

VERIFICATION OF UNUSUAL SIGHT RECORD FOR UTAH

Common Name: PALM WARBLER (WESTERN) Scientific Name: *Dendroica palmarum*
 Date: 9/29/88 Time: ABOUT 12:00
 Length of time observed: < 2 MINUTES
 Number: 1 Age: FALL PLUMAGE Sex: UNK
 Location: FISH SPRINGS NWR

Latilong: FISH SPRINGS, #9 Elevation (if known): 4288'
 Distance to bird: 10-20 YARDS Light conditions: GOOD SUNLIGHT, FEW
 CLOUDS
 Optical equipment: 10x50 BUSHNELL BINOCULARS
 15-60x B+L DISCOVERER SCOPE
 Weather: FAIR

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

SMALLER THAN THE WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS AND HOUSE FINCHES IT WAS AROUND. HAVING A LOT OF WARBLER I.D. EXPERIENCE ON THE EAST COAST, IT WAS IDENTIFIED IMMEDIATELY AS A WARBLER; IT DID NOT HAVE THE BILL SHAPE OR SECRETIVE BEHAVIOR OF THE VIREOS. THE UPPERTAIL COVERTS + RUMP WERE OLIVE & APPEARED UNSTREAKED. THE UPPER PARTS WERE BROWNISH/GRAY HAVING A SOMEWHAT STREAKED APPEARANCE ON THE BACK. AT ONE ANGLE THE HEAD APPEARED TO BE BROWNER THAN THE BACK, GIVING A HINT OF A CAP, BUT A SOLID CAP WAS NOT READILY DISCERNIBLE. THERE WAS A DISTINCT LIGHT WHITE EYEBROW, NOT AN EYERING. THE WINGS APPEARED DARKER THAN THE UPPER BODY, NO WING BARS WERE SEEN. THE BREAST & UNDERBELLY WERE WHITISH & THERE APPEARED TO BE FAINT STREAKING ON THE UPPER BREAST. I DID NOT HAVE A FULL VIEW OF THE BREAST BECAUSE OF THE ANGLE IT WAS SITTING, BUT COULD SEE THE SIDES. THE UNDERTAIL COVERTS WERE DISTINCTLY YELLOW. THE COLOR CHANGE BETWEEN UNDERTAIL COVERTS & UNDERBELLY WAS ABRUPT, NO GRADUAL FADING FROM YELLOW TO WHITE COULD BE SEEN. WHEN SITTING ON THE TOP OF THE BRUSH, THE BIRD WAS VIGOROUSLY BOBBING/WAGGING ITS TAIL, NOT FLICKING. THE BIRD WAS SITTING FAIRLY UPRIGHT AT THE TOP OF THE BRUSH, AND DID NOT GIVE ANY SKULKING BEHAVIOR TYPICAL OF SOME WARBLERS.

Voice or call notes and method of delivery:

NONE NOTICED

Behavior: TAIL BOBBING WHEN 'PISHED' TO THE TOPS OF BRUSH. SEEMED ABOUT AS SKITTISH AS THE WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS & HOUSE FINCHES AT THAT CLOSE RANGE.

Habitat: FLUSHED FROM CANAL BANK LINED WITH BULRUSH. THE AREA AROUND THE CANAL WAS PRIMARILY RABBITBRUSH/GREASEWOOD WITH SALTERASS BANK. THERE WAS MORE EXTENSIVE BULRUSH STANDS (DRY SLOUGHS) NEARBY.

What similar species might it have been and how were these eliminated: YELLOW UNDERTAIL COVERTS & TAIL BOBBING RULED OUT JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING. ORANGE-CROWNED WAS RULED OUT BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF OLIVE-YELLOW ON UNDERPARTS & UPPER BACK & HEAD. ORANGE-CROWNS ~~WAS~~ ^{HAVE BEEN} SEEN OFTEN HERE DURING MIGRATION, & THIS BIRD LOOKED NOTHING LIKE THESE OTHER ORANGE-CROWNS. VIRGINIA'S WARBLER WAS RULED OUT BECAUSE OF OVERALL BODY COLOR, LACK OF YELLOW ON BREAST, AND HAVING AN EYEBROW NOT AN EYERING.

What experience have you had with this and similar species: I HAVE OFTEN SEEN THE EASTERN RACE DURING FALL MIGRATION ON EAST COAST. I HAVE HAD A LOT OF EXPERIENCE WITH VIRTUALLY ALL EASTERN WARBLERS IN BOTH SIGHT & VOICE I.D., AS WELL AS SOME EXPERIENCE WITH WARBLERS IN THE NORTHWEST. THE EASTERN RACE WAS SEEN USUALLY IN ASSOCIATION WITH WET/MARSHY AREAS, PRIMARILY IN LOW SHRUBS AWAY FROM THE TALLER TREE CANOPY.

Books, illustrations, and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE WAS USED FOR INITIAL IDENTIFICATION, BOTH BY PICTURE & WRITTEN DESCRIPTION.

'GOLDEN GUIDE' BY ROBBINS, ET AL WAS USED TO VERIFY THE IDENTIFICATION & TO FIND ANY OTHER POSSIBLE BIRDS IT MAY HAVE BEEN.

Significance of record in this area or the state: CONSIDERED A PROVISIONAL SPECIES IN THE LATILONG STUDY

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

NONE

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

Observer: JOE ENGLER

Signature: Joseph D. Engler

Address: FISH SPRINGS NWR

Other observers who independently identified this bird: NONE

Date prepared: 10/25/88

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

25-1988

Joe Engler

Palm Warbler

On 9/29/88, I was conducting the weekly waterfowl/bird census on Fish Springs NWR. I had just crossed a bridge over the main canal (driving in truck) when 4 small birds flushed from the canal edge near some bulrush. They flew up into some rabbitbrush on the opposite bank, about 10 yards from the truck. While they were flying, 3 were recognized as sparrows (white-crowned) but 1 was noticeably smaller and had olive uppertail coverts and rump. Realizing this bird was different, I stopped the truck to get a better look. "Pishing" brought the sparrows, a house finch, and a warbler to the tops of the brush. The warbler was facing slightly away from me and just below eye level. With 10 X 50 binoculars I could again see the olive rump and uppertail coverts, as well as the distinct yellow undertail coverts and whitish underparts. The bird then flushed about 10 more yards away and landed again at the top of some rabbitbrush. I then switched to my scope (about 25X) to view the bird.

The bird was sitting broadside, at about the same elevation and was wagging/bobbing its tail (not flicking). The yellow undertail coverts were again seen, as was the whitish belly and breast. The whitish underparts were distinct from the yellow undertail coverts and they did not appear to have any yellow in them at all. The breast seemed to have some faint streaking (like an orange-crowned) on the sides, but my angle did not afford a full view of the breast. The head had a distinct light white eyebrow, not an eyering. At one point the bird tilted its head and I got the impression it had a cap. The cap was not distinct. At that particular angle I noticed a slightly darker color change (brown) from the rest of the upperbody and it also appeared to be more uniform. The upperbody appeared to be grayish-brown and not of a uniform texture or color, giving an indistinct streaked appearance. The wings were darker than the body. I did not have time to really scrutinize the upperbody and wings, so cannot give a better description of them.

I was able to go over the key features again before the bird flew. These being the yellow undertail coverts, white underbody, the whitish eyebrow, and the wagging/bobbing tail. The bird then flew to a dry slough and could not be located again. I then consulted the National Geographic field guide which helped me to determine that it was a western palm warbler in non-breeding plumage. The overall coloration and tail behavior fit the book description and picture perfectly. Other species were ruled out as they did not "fit" the bird I had seen.