

VERIFICATION OF UNUSUAL SIGHT RECORD FOR UTAH

Common Name: Hermit Warbler Scientific Name: *Dendroica occidentalis*
 Date: April 29 1989 Time: 11:45 AM Length of time observed: 20 min. and
 Number: 1 Age: Adult Sex: M 15 min. again at 1:30
 Location: Yard, 2458 Sunnyside Ave. SKC
 Latilong: 6 Elevation (if known): 4,600
 Distance to bird: 20-30 ft. Light conditions: Good
 Optical equipment: Leitz 8x32
 Weather: Sunny, dry, some clouds

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

Typical warbler size & shape, warbler bill.
 Brilliant yellow head viewed from front
 and side, black eyes, black markings
 up back of head & neck (not on crown),
 black throat coming to point at chin.
 Clean white breast and under parts,
 dark gray back, two faint white
 wing bars.

Voice or call notes and method of delivery: Not heard

Behavior: Fairly active moving about, 5 to 20 ft. above ground, foraging in oak leaves

Habitat: Scrub oak, half leaved out, "beards".

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

Townsend's - but completely yellow head seemed to eliminate anything else.

Yellow rumped - a small flock in same area, obvious differences

What experience have you had with this and similar species:

Normal watching of local and spring migrating warblers - 10 or 12 species - for most 6 or 8 years.

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

Peterson's at time of observation

Significance of record in this area or the state: First spring sighting in Utah - first at any time in this area.

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

Description from notes taken at time of sighting notes made later from memory

Observer: Harry Spencer

Signature:

H. Spencer

Address: 2458 Sunnyside Ave
SHC 84108

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Adelaide Spencer
Ella Sorensen.

Date prepared: 5/12/89.

Return this form to: Ella Sorensen
3868 Marsha Drive
West Valley City, Utah 84120

harold b. spencer

2458 sunnyside avenue

salt lake city, utah 84108

May 8, 1989

A bird watcher's fantasy was fulfilled for me on Saturday, April 29, when a male Hermit Warbler was spotted in my yard, located on Sunnyside Ave. just below Hogle Zoo.

I had been watching migrating warblers, mostly a flock of Yellow-Rumped, in an oak grove, about half leafed out, for the two days preceding. There were several other interesting sightings of the usual spring species, including an Orange Crowned, a Green Tailed Towhee, a pair of Blue Gray Gnatcatchers and (later) Virginia's and Black Throated Gray Warblers. At about 11:30 AM Saturday I noticed a flash of brilliant yellow and soon had the bird in my glasses about 25 ft. away. It had a completely yellow face with black eyes and a warbler bill, a black bib coming to a point at the chin and clean white underparts. I had my trusty Peterson at hand and the Hermit illustration almost jumped out at me. The identification was about as unmistakable as you can get, with all the other features feadily seen. I was particularly struck by the brilliance of the yellow, reminding me of that on a Scott's Oriole.

I watched it for several minutes and was able to show it to my wife. Not realizing immediately how rare it was I consulted my "Utah Birds" and decided I had better call Ella Sorensen. Fortunately she happened to be home and was able to rush right over. Miraculously the bird showed itself in the same area for another half hour bewteen 12:30 and 1:00, so that a good confirmation was made. This was the last seen of it.

As noted by Ella, this is the first spring sighting ever in Utah and the first at any time for many years. It is far out of its migratory route pattern between Guatemala and Mexico to its breeding range in the forests of the Northern Sierras and on into western Oregon and Washington. Ryser states in "Birds of the Great Basin" that he has no reports of sightings east of the Sierras.

"Wood Warblers' World" states that it is one of the most difficult warblers to find. Nesting is in the tops of second growth coniferous forests, usually 100 ft. up, and it drops down for a sighting only very occasionally. It is also said that no other specieas is so unswervingly regular in its nesting habits. We can only hope that this fellow somehow got back on track in time.

Harry Spencer