

# Louisiana Bird Records Committee

## Rare Bird Documentation

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*Species:* Black-throated Gray Warbler, *Setophaga nigrescens*

*Number of individuals:* One (1)

*Age and Sex:* Hatch year, (likely) Male

*Dates Observed:* 11–12 November, 2016

*Location:* Jefferson Par.; Grand Isle, Lafitte Woods Preserve, Grilletta Tract

*Lat/Long:* 29.2339°N, 89.9965°W

*Other Observers:* Glaucia Del-Rio, Cathy DiSalvo, Joan Garvey, Vitek Jirinec, Oscar Johnson, Mark Meunier, Marco Rego, and Glenn Seeholzer

*Original Observer:* Myself

**Circumstances.** I arrived on Grand Isle for the annual LSUMNS retreat/fishing trip solo, and after eating a quick lunch decided to check out the woods. I was closest to the Grilletta tract, so I stopped there first. The open, scrubby area at the entrance was generally pretty quiet, so I moved on to the first set of Southern Live Oaks, where there was a fair amount of activity. Amongst the horde of Yellow-rumped Warblers were a few other expected migrants, presumably deposited after a weak cold front had blown through the previous day. Also present was an incessantly-calling Ovenbird. While picking through the Yellow-rumped Warblers, a smaller warbler caught my eye. When I looked at it through my binoculars, I immediately it as a Black-throated Gray Warbler. I quickly noted a number of relevant field marks before I lost it as it moved to another tree. I spent some time looking for it, briefly seeing it again before losing it. I then surveyed the rest of the Tract.

Interest in refinding the bird was high among other participants of the fishing trip, so the next morning (the 12<sup>th</sup>), a few other grad students and I set out to search for the Black-throated Gray Warbler. We spent ~1.5 hours in the area I'd seen it the previous day, but without any luck. Eventually the bird was refound by Oscar Johnson in the original location, where we had extended views at close range. After ~10 minutes of watching, the bird flew back and out of sight.

**Description.** Overall, a small warbler with plumage features dominated by gray and white with black highlights. The following description is based off of my observations during both days.

*Head:* The crown was medium-gray, connecting to the back and contrasting with the broad white supercilium. The eyes were masked in dark gray, except for a small patch of yellow at the lores. The submustachial area was white, curving and tapering posteriorly and almost meeting the supercilium behind the auriculars. The malar was

black, flaring posteriorly. The chin and throat were dark gray. The bill was mostly dark horn, but the mandible had a pale pinkish base.

*Body:* The underparts, from the grayish throat to through the undertail coverts, were almost entirely clean white, except for some indistinct darkish streaking along the flanks. The back was the same medium-gray as the crown, and appeared unmarked. The wings were dark, with two distinct pale wing bars through the secondary coverts. The legs were dark.

*Tail:* The tail was quite long in proportion to the bird's body, especially compared to the proportions of the Yellow-rumped Warblers. The outer rectrices were mostly white, with dark edging. One half of the tail (photos show it to be the left side) were noticeably shorter than the other half.

*Voice:* We heard the bird call a few times. It was a fairly typical Black-throated Gray 'chip' note, similar to Townsend's Warbler, but a little 'fuller' and flatter. It was somewhat reminiscent of a Black-throated Green Warbler chip.

**Discussion.** There's no doubt that this bird was a Black-throated Gray Warbler. All other species of warblers were ruled out by the predominately gray, white, and black plumage combination with yellow highlight in the lores. This is a species I am very familiar with from my time in California.