

UTAH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Verification of Unusual Sight Record

Species: Mourning Warbler

Date: Sept. 6, 1985

Number: one

Age: imm. ~~adult~~

Sex: ? (almost certainly a ♀)

Locality (exact address or other specific information to describe location, such as x miles north of x intersection):

Wah-Wah Ranch, west of Milford

County: Beaver

City: —

Elevation: ?

Time: mid-morning

Length of time observed: off and on for 15 minutes;

bird in view for total of 1 minute, 30 seconds of good view

Habitat: clump of trees - 'oasis' effect - and alfalfa fields, surrounded by desert

Distance to bird: from 15-35+ feet

Light conditions: fair to good

Optical equipment: Zeiss 10x40 B

Observer: Paul Lehman

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Ellen Sorensen (also saw bird, although more briefly)

DESCRIPTION. Write a detailed description of the bird's appearance, including size, shape, plumage pattern color, and any unique features.

Copied from field notes written day of sighting:

An oposornis warbler based on fairly large warbler size, overall fairly plump build, short tail (due, in part, to long yellow undertail coverts), and fairly thick-based (for a warbler) bill, and rather 'stout' fleshy legs, as well as general coloration overall.

Bird identified as Mourning based on unmarked olive upperparts and upper surface of tail, head slightly deeper olive or olive-brown; olive wash extended onto sides of breast but did not meet across center of breast; bright yellow on entire underparts from undertail coverts all the way up through center of breast and including entire throat. Therefore, bird did not show 'hooded' appearance of MacGillivray's, Connecticut, or a adult Mourning. The bird showed no gray in plumage anywhere, typical of many imm. ♀ Mournings, but atypical of adults or immature males (or imm. or adult MacGillivray's). Eyering thinner than in MacGillivray's and only somewhat broken both in front and behind eye. Silent.

In this plumage this species may actually be more confused by some with an Orange-crowned Warbler or, especially, a Common Yellowthroat (I once made that mistake years ago), rather than as another oposornis. Certainly the structure, size, shape, and behavior of the bird is that of an oposornis, as is the ^{length of undertail coverts and} overall coloration (deep olive above, yellow below, etc.). MacGillivray's is eliminated by lack of 'hood' and bright yellow extending up through breast to include throat, lack of any

gray in plumage (other fall Mournings, i.e. males, certainly can show gray, however), and Thinner, less broken eyering. A very useful differentiating character is the call: Mourning's low hard call has much more of a wren or yellowthroat quality to it than MacGillivray's, and has often been written as "tchak." Alas, the Utah bird did not call, but many other immature Mourning Warblers I've identified/seen have.

The above fieldmarks are used by many birders I know (primarily in California) to identify this species in this plumage. Mourning Warbler is now being recorded annually (or 2+ per year) in California (where I have seen 4). I have seen and heard many in the East.

Voice and/or call notes: not heard, alas!

Behavior: moving about on low branches of small trees and dropping into brush and alfalfa, presumably to feed.

Describe what specific feature(s) you saw and/or heard that caused you to come to your conclusions:

See above

What similar species might it have been, and how were these eliminated?

See above

What experience have you had with this and similar species?

have seen $\approx$ 100 Mournings; about 25 in fall

Have seen several hundred MacGillivray's.

Books, illustrations, and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

none

Significance of record in the area and/or the state:

first state record

Additional material (attach drawing, photograph, tape recording if available):

Signature: Paul Lehman

Address: PO Box 1061, Goleta, Calif. 93116

Date prepared:

12/25/85

On September 6, 1985, while birding at the Wah Wah Ranch (located in the Wah Wah Valley, Beaver County, Latilong 14), Paul Lehman called my attention to a bird. The bird immediately flew to a dead branch, where I briefly observed it and noted the following characters:

The bird was large billed for a warbler and appeared short tailed. The upperparts were greenish and no wingbars were observed. The underparts were yellow including the throat. The darker head color pinched slightly on the throat but did not form a complete hood.

The bird was well observed by Paul Lehman and identified by him as a Mourning Warbler (*Oporornis philadelphia*).

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