

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for. Attach additional pages or files as necessary. Please print or type for hard copy. For electronic copy, be sure to save this file to your computer before entering text. Attach field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed (if hard copy), mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216, or e-mail electronic copy as an attachment to Paul Edward Conover at <zoiseaux@lusfiber.net> .

1. English and Scientific names: “Mangrove” Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia oraria*

2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):

One male, age and plumage unknown to me at the time of sightings, but circumstantially my guess was first year in basic or basic molting to alternate. However, based on looking at photos obtained from January to October 2018, it may have been an adult, and reduced chestnut on head and no chestnut color in breast streaks may simply be a result of changes from alternate to basic plumage. See discussion below.

3. Parish: Jefferson

Specific Locality: Grand Isle, wood lot southwest of Wildlife and Fisheries complex at the end of Ludwig Lane. (Lat. 26.237°, Long. -90.003°).



4. Date(s) when observed: 12/20/17; 01/28/18; 03/24/18.

5. Time(s) of day when observed: See Ebird checklists.

6. Reporting observer and city/state address

Reporting observer: David P. Muth
City: New Orleans
State: Louisiana

7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): 12/20/17: Christina Riehl;

1/28/18 Joan Garvey, Wendy Rhiner, Mark Meunier;

3/24/18 Dan Lane, Michele McClindon, Cameron Rutt, Van Remsen

8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s): See my Ebird reports 12/20/17, 1/28/18 (linked below), and by Eric Johnson 3/12/18: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S43599474>, by Remsen 3/24/18 (linked below), and by Joan Garvey 10/28/18: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S49528965> .

The bird was reportedly rediscovered in December 2019 during the Grand Isle CBC by Jane Patterson.

9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light):
various

10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Eagle Optics 10x50 Ranger ED

11. Distance to bird(s): As close as 3 meters.

12. Duration of observation: various.

13. Habitat: A partially filled black mangrove *Avicenna germinans* swamp. Tall (4-5 meters) to short mangroves in wet tidal areas, mixed shrubs dominated by *Baccharis halimifolia* in filled areas. Other typical saline marsh/scrub forbs grow nearby and are interspersed.

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):

Because it was a CBC, Christie Riehl and I were checking an area I'd not normally bird (may never have?)—but I went there because I had always wanted to, there was a new road, and we had a small territory to cover. It turned out to be an incredible area, with some of the tallest black mangrove I had ever encountered in Louisiana. Both wintering N. Waterthrush and (later) Ovenbird were found. Otherwise bird diversity was typical for depauperate Grand Isle, in fact on the low side.

The bird appeared from the thicket while we were walking the road. We may have been pishing but I am not sure. Christie alerted me to turn around, and I saw it with the naked eye about 3 meters away. We both made noises of astonishment, but while I was trying to find a name—embarrassingly the first name

in my head was “Cape May” because of the yellow-chestnut combination on the head (and I had just been telling her about a wintering CMWA on Grand Isle I had found years before), but I knew that I.D. to be wrong immediately. Christie first uttered “Mangrove Warbler”. Damn! It was. As far as I know, this is both the first Louisiana record, as well as the first U. S. record outside of extreme South Texas.

I looked briefly with binoculars then tried to get my point-and-shoot Canon SX60 camera on it, but failed. It disappeared almost immediately, but given how distinctive it was we were certain of the identification and began an immediate and frustrating search which yielded (after a lot of effort and bushwhacking) a few glimpses of it and tantalizing flight calls. At some point I texted and emailed other Grand Isle CBC observers both to give them an opportunity to see the bird and to increase the chances of adequate documentation of what had been so far a seen-only bird. A group assembled, but none of us saw the bird.

Much later in the day Christie and I returned, and it made a brief appearance, but again eluded photographs.

I returned Jan. 28 (see Ebird list) with skilled photographer Joan Garvey. After Mark Meunier re-found the bird, Joan got definitive photos.

I returned again March 24 (see Ebird list) and we got more photos, plus Dan Lane obtained great recordings which seem to pin it down to the expected northeast Mexico subspecies which had in recent years been found nesting in mangroves in extreme south Texas. Please listen to DL recordings and commentary linked in Ebird list.

In my 4 sightings, it has been seen foraging either loosely in a mixed species flock but most often singly. It is generally very elusive and has been missed by searchers on several occasions. While the tall mangrove area is accessible on muddy tracks, shorter mangrove extends well beyond the accessible area into places that are pretty much impossible to reach on foot or by conventional boat.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, not what "should" have been seen; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species; body bulk, shape, proportions; bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species, or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids):

A typical yellow warbler (both in the sense of “yellow” and “Yellow”). Bright yellow below and on non-chestnut portions of head, with darker greenish yellow above highlighted by yellow edgings to coverts, flight feathers and tail feathers. Chestnut on the fore-face—crown, chin and cheeks, but not on the nape by late January (not sure about what I saw in December 2018), i.e. chestnut on head not as full or well demarcated as depicted for adult males in field guides (not sure at the time if this reflected immaturity or basic plumage). The chestnut cap appeared to be more extensive and farther into the nape in the March photos, as opposed to the January photos. On close inspection of January and March photos it had breast streaks but not chestnut colored breast streaks as in a breeding plumaged male. I was not sure if this indicated maturation or molt from basic into alternate, but photos obtained by Joan Garvey in October 2018 (see addendum) seems to me to show a much more complete chestnut head and chestnut breast streaks, indicating that perhaps this is adult molting in and out of alternate plumage? (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S49528965>):

Photos and Ebird lists:

First Sighting During Grand Isle CBC 12/20/17, Christina Riehl and David Muth

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S41230620>

(from checklist) First spotted by CR over my shoulder. A male yellow warbler, yellow below (i believe i saw light chestnut streaks but am frankly not positive), yellow-green above, yellow tail but i did not specifically note brighter yellow tail spots, black eye, black bill, but with a chestnut head--chestnut coloration forming a nearly full cap, face and throat, but nape and chest yellow. In flight gave typical sounding YEWA light "zeet" note. I had maybe one second to try for a photo but missed my chance, getting only bare branches. Very elusive. Saw it twice during this period, once within 10' with naked eye, and later about 50' away with 10x binoculars. It was found again later that day (see list).

And later that day, no photos obtained:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S41230644>

(from checklist) Re-found by Christie right at dusk (see earlier checklist). I aimed camera and took one desperation shot into thicket but no luck. A typical male yellow warbler with a chestnut head patch--chestnut on face, cap and throat. I believe this bird showed light chestnut streaking on the breast but truthfully i just failed to look for that feature.

On Jan. 28, 2018, with Joan Garvey, Wendy Rhiner and Mark Meunier, we re-found the bird and obtained photographs.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S42308494>

*(from checklist) Stakeout. Photos to come by JG; mine is a placeholder. Spotted by MM. Yellow warbler literally and figuratively with amazing chestnut cap, face and chin. Chestnut did not seem as complete as on Dec. 20 during Grand Isle CBC when first found-
-i.e., looked a little ragged around the edges as opposed to the clean edges I remember, but of course, we did not get photos Dec. 20. Feeding on and near the ground among black mangrove rhizomes and ground litter. With loose flock, that was responding to various chickadee calls, vireo fuss notes, and warbler songs that we were playing to lure in NOWA. Showed no interest in YEWA chips we played.*



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On March 24, 2018, I returned with Cameron Rutt, Dan Lane, Michelle McClindon and Van Remsen. We obtained additional photographs, and Lane obtained recording of call notes, flight notes, and song.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S43936684>

(from checklist) Stakeout; present since CBC. DL obtained recording of flight note, call note, and song. Flight note to my ear (DPM) perhaps thinner than YEWA. Call note "tchoup" rich but lacking sweetness of YEWA note (DPM); song difficult for me to characterize but again lacking sweetness and call-response cadence of YEWA (DPM).



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16. **Voice:** The first day the only vocalization I heard was a “zeet” note that sounded fairly close to migrant Yellow Warbler flight calls, but I did not hear a typical sweet redstart-like call note. Thereafter I heard various brief vocalizations, but only on March 24 did I hear repeated call notes, flight notes and snippets of song. Lane was playing snippets of song as well, so I was a bit overwhelmed and instead of

my trying to describe what I think I heard, I recommend the contemporary Ebird notes and his recordings.

17. **Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):** There are no similar species, but as to other chestnut headed “subspecies” of Yellow Warbler, I have no clue beyond what Dan Lane heard and describes in the 3/24 Ebird list.

18. **Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?):** See Ebird lists.

19. **Previous experience with this species:** Subspecies group seen in Mexico (both coasts) and Costa Rica (Pacific).

20. **Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):**

a. **at time of observation:** none

b. **after observation:** Pretty much my entire relevant library.

21. This description is written from:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	notes made during the observation.	Are notes attached?	from Ebird; yes.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	notes made after the observation.	At what date?	12/20/17
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	memory		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	study of images		

22. **Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain:**

Yes.

23. **Date:** February 16, 2020

Time: various.

24. **May the LBRC have permission to display in whole or in part this report and accompanying photos on the LOS-LBRC website and LBRC Facebook page?** Yes.

If yes, may we include your name with the report? Yes.

Addendum:

Here is an excerpt of two photos from Joan Garvey 10/28/18 Ebird list which to me show an alternate plumaged male:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S49528965>



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