

From: azfo@azfo.org
Subject: ABC Report of Kentucky Warbler observed on 07_November_2008 by John Coons
Date: December 3, 2008 at 12:10 PM
To: kurtrad@mexicobirding.com, drbrdr@worldnet.att.net, ghrosenberg@comcast.net
Cc: jcoons@flagstaff.az.us



Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*)

Date observed: 07 November 2008
Initial observer(s): John Coons jcoons@flagstaff.az.us Chuck LaRue Dave Bancroft - non-birding hiking companion
Exact location: Roughly 300 yards up Dinnebito Wash from its confluence with the Little Colorado River on the Navajo Reservation. This site is approximately 4.5 miles downstream from Grand Falls on the LCR.
County: Coconino
City: Flagstaff/Leupp
Elevation: 4450 ft

Submitted by: John Coons

Number observed: 1
Age: adult
Sex: male

Time observed: 2:20 pm
Duration of observation: 2-3 minutes
Minimum distance from bird: 20 ft nearest to 60 ft
Optics used: Leica 10 x 40 bins
Position of sun: the observers nor the Kentucky Warbler were related; the sun was roughly behind the observers but behind the canyon rim
Habitat: dry, sandy canyon bottom with 3-5 mt. tall Tamarisk vegetation; loosely riparian

Others who observed this bird:
Anyone known to disagree: Nope

Was the bird identified before consulting any guides: No
Identification guides used: I double-checked sex and age plumages to confirm our assumption that it was a fall adult male.
Were notes taken before or after the observation: After
How well was the bird seen: Very Well

Detailed description:

My first impression upon seeing this individual make a low flight in front of me and land on the sandy canyon bottom 50 ft ahead was that it was a MacGillivray's Warbler by the back color, general shape and the way it landed and stood on the sand. I identified it as a Kentucky Warbler in less than a second after putting my binoculars on it and uttered something to the effect of, "Holy ****, that's a Kentucky Warbler". This bird had a yellow-olive back, wings and upper tail and was brighter yellow below including the throat. The clincher was the distinctive head pattern which included a quite dark-gray crown and obvious yellow supercilium that curved around the eye and under it. This yellow was highlighted by the typically odd-shaped black mark on the side of the face with a black dagger-like mark descending onto the side of the neck. The size and distinctiveness of this mark led us to assume this was an adult male individual. I noticed a pinkish/flesh tone to at least the lower mandible. I don't recall making an observation on the leg color at the time. Both Chuck LaRue and I were well aware of the rarity of this species and the rather extraordinary late date of 7 November.

Vocalizations:

the bird gave a loud strong "chuck" note that led us to refinding it after it had initially flown around a bend in the canyon; this call was lower in pitch than a MacGillivray's Warbler

Behavior:

Surprisingly, the bird was first seen making a short flight and then lit and walked on the sand in the canyon bottom; it then flew around a bend in the canyon; when we relocated the bird it was calling from dense Tamarisk vegetation; hoping to get a photo we herded it to the edge of the Tamarisk where it was seen on the lowest branches before hopping onto the ground under the shrub, it then flew 10 mts to a larger stand of Tamarisk where we had poor looks in this denser vegetation; we never observed this bird feeding or doing anything unusual

What similar species were considered and why were they eliminated:

Initially, MacGillivray's Warbler came to mind before getting binoculars on it. This was quickly eliminated by the facial pattern described above and by the yellow throat. The overall shape and facial mark also eliminated Common Yellowthroat.

Experience with species:

I have extensive experience of 30+ years with this species in the eastern US as a migrant and on the breeding grounds as well as in the winter in eastern Mexico, mostly on the Yucatan Peninsula.

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Experience with similar species:

Extensive experience with all other likely species.

Was the bird photographed: No

Submitter name: John Coons

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Date and time submitted: 12/3/2008 2:09:52 PM

Url:http://www.azfo.org/ArizonaBirdReview/SubmittedHtml/KEWA_FlagstaffLeupp_Coons_07_November_2008.html