

**LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE
RARE BIRD DOCUMENTATION**

Oscar Johnson
Louisiana State University
119 Foster Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
ojohns7@lsu.edu

Species: MacGillivray's Warbler, *Geothlypis tolmiei*

Location: Richfield Riversilt, East Baton Rouge Parish

Date: 25 September 2019

Age and sex: Unsure, but likely a first fall male or an adult female.

Molt status: None apparent

Number of individuals: One

Other observers: Matthew Brady and Marquette Mutchler

Original observer: Van Remsen

Circumstances: Matt, Marky, and I spent the morning searching for this bird, which had been found the previous day by Van Remsen. Van had arranged access for us to visit this private property specifically to search for this bird. Matt and I arrived at 07:30, while Marky showed up later, around 9. Matt and I searched unsuccessfully, and it wasn't until 9:40 that we finally relocated the bird, despite having searched the area where it had been seen pretty much continuously since our arrival. The bird was eventually located when it started calling in response to Matt playing a few call notes on his speaker, at which point the bird started calling about 15 feet away from us, poked out from its hiding place in a dense tangle of wild grapes for about 20 seconds before hiding again and falling silent. While it was (briefly) out in the open, Marky and I managed to get photos and we all got good close views, though partly obscured by leaves.

It was a typical hot, sunny, calm, muggy day.

Description: A small mostly yellow warbler with a rather long tail and slim body, but chunkier than say a Wilson's Warbler. Most obvious was the entirely light gray head, somewhat paler and vaguely mottled whitish on the throat and upper chest. The boundary between the gray/whitish of the chest and bright yellow of the rest of the underparts was quite sharp, giving the bird a hooded look. The back was olive green, but I wasn't able to tell how far up the nape/crown the olive went. The center of the crown, at least, looked gray to me. Olive wash to flanks. Wings and tail also olive green, and no wing bars. I wasn't able to see well the length of the undertail coverts, but they were yellow and not as long as on a Connecticut. The mark that was most telling of this being a MacGillivray's were the prominent and broad white eye arcs. The upper one especially was broad, much too broad for a Mourning. The eye arcs did not connect at the front or back of the eye, but there was a faint paler area in the lores that kind of extended off the front of the upper eye arc, though was not nearly as pale white as the eye arc itself.

The call was a hard smacking chip, somewhat reminiscent of a yellowthroat, though not as rough-sounding. It sounded to my ear very much like the recordings that Matt was playing, though to be fair both Matt and I had

earlier in the morning mistaken the calls of a Kentucky Warbler for a MacGillivray's, so I don't really trust our reliability on this front.

The bill and eyes were dark, and the legs were pinkish.

Discussion: The gray hood, yellow body, and olive back clearly placed this bird as a Mourning, MacGillivray's, or Connecticut Warbler. Connecticut can be easily ruled out by the lack of a complete thin eye ring, lack of walking behavior, and short-ish undertail coverts. Mourning is a bit more tricky, especially given that the two species are known to hybridize. However, I think that this individual was a fairly typical MacGillivray's with nothing indicating hybridization to me. In particular, the lack of any yellow tones in the throat and the details of the eye arcs I felt were outside the range of variation of Mourning or hybrids. The eye arcs were incomplete (i.e. were arcs, not an eye ring) and were quite broad and somewhat flared especially the upper one. Mourning Warblers or hybrids that show hints of eye arcs typically have them connected in the front or back (i.e. more like an eye ring), and are much thinner, often with a yellow wash to the eye arcs.

Written mostly from memory, the day after the observation. I consulted my photos to check the pattern of the lores and whether the length of the undertail coverts was visible.















