

1998-125

ACCEPTED (7-0)

PINE WARBLER (*Dendroica pinus*)

mid 6-30-98 ✓

DATE/TIME:

1905-1935 hours, June 15, 1998.

NUMBER/AGE/SEX OF BIRD:

1, unknown age, male (?).

LOCATION:

Comanche National Grassland, Little Washington Work Center (T32N, R46W, Sec. 4 SW), Baca County, Colorado. Approximately 7 miles south of Springfield, CO.

OBSERVERS/OPTICS:

Jeff Chynoweth, Shawn Conrad, Jen Dose, Dan Svingen, and Ila Svingen (Emily Svingen, age 1, was also present, but unimpressed). 8x42 binos (5 pairs).

DESCRIPTION DETAILS:

Jeff and I were working the south side of the yard when I (Dan) saw a warbler 20' high in a ponderosa pine. I was able to see a plain greenish back and yellow somewhere on the ventrum, and called Jeff over, thinking the bird would turn out to be a MacGillivray's or Nashville Warbler (ok, ok, I know neither looks anything like a Pine Warbler (PIWA), but I was holding a bouncing baby at the time!). At my next look I saw the wingbars and relatively long tail and asked "what is that?". Jeff, a native Alabamian, glanced at the bird with his binoculars, then turned to me with a nonchalant, "oh, its a Pine Warbler". I then ran in the house and got Ila. After she had had a minute long look, I gave her the baby and was able to enjoy the bird at length. Emily and I then ran to get Shawn and Jen (biological technicians for the Forest Service, and beginning birders). After everyone had had more good looks, I dictated field notes to Jen while watching the bird and before consulting any field guide (I did consult "Colorado Birds: status and distribution"). I then typed the field notes into this format an hour later.

WEATHER/LIGHT:

Beautiful conditions. Sky was clear, with the temperature about 65 degrees fahrenheit. Color discretion good, but colors "warmed" by early evening light conditions (local sunset at about 2020 hours).

DISTANCE:

Bird most often seen from about 50', with range from 20 to 100'.

BEHAVIOR:

Bird fed deliberately, picking along Ponderosa Pine branches, with seemlily special attention to terminal needle whorls. Bird hopped or flew from branch to branch, moving up and down crown. Fed from third-lowest branch whorl to crown. Several times perched for several seconds on adjacent dead deciduous tree branches, allowing unobstructed views (several unobstructed

views also gained while bird was in pines). The Pine Warbler then flew to the next closest Ponderosa Pine (bypassing several ash trees), and fed high in the crown.

#### OVERALL IMPRESSION/SIZE/SHAPE:

In order of noticeability, the most striking features on this warbler (evident even while holding a baby) were: 1) bright yellow on the ventrum (turned out to be its throat), 2) whitish belly, 3) long tail, 4) two dull wingbars, and 5) greenish crown and back.

Even a momentary look impressed all observers with the bird's large size and long tail.

#### HEAD:

Dark, slightly decurved, warbler-like bill. Yellow supraloral stripe extended posteriorly to become yellow supercilium. Lores dusky olive. Bright, greenish-olive crown was a shade or two brighter than similarly colored nape or mantle. Plain, dull olive face. Supercilium set off by olive crown and darker cheek patch. Darker olive feathering anterior and posterior to eye gave hint of a darker eyestripe. Very narrow, faint whitish eyering (we did not note whether this eyering was "complete" or "split"). Lower face was dull yellow, which wrapped up and behind auriculars to form a narrow "half-collar", stopping at nape (i.e. collar did not connect across dorsal surface of neck). Chin and throat bright, unmarked yellow.

#### UPPERPARTS:

Mantle unstreaked greenish-olive. On folded wing, exposed remiges dull gray, with no light edging (or at most, a slightly lighter gray tone). Lesser coverts concolor with mantle. Two dull white wingbars, formed by light edgings to median and greater coverts. Primary extension not noted.

#### UNDERPARTS:

Bright yellow of throat extended posteriorly onto the middle portion of upper breast. Upper breast sides dull greenish-yellow, with blurry dark-gray streaks. Moderate amount of streaking extended posteriorly along upper flanks. At mid-chest, yellow faded abruptly into off-white or light gray lower belly, vent, and undertail coverts. Grayish legs.

#### TAIL:

Tail length judged to be almost one body length. Dorsal surface appeared dull dark gray, but exact shade not noted. Ventral surface of retrices specifically studied by all observers while bird perched overhead (and facing away). Two large, dull, white tailspots started just posterior of undertail coverts and ended just anterior to lateral tail-tip (white extended to tail tip in middle portion of tail, making the dark border at tail tip look like two dark "ticks" on either side of folded tail).

#### VOCALIZATIONS:

I heard no vocalizations, but Jeff heard a "tsick" chip note.

#### HABITAT:

Residential yard (farmstead) along US Highway 287. Bird was most frequently found in the 30'



tall and 50' tall Ponderosa pines on the south side of the yard. The bird also perched for short periods in adjacent elms.

#### IDENTIFICATION:

The Pine Warbler is a distinctive bird, especially in spring, when its main i.d. contenders (such as fall Blackpoll and Bay-breasted Warblers) are well-marked and typically very different from spring PIWA. Comparisons follow, although some pairings would require a bird in unseasonable plumage (example: basic plumage when alternate plumage would be expected....I know that such things can happen in other bird groups can happen, and so will assume that it is possible in warblers as well).

#### Blackpoll Warbler and Bay-breasted Warblers:

Assuming a fall-plumaged BLAC or BBWA in early June is possible, our PIWA would be distinguished from them by: 1) its long tail, estimated in the field to be an entire body length long (I don't know if it was in reality, only that the tail was so long that it looked that way...I'd be interested in measuring some specimens). 2) larger white tailspots, 3) relatively dull white wingbars, 3) marked contrast between throat and face (this would have been less obvious on a fall-plumaged BLAC or BBWA), 4) "hooked" pattern of yellow extending up and behind auriculars (this pattern absent in BLAC or BBWA), 5) unstreaked (not streaked) back. 6) dark gray (not light colored) legs.

#### Cape-May Warbler:

I believe this is the main i.d. contender of PIWA during spring. Because of this, I specifically asked the other observers to note this bird's rump color, so that we could discuss this species pairing in the documentation. Jeff's response was "this bird looks nothing like a CMWA!". Shawn, Jen and I continued to watch however, until the bird turned and showed us its rump, which was olive-green (concolor with the back), not the brighter yellow characteristic of CMWA. CMWA further eliminated by structure, as the bird we saw had a larger bill, longer tail and larger body than CMWAs. In addition, the edging on our bird's remiges showed only slight contrast with the rest of the feather (unlike the greenish edging seen on CMWA) had an unstreaked back, and only limited ventral streaking (much less than in typical CMWA).

#### Orange-crowned Warbler:

This species can have a bright yellow throat becoming duller on upper breast, dully streaked breast, yellowish supercilium set-off by darker face, and a relatively long tail (all of which match our bird). Our bird however, had an even longer tail, whitish (not yellowish) lower breast and belly, two very large ventral tail spots (absent in OCWA), greenish (not brownish) back, and two wingbars (absent in OCWA).

#### OBSERVER EXPERIENCE

I have seen a few hundred PIWA in the last 20 years, in MN, TX, AL, NC, SC, VA, KY. Jeff has seen thousands across the eastern U.S. Both Jeff and Ila have seen hundreds of PIWA in their native Alabama.

#### REMARKS:

We have no camera, so no photographs were taken. The date seems unusually late to me for a wandering spring migrant of this species (a "semi-hardy" which moves early and stays late). Interestingly, the night preceding this sighting, we had been hit by the first strong summer storm, which dumped about 1" of rain, driven by heavy west winds.

cc: M. Janos, June 21, 1998  
cc: B. Percival, June 21, 1998  
cc: R. Stevens, June 21, 1998

Dan Sorenson

Gen Dese

Shawn Conrad unavailable (on fire assignment)

He Singer