

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD () UNUSUAL RECORD ()

Species: CONNECTICUT WARBLER .
(Vernacular Name)

Oporornis agilis
(Scientific Name)

Date(s): October 10th, 1993

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: Female or juvenile Plumage: Fall

Locality: West of Valco Ponds in Pueblo. Dense woodland and undergrowth. Approximately 30' from Arkansas River and 1/4 of a mile from the Valco ponds. In the area just behind a power station with chain link fence around the power station. First seen in the bottom of shrubs and wild grape vines. There also was Virgin's Bower entwined around the undergrowth. A Russian Olive was above all the shrubs with several Cottonwoods in the surrounding area.

Elevation: 4,695'

Nearest town: Pueblo

County: Pueblo

Time(s) observed: 3:05 P.M. until 3:08 P.M. - WEATHER: 70° - NO WIND

Duration of observation: approximately 3 minutes. Two minutes under brush and one minute on the snag.

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Margo Shimel, had a quick look and noted that it was large for a warbler. 1533 48th St. Boulder, CO 80303, Phone: (303) 440-3554. There were others on this field trip, but we were the only two who actually had a look at this particular bird. I wish she had had a better look. Brandon Percival had a very brief look, but does not believe it could have been a Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) based only on, "because it was seen near the top of the snags". Brandon's phone number is 547-3722, address: 835 Harmony Way, Pueblo West, CO 81007. He only saw it fly from the snag in the Russian Olive that was just below the crest of the tree. He did not see it when it was walking under the shrubs, nor in full sun sitting on the snag.

Other observers who saw the bird independently: None that I know of.

Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light): Under the shrubs the sun was at an angle from the West exposing nice light into the area where the bird was on the edges of the brush. The area the bird was in was East of the sun's Westerly rays. When the bird flew to the snag it was in full, bright sunlight.

Continued...2.

Light conditions: Improved when the bird was "chased" up onto a snag in the Russian Olive tree. The bird was in full, direct sunlight for at least a full minute. The bird's front was exposed, then the bird turned around and his back and undertail was in full light. I could not have had better light if the bird had been in stage spotlight.

Optical equipment used: Bausch & Lomb 10 x 50 binoculars.

Distance, and how measured: When on the ground the bird was approximately 15' away from me. When the bird flew to the Russian Olive snag, the distance above my head and out in front was probably 25'. Measurements are an educated guess, there was a time I worked for United States Geological Survey, so my guesses, at one time, were fairly accurate.

If photographed, type of equipment and film: No photo taken.

Who else photographed the bird? No One.

Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits, used in identifying): Seen actually walking on a limb and under the bush. I think the bird was after the seeds that had fallen to the ground rather than from the shrub directly. Several White-crowned Sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers flew into the same bush and either chased the bird out or scared the bird out. The bird then flew up onto a snag on the Russian Olive just below the top. The bird stayed there in full sun for almost a full minute. At first the bird's front was facing the sun and I was just below it. Then the bird turned around, he did not "hop" around, it actually turned around so his back was in the sun. Then the bird dropped off the limb and flew past me into more dense brush about 40' away and I lost it in the undergrowth.

Describe in bird in detail: Strictly from my notes taken in the field: I first noticed its behavior, I had not seen many warblers walking and took notice. Then when the bird's head was in plain sight I could not miss the large eye with a very "thick" white eye-ring. The eye-ring had no break in it, the ring was a very large complete circle. The bird had a brownish "hood" effect from the mantle over the head and down to the breast. As the hood covered the breast it became lighter, not as dark brown as on the back and head. The only break in the brown hood was an off white chin, not much of one, but it did not have a yellow chin. The head color contrasted slightly with the back. It had no wing bars, no streaking on mantle and did not have a blue-grey cast to the hood. The belly was a "lemon" yellow from the breast extending all the way down to the long undertail coverts. It was "stocky" looking with a shortish tail. That may have been because the yellow undertail coverts extended a long way down the tail, (no tail spots). The bill was dark and pointed but looked thicker and longer than most warblers, but not as thick as a vireo. It had light pink legs.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery: No call heard, no song, no chip or warble.

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird: Dense underbrush of wild grape vines, Virgin's Bower, I think Squaw bush with Russian Olive in the center of the shrubs and Cottonwoods all around.

Continued...3.

Similar species and how they were eliminated: *Nashville Warbler*, *Vermivora virginiae*, is much smaller has no hood and has a white break between the belly and undertail covert. The eye ring is not as large, nor is the eye and the chin and belly are all yellow with no brownish stain or band across the breast. Plus the Nashville Warbler wags his tail and this bird did not wag its tail. The *MacGillivray's Warbler*, *Oporornis tolmiei*, is a close twin of the Connecticut, but the differences were apparent. MacGillivray's has an obvious broken eye ring. The ring has crescents above and below the eye. The "rings" are also much thinner and are not the complete circle of the Connecticut. The coloration is more grey in the male and more olive green in the immatures and female, not the brown tones of the Connecticut. The MacGillivray's is smaller with a smaller bill. The immature MacGillivray's Warbler's breast is not as dark and the sides are "dirty". The *Mourning Warbler*, *Oporornis philadelphus*, has no eye ring on the male. The immatures and females have a smaller less distinctive eye ring. The bill is shorter, the throat more yellow and the legs are less bright pink.

What is your prior experience with this bird: Observed an adult male in breeding plumage on July 14th, 1993 in Damariscotta, Maine. More experience with the birds I compared it to in above descriptions. Especially Nashville Warblers and MacGillivray's Warblers.

List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification: **IN THE FIELD:** *Birds of North America*, second edition, National Geographic Society. *A Guide to Field Identification Birds of North America*, Golden. *Peterson Field Guides, Eastern Birds*, Roger Tory Peterson. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds, Western Region*, published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York. **AFTER OBSERVATION:** *Birds of the American West*, by Roger Tory Peterson and *Birds of Texas*, by Roger Tory Peterson. All the book sources confirmed in my mind that what I saw was indeed a Connecticut Warbler. The illustrations of the Connecticut Warbler female come as close as you can get to the bird I observed. The only other bird that even came close was the immature of the Connecticut Warbler. But I suspect the bird was the female Connecticut Warbler.

I also discussed the bird with Dave Silverman, as I almost always do when in doubt, and he said what I described sounded as though I had seen a Connecticut Warbler.

This report was written from reports made during X, after observation X, from memory . From notes taken in the field and confirmed in the above book resources.

Date and time report was written: October 10th, 1993 at 7:00 P.M. Wrote out in long hand then on October 18th, 1993 typed up to send to you.

Reporting observer: Pearle Sandstrom-Smith

Signature:

Pearle Sandstrom-Smith
10-18-93

Address: 2823 5th Avenue, Pueblo, CO 81003 Phone: (719) 543-6727 can call collect!