CFO - RC FII 1999 - 127
RESUI

ACCEPT 7-0

Rcd 10/21/99 mpl

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS SIGHT RECORD FBRM

Species: Black-throated blue Warbler Dendroica caerulescens

Date of observation: September 24, 1999

Number of birds seen: One Sex: Male Plumage: Adult

Location: Third Gulch, in the north foothills of Hardscrabble Mountain 5½ miles south of Eagle. Topographic quadrangle: The Seven Hermits

County: Eagle Latilong: 39106 Nearest town: Eagle Elevation: 8100 feet

Length of observation: A few seconds at a time, no more than one minute total.

Time of observation: 10:45 to 10:55 a.m.

Other observers: None. When I returned the next day with a friend no warblers were there.

Light conditions: Fairly good. Weather was cloudy but not dark.

Optical equipment used: Zeiss 10x40 binoculars.

Distance from bird: Variable, 40 to 100 feet.

Bird was not photographed.

Habitat: Aspen woods in the bottom of a narrow gulch. Aspens continue up the hill on the east side of the gulch but give way to Gambel's oak beyond a narrow riparian zone on the west side. Gulch was largely dry, but there was atrickle of water in a few places. Most of the leaves had turned yellowish and some had fallen.

Behavior: The bird flitted about in the upper parts of the trees seeking insects on the twigs and branches, seldom spending more than a few seconds in one place. Foraging behavior was similar to other warblers, as well as to vireos and kinglets; didn't hang upside down like chickadees.

Description: My first glimpse of the bird was of its slate-blue back as it flew across at a fairly low level in front of me. The color registered as black-throated blue, but at the time I thought it was a false impression, a trick of the lighting on a bird with a gray back. That was my only view of the back; subsequent views were of the ventral surface plus the folded wing and once or twice the face. Belly and lower breast were white. The throat was black, extending down into the upper part of the breast. The corners of the black throat turned down to make black sides below the margin of the folded wing. The black extended up across the bird's cheeks. Illustrations show the crown to be dark blue, but seen from below as I saw it the entire face appeared black; the face had no white or other light color whatsoever. Occasionally I could see the wing in good enough light to see that it was dark blue, though at a quick glance it appeared black. In the wing near the base of the flight feathers was a crudely rectangular patch of clean, bright white, cleaner white than the belly. This was a patch of solid white, not a wing bar. I suspect the underside of the tail was white, but I never really noticed it. The bill was black, I guess; what little I saw of it appeared as an extension of the black face.

Voice: I don't know whether the bird made any sounds. Audubon's warblers were in the vicinity, and any calls I heard could have been theirs.

Similar species: With an ideal view there are none, but my views were less than ideal. Other small birds with black throats include the other black-throated warblers, gray and green, plus Townsend's and golden cheeked. All of these have yellow or white in the face, either as stripes or the entire side of the face, and the black extending down the sides is streaky, not solid. Hermit wrbler has a small black throat with no streaking down the sides, plus a yellow face. All of these have wing bars, quite different from the solid white wing patch seen on the subject bird. Of these the black-throated gray is the most likely source of confusion; its gray back can show a faintly bluish cast in some light, but it

has bold white stripes on the face. Chickadees have black throats, but the black area is smaller and does not turn down along the sides; and they have white cheeks. There are some sparrows with black throats, but they don't act like warblers and the black throats are of different shapes. The slate-colored junco seen from below has a pattern similar to the warbler - throat and sides almost black around a white belly, and the face is all dark; but the chunky bill is almost white, and the tail pattern of a junco when it flies is conspicuous, not something I would fail to notice.

Prior experience: Before I moved to Colorado in 1954 I lived in the northeast. I saw one or more black-throated blue warblers every spring through the late '40's and early 50's. This is the first one since then. I was familiar with the black-throated green warbler while living in the east, and the black-throated gray has become familiar since I moved to Eagle. Chickadees and juncos are common birds both east and west.

Books used: At home after seeing the bird I looked it up in the NGS Field Guide to confirm the identification already made in the field; I used that book also while writing the section on similar species. (Perhaps I should mention here that I omitted mention of other warblers with bluish backs because I didn't use the back color to identify the bird, since I didn't see it for more than a second. The other warblers with that sort of back lack black throats, except for the painted and slate-throated redstarts, which have red underneath.)

I looked up the Colorado occurrence of black-throated blue warbler in Andrews & Righter Colorado Birds. At the time that book was compiled there were no records of black-throated blue warbler in Eagle County or in this latilong block, and the longitude of my sighting, 106° 49' W., is farther west than any record shown on Andrews & Righter's map.

This report was made from notes written a couple of hours after the sighting. I postponed writing the actual report this long because the weather has been too nice to spend inside.

Date of writte report: October 18, 1999.

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