

1997-84
ACCEPTED 7-0

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER

Dendroica fusca

Location: Ft. Lyon Wildlife Easement; Las Animas; Bent County, Colorado

Date: May 2, 1997 (Also seen by Bob Dickson on May 3rd)

Background:

I was birding the Ft. Lyon Wildlife Easement alone late morning on May 2nd. It was extremely blustery and overcast. There was obviously a small front of some kind moving through and the conditions were difficult. I was not expecting to see much and at the start, I didn't. However on the way back to the car I ran into a very large group of warblers, about 100 strong. They were primarily Yellow-rumpeds but there were also Wilson's, Yellow, Virginia's, a single Black-throated Green, a female Black-and-White and this female Blackburnian. The Blackburnian miraculously landed on the tip a small dead branch about 15 feet high, but just at eye level for me as I was standing up on the edge of the canal at the time. I observed the bird for about a minute and a half, most of which time it was perched sideways to me at or below eye level. The bird flew off and I was unable to re-find it. Bob Dickson glimpsed it here on the 3rd. The bird was silent. I observed it with my B & L Elite 10x42 binoculars.

Description:

The bird was a spring female. It was easy to observe as it took shelter down in the trees and perched still, "posing" for me. It was a small, slim, short-tailed warbler about 5" long. The bill was small, sharp and black. This was a plain warbler, without obvious markings, reminiscent of a female Townsend's Warbler. It was generally dark above and light below. It had a pale dull creamy-yellow face, chin, throat and breast, gradually giving way to a white lower breast, belly and undertail coverts. The wings and tail were very dark, blackish, and it had two white wingbars. The back was blackish, obscurely streaked lighter, except for two distinct diagonal pale lines across the scapulars, one on each side. The otherwise yellowish face was marked by a dusky face patch, with an irregular pattern at the auriculars and a dark streak extending down from the auriculars. The flanks were obscurely streaked with blackish marks. There was no streaking in the middle of the breast, only the flanks. There was a small yellowish mark below the eye

Similar Species:

The small size, slim shape and small, pointed bill indicate a warbler. The most similar species is probably Townsend's Warbler female (there was one present at Ft. Lyon the next day). The distinctive face patch, lack of streaks across the breast, and light scapular streaks rule out Townsend's.

Experience with Species:

I have seen Blackburnian Warbler twice before in Colorado. I have seen female Blackburnians in other states.

This report is prepared from memory.

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