

Indeed it was. Binford and I agreed that we were looking at a female Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*). I called the Chicago Audubon Society birding hotline and Dave Johnson. By 12:30 p.m. Johnson and Richard and Mary Biss arrived and had relocated the bird in the same area. Later in the afternoon, others came to see the bird. James Landing and Margot Merrick also photographed this out-of-place warbler. I last saw the bird at 4:30 p.m. that day.

The Townsend's Warbler tended to remain alone. Observers noticed it associating with other warblers only when a flock passed by while feeding. The bird did not follow the warbler group as it moved to another habitat.

Although the warbler was first observed in deciduous trees, it spent most of the time feeding among pine and particularly spruce trees along the golf course fence, occasionally switching to the willows in the golf course behind the evergreens. Considering that we were able to observe 36 species of warblers at the Botanic Garden this spring, the Townsend's Warbler was just icing on the cake.

## Description and Identification

The bird had a clear yellow throat and yellow face with a dark distinct olive or gray cheek patch. The eye appeared to be separated from the cheek patch by a yellow lower half eyering. The breast had black streaks down the sides and the belly and undertail coverts were white. The bird had a very dark gray-green to olive cap; an olive back with no obvious streaking (only faintly streaked, most noticeable on the rump); and white slats along the sides of the tail. Two white wing bars were distinct.

The three warbler species which

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## Townsend's Discovery

When physician John Kirk Townsend was 24 years old, he and his friend Thomas Nuttall embarked on a journey hoping to become the first naturalists to cross the entire United States. As they set out on a brisk mid-March day in 1835, they were destined to discover birds that were not yet known to science.

Townsend, also a taxidermist, had already organized a collection of the birds of West Chester, Pennsylvania, according to Paul Fleischman author of *Townsend's Warbler*. But he had never traveled farther west than that.

The pair endured difficult conditions - ice cold, rugged mountains, unbearable thirst. But they continued on, collecting specimens of birds, plants, and sea creatures that had never been named.

It was along the Columbia River in Oregon that Townsend caught sight of a tiny, olive-backed, gray-winged bird with black head and throat and yellow around its eyes. Townsend shot the bird, as he and Nuttall did all the specimens they were collecting.

"None but the naturalist can appreciate a naturalists' feeling - his delight amounting to ecstasy - when a specimen such as he had never before seen meets his eye," Townsend wrote in his diary.

Nuttall named the avian species of Townsend's delight *Sylvia townsendi*, or Townsend's Warbler (today *Dendroica townsendi*). The specimen placed in Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences "still serves as the type specimen, the official representative of the species," wrote Fleischman.

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can be confused with the Townsend's Warbler are the Black-throated Green, Golden-cheeked, and Hermit Warblers (*D. virens*, *D. chrysoparia*, *D. occidentalis*). The well-defined dark auricular patch and lack of yellow on the lower belly and vent separate the Townsend's from these three. (Pyle, et al. 1987).

## Distribution

The Townsend's Warbler breeds as close as Wyoming and is a common migrant through states west of and including the Continental Divide. Any record east of the Rocky Mountains should be considered an unusual occurrence. The species is named after John Kirk Townsend, a physician and naturalist who collected the first type specimen known to science with fellow naturalist Thomas

Nuttall during the spring of 1835 along the Columbia River in Oregon.

## Other Records

This sighting represents the third accepted record for the Townsend's Warbler in Illinois. The first record was of a female seen 6 May 1980 at Jackson Park in Chicago, Cook County. The second record was of a male photographed 1-2 May 1982 in Jacksonville, Morgan County (Bohlen 1989). Other eastern sightings include New England and Ohio (DeSante and Pyle 1986), Indiana (Mumford and Keller 1984), and Minnesota (Janssen 1987). No records have yet been recorded for Michigan or Wisconsin (DeSante and Pyle 1986). Eastern records appear to be almost exclusively May observations with the exception of a bird

Meadowlark