

1997-101

## APPENDIX II

ACCEPTED 6-1

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD SIGHTINGS  
FOR  
THE COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS' RECORDSSpecies: Mourning Warbler ; Oporornis philadelphia  
(Vernacular name) (Scientific name)

rec'd 6-5-97

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students -- those studying occurrences 50 years from now -- must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Dates (s): May 23 & May 25 1997 Time Bird Seen: May 23 1030 - 1130  
May 25 0730 to 0830Locality: Fountain Creek Regional ParkFountain CO El Paso

Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: Zeiss 10x40 6GT

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: ♂ Plumage: ANYLight conditions: deep shade through sunlightDistance from bird, and how measured: 10-20 meters - estimate

Describe the bird's overall behavior: A real skulker, it would spend >95% of its time (while I was trying to observe it) below the understory, <1m. It responded to a pair of Black-capped Chickadees (a chase) and to a Lincoln's Sparrow that landed in patch (MOWA-pipped up)

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

Siberian Elm "forest" with very dense understory of buckeye, cow parsnip & a 1m-tall white-flowered crucifer

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):

Unfortunately, I couldn't find the DFO field trippers who had seen  
for ??

This bird needs an introduction. I had been birding in another section of Fountain Regional Park and I ended up talking to some folks from Denver, who were on their way to the CTO convention in Monte Vista and <sup>they</sup> asked me if I had seen the Chestnut-sided Warbler, and they also mentioned an American Redstart which had been seen near the nature center. So I was actually looking for the redstart when I heard some chirping and glimpsed an Oporornis sp warbler on top of a cow parsnip. I had seen on the "Sighting Board" that a MacGillivray's Warbler was seen that morning somewhere in the area where I was birding so my first reaction was: "Here's the MacGillivray's!"

There was little bird activity, so I tried to follow the Oporornis around. My first good look of it showed, no, nada, zilch upper white eye crescents but, I saw some light "feathering"?? in front and below the eye. I thought then that I had a hybrid. I saw that this pattern was the same on both sides of the head (all brief looks) and then started to wonder if the light area was feathering on the base of the bill. I never could tell but drove home to look up all my references for both Mourning & MacGillivray's Ws. Most helpful were from Birding 22 NOV 5 pp 222-228. and Corson, Quinn & Beadles' Warblers of the Americas where Plate 18 #52A, shows the pink base of the mandible extending close to where a lower eye crescent would begin. The pinkness of the mandible was what I was seeing. I went back 2 days later and found the bird to re-study it. It was still difficult to see well for more than a few seconds but it bled eye crescent.

⇒ Behavior cont'd - The Mourning Warbler foraged as high as 5m, mostly in dense tangles but once moved along dead, small branches of a fallen log. It was always on the move, I tried to video tape it, but never could find it in my viewfinder. I also tried to tape record it, but, it never sang and although it did chirp on occasion I never got it on tape.

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APPENDIX II Continued

Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. Emphasize particularly the field marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough). Describe what you actually saw in the field.

Bright yellow belly. Blackish upper breast, widest & darkest where it joined yellow belly. Dark eye, NO white eye crescents. Gray head, chin & throat, lower throat with flecks of black. Back was mostly blue, but mid to lower back had some brown mixed in. Tail greenish brown. Undertail coverts yellow. Bill & culmen dark mandible & at least base of mandible was pinkish, lightest at base. No wing bars. No eye ring. Lores were dark gray, darker than face, lighter than breast. I thought Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

Chipped, once or twice every 5-10 minutes, remaining quite between chips. Chipped 3 or 4 times when a pair of ~~Black-capped~~ Chickadees approached & 2-3 times in response to Lincoln Sparrow in close proximity. At all other times it would emit 1-2 chips then remain silent. → List similar species and how you eliminated them:

MacGillivray's - All plumages of Mac's W have white eye crescents. This bird did not. By plumage, a ♂, By plumage, after hatchlings.

Prior experience with this and similar species:

Lots of experience with MacGillivray's Warbler. Very little with Mourning 2-3 in S. America. 2-3 on Isle Royale V.P. in Michigan.

This report was written from notes made during \_\_\_\_\_ after ☒ observation; and after a from memory \_\_\_\_\_. Second visit was made after consulting the various books on Warblers.

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CFO Records Committee  
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→ that the bill was long.

→ Vocalizations cont'd. I know, from reading, that MacKellway's & Mourning Ws have similar (but separable to the experienced) calls. When I did bird survey for Dr. Verner in California we always called MacKellway's "Smack-Kellway's" because of the chips but it's been too long & I have no experience with Mourning chips. It did, however, sound like the chips of Mourning on the William ~~Dunson~~ <sup>Warbler's</sup> tape.