

Common Yellowthroat
20 Dec 1984
north of Keokuk, Lee Co., IA
*Robert Cecil
IBL 55:29, 57

Record Number: 84-39
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Robert I. Cecil

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 55:29
Records Committee: IBL 55:57

VOTE: 7-III

III, The only surprise is that this is Iowa's first winter record.

III, I like this description--probably a first-fall male. Exceptional view was noted, as well as call note and characteristic actions. Not unexpected in late fall.

III, Brief but sounds OK, assuming a 20x scope will focus that close. Odd time to molt--but odd time to be there, too, and there could be a cause and effect relationship. Immature fall males may have yellow rather than white belly--I ran into that problem identifying a dead one once. Behavior, call, etc. right.

What species? Common Yellowthroat (Geothlypis trichas) How many? 1

Location? Along bank of Mississippi River, 1 mile N. of Keokuk, Lee County, Iowa

Type of habitat? On small, thin peninsula jutting into river, covered with low marsh grass interspersed and supported by taller weeds. Some short willow saplings. Some thin ice bordering shore.

When? date(s): Dec. 20, 1984 time: 9:00 A.M. to Total viewing time, less than 10 seconds.

Who? your name and address: Robert I. Cecil 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, Iowa 52632 2-3 seconds through scope

others with you: No

others before or after you: No

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

While viewing an Oldsquaw through my scope I was distracted by a low tshp note coming from the grass in front of me. I noted a small bird and put my scope on it. I was suprised to see a small yellow bird--the first yellow bird I had seen in several weeks--a bird which due to its coloration and posture was obviously a common yellowthroat. In the brief look that I had, I noted the dusky greenish yellow back, yellow throat and yellowish undersides. Most noticable about its field marks was the faint trace of a mask. It was as though the black feathers of the mask were just barely beginning to emerge from through the existing plumage. (Note that my view of this bird was exceptional--I was looking through a 20x scope at a bird less than 20 feet away). Also noticable was the bird's posture including the cock of the tail characteristic of the yellowthroat.

I had very little time to observe behavior. It remained low in the weeds as long as I watched it, moving actively and nervously. It appeared healthy--certainly healthy enough to quickly and permanently leave my presence.

Voice was a repeated, low tshp note. I am sure a more experienced birder could have identified the bird from this alone, but I would not have been able to. Looked for bird twice more during day but could not find again.

Similar species and how eliminated: I feel that combination of posture, incl. cock of tail, clear yellow throat and yellowish undersides, and most importantly, trace of emerging mask ruled out all other Warblers. Mask, although faint, was clearly noticable. Was not Kentucky warbler--saw several this summer and early fall.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? N.A.

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Cannot recall sky conditions, but no rain, light good. Distance not more than 20 feet. Optics: Nikon spotter at 20x.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Quite familiar with Common Yellowthroat, incl. fall birds. Quite inexperienced with other fall warblers.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Used Petersons and N.G.S. Field Guide during sighting only. Referred to Iowa Birds

How long before field notes made? 10 minutes This form completed? 2 weeks

A little belatedly I decided to document this. I didn't know whether to document late dates or not, but since this is only summer record I could find, I decided to.

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