief snow shower. Once the snow shower subsided, both birds departed and were not seen again. The bird was seen to fly from one part of the Ponderosa Pine tree to another. Its movements were much slower than that of most other warblers, and it would remain perched in any one location for about one minute. It did not feed nor could I hear (the window was closed) whether it called during the time of the observation. The bird appeared to be about the same size or possibly slightly larger than the Black-capped Chickadee that was in its company.

The shape of the bird was typical that of a warbler as it was a small slender bird with a long thin bill and a square shaped tail. Its crown, nape, back, rump, and upper surface of its tail appeared to be a uniform olive brown. There was no evidence of any streaking on its upperparts. Its wings were slightly darker than its upperparts and there were two dull white but conspicuous wing bars. The breast of the bird was fairly bright yellow in color. It appeared to be only slightly duller than that of a typical adult Pine Warbler. In addition, there was no streaking on either the center or the sides of the breast. Furthermore, the yellow on the sides of the breast extended slightly upward toward the neck. This reminded me of the yellow extension to the side of the neck on a Cape May Warbler, but it was much less extensive. The yellow on the breast contrasted sharply with the belly which was dull white in color. The whitish belly had a slight brownish tinge. There was no streaking evident anywhere on the belly. The undertail coverts were white and the undersurface of the tail exhibited two white oval shaped spots. The face of the bird showed a faint whitish supercilium. There was no obvious eye-ring and no other obvious field marks on its face. The bill was long and thin (like the bill of most *Dendroica* warblers), except that it appeared to be noticeably longer than that on most warbler species, and the upper and lower mandibles of its bill were both black. Also, the legs on the bird were uniformly black. The bird did not exhibit any distinctive behavior such as flicking its wings or raising and lowering its tail.

These field marks suggest to me that this bird is an immature male Pine Warbler. The absence of streaking on the sides and the faint supercilium suggest that this is an immature bird. Furthermore, the brightness of the breast suggests that it is a male since immature female Pine Warblers tend to have a rather dull yellow breast.

Similar species that one could confuse Pine Warbler with are Yellow-throated Vireo, Prairie Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Olive Warbler. I have had field experience with all of these species. Yellow-throated Vireo was eliminated for the following reasons. The bird observed had a long thin bill and not a shorter sharply hooked bill as in a Yellow-throated Vireo. The bird observed had only a faint supercilium unlike that bright yellow spectacles on a Yellow-throated Vireo. The rump of the bird was olive-brown not grey as in Yellow-throated Vireo. Furthermore, its back was olive brown and not green as in a Yellow-throated Vireo. Prairie Warbler could be eliminated as the bird had very obvious white wing bars unlike the faint wing bars on a Prairie Warbler. The belly of the bird was white, not like a Prairie Warbler which has a yellow belly and only white undertail coverts. Furthermore the bird did not have streaking on its sides and flanks whereas Prairie Warblers does have streaking in these regions. Blackpoll Warbler can also be eliminated as the bird did not have streaking on the back and the breast, and the bird had dark legs. Also, Bay-breasted Warbler can be eliminated as the bird lacked streaking on the back, its back was olive-brown and not green, and its breast was much brighter yellow than is seen on Bay-breasted Warblers. Lastly, adult female or immature Olive Warbler can be eliminated as the bird did not have the dark ear patch nor the grey upperparts that is characteristic of Olive Warblers.

Pine Warbler is a bird that I have had much experience with as it is a common breeding species in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Ontario where I previously lived. I have probably seen about one hundred Pine Warblers before the present observation. The above description of the Pine Warbler was written in the late afternoon at home on the day of the observation. A field guide was never consulted in writing the above description of the observed bird. However, the National Geographic Society field guide and the Advanced Birding Guide by Kenn Kaufmann were consulted only for the purposes of comparing Pine Warbler with similar species. These guides were consulted only after the documentation of the observed bird was completed.

The bird was subsequently seen the following day on November 21, and on December 1, 2, and 9, 1992.

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