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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER
Dendroica caerulescens

Location: Rocky Ford State Wildlife Area; Rocky Ford; Otero County, Colorado

Date: May 9, 1993

Setting:

I was birding alone on the morning of May 9, 1993 at Rocky Ford SWA. At about 7:30 a.m. I was in an overgrown area of old apple trees near the marshy pond along the highway. A male Black-and-white Warbler flew into the area and I watched it for a few moments. Then a second bird flew in to the tree and I focused on a male Black-throated Blue Warbler with my binoculars. I watched this individual in the apple tree and later in adjacent trees for about 10 minutes. I got very good views as it foraged at mid-height (6-20 feet) in the heavy foliage. It was quite animated and actively fed in the small twigs and leaves, occasionally hanging sideways to probe into foliage.

Description:

This was a small active warbler, about 5" long. It had a very small pointed dark bill. The upperparts were entirely deep steel blue, contrasting slightly with a black face, chin, throat, breast and flanks. The undersides were otherwise pure white, contrasting sharply with the black flanks and breast. There was a small distinct white patch in the otherwise blackish folded wing. There were no wingbars. The rump and square-ended tail looked black. I didn't note the color of the legs or feet.

Similar Species:

The small size, active habits and small pointed bill indicate a wood warbler. It's hard to think of anything even vaguely similar. Male Cerulean Warbler has a white chin and throat and white wingbars. Black-throated Gray Warbler has white face markings and white wingbars.

Experience with Species:

I have seen three previous Black-throated Blue Warblers, 2 males, in Colorado. I have also seen them in migration in the east.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

Mark

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