

17-1991

May 24, 1991

Ella Sorenson
3868 Marsha Dr.
West Valley City, UT 84120

Dear Mrs. Sorenson:

I enclose details of my sighting of the worm-eating warbler for inclusion in your American Birds report (I assume you are still the local compiler). Is there a local or state periodical that publishes interesting observations such as this?

Sincerely,



Terry A. Cox

On May 23, 1991, at 2:30 P. M. I saw a worm-eating warbler in Utah. The location was 300 feet west of mile marker 22 on Highway 65 in Summit County, east of East Canyon Reservoir State Park. The habitat here is predominantly sage, at an altitude of about 6000 feet. A small stream runs along the north side of the road in a gully, and there are scattered trees and bushes along the stream. Other birds in the immediate area at the time of this observation included Wilson's warbler, song sparrow, broad-tailed hummingbird, Brewer's blackbird, American robin, American goldfinch, yellow warbler, barn swallow, red-tailed hawk, and turkey vulture.

The bird was the size and shape of other warblers in the area. It had a long, narrow bill that was pale gray with an apparent shading of pink. It had pinkish-red legs. The head was uniform buff in color, with four black stripes running rostral to caudal--one through each eye and two broader ones along the crown. The eye was dark. The back was slightly darker than the head and was uniformly buff with a touch of olive. The tail was the same color as the back. The breast and abdomen were buffy with some gray in the flanks. There was no streaking anywhere in the plumage.

I initially observed the bird for about fifteen minutes while it stayed in a large bush, always within two feet of the ground. At one point it rested in clear view with its eyes closed for several minutes, and I was able to move to within ten feet of it. The rest of the time it moved around in the foliage at about the same rate as a MacGillivray's warbler would, and I observed it from about 15 feet. Lighting was excellent. I used Bushnell Custom 8 x 36 binoculars.

After the initial observation I left to phone the local hot-line. I returned at 4:15 P. M. and found the bird in the same bush. After a few minutes it flew to another bush, then across the stream. The duration of my second observation was five to ten minutes. At no time did the bird make a sound.

This is the first sight record for worm-eating warbler in Utah. Phillips et al¹ listed one report from the Chiricahua Mountains of Arizona. Roberson² noted that

the only observations on the west coast were in California; he lists 27 records, only 9 of which were from the spring. Alcorn³ cited four reports in Nevada, three in the southern part of the state and one from Las Vegas. Bailey and Niedrach⁴ listed eight records in Colorado; two were from the western part of the state -- a sighting in Dinosaur National Monument on May 1, 1963, and another in Durango in October. I had previously seen worm-eating warblers in southern Illinois in 1980.

References

1. Phillips A, Marshall J, Monson G. The Birds of Arizona. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1964; 212.
2. Roberson D. Rare Birds of the West Coast. Pacific Grove, CA: Woodcock Publications, 1980; 496.
3. Alcorn J. The Birds of Nevada. Fallon, NV: Fairview West Publishing, 1988; 418.
4. Bailey A, Niedrach R. Birds of Colorado. Vol. II. Denver: Denver Museum of Natural History, 1965

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