

MacGillivray's Warbler

7 Sep 1997

Moorehead Park, Ida Co., IA

*Peter Ernzen

IBL 68:16, 87

Record Number: 97-46

Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Peter Ernzen, 407 Court, Ida Grove 51445 [2/15/98]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 68:16

Records Committee: 68:87

VOTE: 6 NA, 1 A-D

A-D, The view was brief, as is the description: similar to fall male Mourning with two bold white eye crescents and a longer tail. Female, immature, and some male Mournings have narrow eye-arcs, but they are always thinner and less distinct than MacGillivray's. MacGillivray's typically has a longer tail extension beyond the undertail coverts (Petersen Field Guide to Warblers). Even though other important characteristics such as call notes and breast color were not noted, I believe the description of the eye crescents, in conjunction with the tail length, is sufficient to rule out Mourning Warbler.

NA, No mention of sex. If a male, the eye crescents should eliminate Mourning. Male should also show black lores, which is not described.

NA, This is a tough call. Location is reasonable for a vagrant MacGillivray's. The bold crescents are highly suggestive and may, in fact, be diagnostic if we had more description of the rest of the bird; i.e., breast. From the description I am unable to absolutely sex or age the bird. Cape May, NJ has had a MacGillivray's for much of the winter. It would be interesting to see what criterion they used for identification.

NA, There's no indication of the amount of black mottling on the upper breast and no mention of black lores. Eye crescents "require careful viewing to appreciate", Jon Curson's Warblers of the Americas. If it was 10-15 minutes of viewing time instead of 10-15 seconds, one could eliminate the possibility of an adult male Mourning Warbler showing 1 or 2 of these features.

NA, The bold eye crescents and subjectively longer tail indicate that this bird is a MacGillivray's. Proof for a fall female or immature would likely require measurements. Song or call note might be diagnostic by an experienced observer, but who would have enough experience in Iowa? See the new guide by Dunn and Garrett for much more detail.

NA, I am not convinced that these species can be separated in fall even with these kind of details.

NA, Based on plates in Dunn & Garrett (Plate 23) I don't believe the 2 species can be differentiated with such brief information and look. However features described are attributable to MacGillivray's (longer tail and bold eye crescents) but these

birds are very similar in fall.

97-46

rec'd 12-15-97
from Pete Erazor

97-46

MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER

On the Afternoon of September 7, I was walking a path near the Maple river at Moorehead Park, when I noticed a warbler in the brush approximately 15 feet from me. The bird flew up to a downed tree and proceeded to scold me (I would estimate a viewing time of 10 seconds). I initially thought that the bird was a Mourning Warbler - common at Moorehead Park at this time of the year in this type of habitat. I was somewhat perplexed as I focused my 10 x 50 binoculars on the bird. I observed a broken eye ring on both sides of the head of this bird. The broken eye ring could best be described as "two bold white crescents" - above and below the eye. The other feature which stuck in my mind was the relatively long looking - "longer looking than Mourning" - tail on this particular bird.

At first I tried to dismiss this bird as a nontypical Mourning Warbler. I have seen on several occasions Mourning warblers with slight eye rings - making identification of fall Connecticut and irregular Mourning warblers somewhat difficult. For the next week I returned to the spot hoping for a glimpse of the bird. This proved useless. I had hoped to see this bird as my notes were rather sketchy and incomplete. Consisting primarily of "bird with 2 bold white crescents" around the eyes, and "appeared longer tailed than Mourning". Otherwise the bird looked very similar to a fall male mourning warbler.

Unfortunately the only resources I have available on this bird are somewhat contradictory - National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America (referred to as NGS) and A Golden Field Guide - A Guide to Field Identification BIRDS OF North America (referred to as GFG).

NSG states "Bold white crescents above and below distinguish all plumages from male Mourning and all Connecticut Warblers." It goes on to say, "Crescents may be very hard to distinguish from the thin, nearly complete eye ring on female and immature Mourning Warbler." Again the crescents observed were bold and white.

The GFG "The gray hood and broken eye ring are diagnostic except in fall, when it is impossible to separate this species from the immature and female Mourning Warbler." Kaufman's book Advanced Birding does not cover field separation of these two species.

After reading Mark Proescholdt's Macgillivray's Warbler in Hardin County IBL vol 67:65 several times, I contacted him the following weekend and explained my dilemma. He encouraged me to submit this record. It would be helpful to know if the undertail coverts on the Macgillivray's Warbler were the same, shorter, or longer than the Mournings.