

FIRST RECORD OF THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER IN NEW MEXICO

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ABSTRACT: A Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) photographed and recorded calling at Percha Dam State Park, Sierra Co., New Mexico, on 9 September 2023 represented a first confirmed record for the state of New Mexico. Of the relatively few Connecticut Warblers found inland in western North America, this individual was a fall migrant, and the date is typical for other occurrences in the West.

On 9 September 2023, I found a Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) at Percha Dam State Park, about 34 km south of Truth or Consequences, Sierra County, New Mexico (32° 52' 7" N, 107° 18' 13" W). This area, at 1200 m elevation, is a riparian woodland of cottonwoods (*Populus* spp.) and willows (*Salix* spp.) embedded in a linear strip of agricultural lands along the Rio Grande within a matrix of desert grassland. At around 19:15, I detected a sharp metallic "chit" call along the river's edge. Soon after, I observed the bird in a willow thicket about 1 m from the ground for about 1 minute at a distance of approximately 10 m. The bird reappeared for about 30 seconds at 19:20. I obtained one poor yet diagnostic photo of the bird and an audio recording of the call. Several other observers and I returned the following day to obtain further documentation. The bird was confirmed in the same general area through the late afternoon of 10 September 2023 by at least 16 observers.

The Connecticut Warbler appeared to be in immature plumage (see photo on this issue's back cover). The eye ring was complete and not as thin as on a Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*). Its tail seemed short because of the long wings and undertail coverts. The bill was flesh-colored and slightly longer than on the loosely associated MacGillivray's Warbler (*G. tolmiei*) seen on 10 September 2023. I heard its nasal, metallic "chit" note several times (Figure 1). On a few occasions, I saw the bird walking, not hopping like most other warbler species (video: <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/608783060>). Additional documentation is archived in the Macaulay Library (www.macaulaylibrary.org). There are five previous sight reports of the Connecticut Warbler in New Mexico (September 1979, May 1991, August 1997, June 2015, and September 2019), but none of these reports established the bird's identity (S. O. Williams III, New Mexico Bird Records Committee, *in litt.*).

Formerly classified in the same genus as the Kentucky (*G. formosa*), Mourning (*G. philadelphia*), and MacGillivray's warblers, the Connecticut Warbler is now considered the sole member of the genus *Oporornis* (Chesser et al. 2011). The breeding distribution of the Connecticut Warbler spans the wet boreal forests of North America, from Canada south to northern portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan (Dunn and Alderfer 2006). The species winters in South America east of the Andes, but the exact limits of its winter range are poorly known (Pitocchelli et al. 2023). The migration route of the Connecticut Warbler is elliptical; in fall its route is normally more easterly than in the spring (Lincoln and Peterson 1979).

Fall records of the species are rare in western North America despite a breeding range that extends west to northeastern British Columbia (Davidson et al. 2015), with records from Montana, Nevada, California, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming (Roberson 1980, Dunn and Garrett 1997, Rosenberg and Witzeman 1999, Carlisle et al. 2008, Faulkner 2010, Marks et al. 2016). Most of these records are from coastal California and nearby offshore islands. Inland records are few, reflecting in part a concentration of observers and the greater ease of finding a secretive species in more open areas. This account establishes an additional record of a vagrant

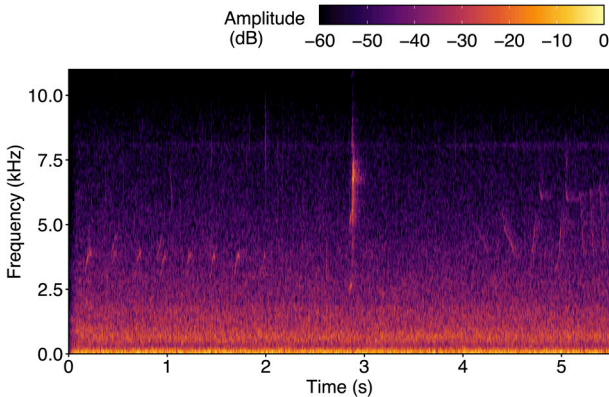


FIGURE 1. Call of the Connecticut Warbler at Percha Dam State Park, Sierra County, New Mexico, on 9 September 2023 (recorded by Nicholas T. Vinciguerra, <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/608668924>).

for the state of New Mexico. The Connecticut Warbler remains undocumented in Alaska, Washington, and Oregon. Through March 2024, the New Mexico state list numbered 555 species, of which 51 are New World warblers (www.nmbirds.org).

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