

**LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE
RARE BIRD DOCUMENTATION**

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Species: MacGillivray's Warbler, *Geothlypis tolmiei*

Location: East Baton Rouge Parish, Mississippi River levee just S of I-10 bridge,
30.4336851, -91.1914218

Date: 8-9 February 2020

Age and sex: Appeared to be an immature bird.

Molt status: Possibly some light head and chest molt

Number of individuals: One

Other observers: Lauren Solomon

Original observer: Oscar Johnson

Circumstances: I was birding the batture from the top of the levee when I heard an odd sounding chip note from a warbler and quickly got on this bird feeding in a vine tangle. After realizing that it was a MacGillivray's Warbler I tried to get photos and recordings, but I didn't have my good camera on me, so I had to use my iPhone to get photos through my binoculars. I had moderate success getting documentation, so I watched the bird for a few minutes, then texted some other birders in town before continuing on my way. The water level was quite high, with all of batture undergrowth underwater. Temps in mid 50s, solid overcast, light breeze, occasional light sprinkles.

I have included a poor photo and a recording taken when I first found the bird on 8 February, and also a series of better photos that I took with a better camera when I returned to look at the bird the following day with Lauren Solomon.

eBird checklists:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S64232864>

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S64290732>

This bird was chased by quite a few local birders and many of them got good photos. I hope some of them also submit this record to the LBRC.

Description: First detected by call, which was rather like a Common Yellowthroat, but somewhat sharper. It was foraging at the edge of the batture by itself, being quite obvious. Watched foraging in the open for about five minutes. A very yellow warbler, shaped like a Yellowthroat. Solidly yellow below, olive green above and on wings and

tail. No wing bars or tail spots. Head (including crown and nape) pure gray. Throat contrastingly pale whitish, contrasting both with gray auriculars and yellow lower chest. Some dark mottling in upper chest. Distinct and broad white eye arcs, broken in front and behind the eye. Undertail coverts yellow and short, reaching less than half way down the tail. Notes taken soon after observation.

Discussion: This discussion was written for a MacGillivray's Warbler that I saw in 2019 in Baton Rouge Parish, which was in a similar plumage to this bird, and all of which applies to the 2020 bird equally well: 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.

















