

and plumage characteristics and molt schedules of these two very similar species. After viewing and studying the excellent photos taken by Jeff McCoy, Rohwer said, "The bird seems clearly to be less than a year old, as it shows the heavy shaft streaks on the secondary coverts characteristic of young birds. These feathers are retained through the first breeding season, and are an important aging character throughout the first potential breeding season." Rohwer could not come to a conclusion about the gender of the bird, but guessed that it was likely a first-year male due to the brightness of the head.

A number of other vagrant Hermit Warblers have been recorded in the Midwest and East. One or two reports exist for Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Nine reports have also come from four locations in eastern Canada (Dunn and Garret 1997). Previous to this record, the Hermit Warbler has been reported twice in Illinois, but documentation has never been accepted by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (IORC). A bird at Springfield and one at Chicago (see Bohlen 1989) were not accepted due to the possibility of these birds being Townsend's/Hermit hybrids.

### Ruling out a Townsend's X Hermit Hybrid

The breeding ranges of the Townsend's Warbler and Hermit Warbler overlap in portions of Oregon and Washington, but even in areas of overlap the two species breed in separate habitats, specifically different elevations. Nonetheless, hybridization between Hermit Warblers and Townsend's Warblers has been well documented for years (Dunn and Garret 1997)

A Hermit/Townsend's Warbler hybrid has been documented in Illinois. See a sketch of the breeding plumaged male that was found at Van Patten Woods Forest Preserve, Lake County, 4 May 1995, discovered

on the spring bird count (Johnson et al. 1998). Jon Dunn, co-author of "A Field Guide to Warblers of North America," concurred with the identification of this 1995 record as a hybrid. This was possibly only the second record for eastern North America for this hybrid, with the other being found in Newfoundland (MacTavish 1996).

Separating Hermit Warblers from Hermit/Townsend's hybrid can be difficult at times and relies on a number of key field marks that include the extent and location of streaking on the flanks, the amount and intensity of yellow wash below the black bib on the breast, the amount of gray coloring present in the back, and the amount of yellow on the crown. Dark patches on the crown are also often present in many of these hybrids (Jackson et al. 1992).

The Hermit Warbler that was present in New York (November and December 2003) has been subject to much continuing controversy. The general consensus among Sievert Rohwer and many New York birders was that the New York bird had at least some Townsend's Warbler ancestry. These conclusions were

based mainly on the field marks mentioned above that set the New York bird apart from the one in Illinois. Based on these and other criteria, the Hermit Warbler at the Morton Arboretum was ruled as being a "pure-blood" Hermit Warbler, thus becoming a first state record for Illinois.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all of those people who sent in documentation on the Hermit Warbler. Your efforts helped make the Hermit Warbler one of the most well-documented birds in Illinois. I'd also like to specifically thank Jerry Kumery and Jeff McCoy for their successful efforts in photographing the bird. Special thanks go to Bob and Karen Fisher, Brian Herriott, Dan Scheiman, and about a dozen other unnamed birders for quickly relocating the bird the next day and confirming its identification. A special thanks also to Sievert Rohwer for his comments and help in aging the bird.

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