

## LBRC Report Form

1. English and Scientific names: Tropical Parula (*Setophaga pitiayumi*)
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):  
One male (adult by the orange chest?) in nice plumage
3. Parish:  
Cameron
4. Specific Locality:  
St. Martin de Porres Cemetery about 3km east of Grand Chenier
5. Date(s) when observed: Sunday, 8 October 2023
6. Time(s) of day when observed: 12:05-12:15pm
7. Reporting observer: Nick Ramsey
8. Other observers accompanying reporter who also identified the bird(s):  
None
9. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):  
None
10. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Bird in direct sunlight from the noon sun, from 10-25 feet up in a Live Oak
11. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Vortex diamondback 8x42, clean in fair condition; Canon EOS R5 with RF 100-500mm lens, new
12. Distance to bird(s): 10 feet to 40 feet
13. Duration of observation: Initial observation was brief, about 5 seconds, and several subsequent observations over the next 10 minutes allowed for study from 3-10 seconds at a time
14. Habitat: The cemetery borders Grand Chenier Hwy to the south and backs up to the Grand Chenier Ridge. The cemetery edge is mostly younger Live Oaks and various second growth shrubby and small tree components. The understory is variously open or

full of brambles (*Smilax* and *Rubus* spp). The parula stayed 10-25 feet up in the smaller live oaks and shrubby trees for the duration of my observation.

15. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation): This bird flew into pishing at the northeast corner of the cemetery with three northern parulas and a redstart around 12:05pm. The bright lemon yellow throat contrasting with the dark mask caught my naked eye and I immediately raised my camera for photos. Through the viewfinder, I could not make out any hint of white eye arcs. Unfortunately the camera would not grab focus and I was left with a burst of blurry oak leaves. I started playing vireo scolds to attract the bird back; it was fairly confiding while it moved through a live oak with Northern Parulas. The black mask, with no white around the eye, flowed into the dark blue crown, the same color as the wings. The wings had limited white. I believe the bird was a young or adult male; the breast had some suffused orange below the throat. The rest was bright lemon yellow through to the flanks (unlike the reduced chest patch of Northern). I was able to observe the bird well for 10 seconds, initially in my binoculars and then through my viewfinder. Still my camera would not grab focus, but upon reviewing stills, I was able to capture a blurry flight shot at this time. I alerted the LA RBA Groupme at this point, hoping someone else would be able to help me get documentation.

In total, I observed the bird 5 times, at first for about 5 seconds. Subsequent observations were of about 3 (2x), 5, and 10 seconds. I was mostly able to see the bird from below or broadside, and was able to observe all major field marks to separate from hybrid Northern x Tropical Parulas both in my binoculars and in the viewfinder of my camera.

Esme Rosen showed up about 30 minutes later, telling me she'd checked the cemetery earlier in the day with no parulas to speak of. The two of us tried luring the bird in with mob tapes and did an exhaustive search of the woods behind the cemetery and along the road but were not able to relocate the bird after two more hours. Birds seemed to be moving west down the chenier, with near 100% turnover at our mob tapes every half hour or so. Activity fell a lot in accordance with the hot, sunny weather.

16. 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):

A parula with a blackish mask flowing into a dark blue crown and face. There was no white above or below the eye, which I took special care to make sure of. The crown was

the same color as the wing coverts aside from limited white in the wingbars. The underside of the bird was bright lemon yellow down through the flanks, the same color as the lower mandible with which the coloration appeared continuous. The upper mandible appeared dark. There was suffused tangerine color on the birds upper chest, appearing not as a confined patch but more as a puddle with no defined margins, and was less obvious in the field than it was in the single photograph I was able to capture. The undertail coverts and thighs were white. Overall, all of the colors on the bird were very bright and high contrast, especially compared to Northern Parula. Proportionately, as best I could tell, the bird was identical to Northern Parulas, three of which were in the same tree.

17. Voice: Silent

18. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation): Northern Parula eliminated by lack of white eye arcs, dark mask, extensive bright yellow coloration underneath, to flanks, with suffused orange below the throat (rather than a contrasting orange patch). Overall colors brighter than Northern Parula and white on wings reduced. Hybrid origin was eliminated as well by the above characteristics, mostly the complete lack of white above or below the eye.

19. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?):  
The bird was silent.

20. Previous experience with this species: I've observed pure Tropical Parulas in Texas, including a female in the fall of 2022 at Sabine Woods (Jefferson County) and several birds of both sexes in western Texas (Kinney and Uvalde Counties) in spring 2023. In the tropics, I've observed dozens of Tropical Parulas, including in the hand as recently as August. I've also observed a handful of hybrid parulas of various degrees in Texas' Lower Rio Grande Valley. I've seen Northern Parulas of all age and sex classes on hundreds of occasions.

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

I reviewed hundreds of photos from Macauley Library in the evening following the observation to make sure that nothing I had seen was inconsistent with a pure male Tropical Parula. I also reviewed photos of hybrid birds, mostly from Texas. I had no concerns in the field with purity, and upon review of media, I was still sure.

22. Identification aids used when?  
After observation

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

Yes. I am positive this bird demonstrated no signs of hybridization with Northern Parula.

24. Date report completed:

11 October 2023

25. 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

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

Yes

