

FIRST SIGHT RECORD OF NORTHERN PARULA (*PARULA AMERICANA*)
FOR TRINIDAD AND A FOURTH RECORD FOR TOBAGO

FLOYD E. HAYES

Department of Life Sciences, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago;
Current address: Department of Biology, Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA 94508, USA

Abstract.—I report sight records of a male Northern Parula (*Parula americana*) at Pointe-a-Pierre, Trinidad, on 22 February 1998, and a male at Buccoo, Tobago, on 9 February 1998. These records provide the first for Trinidad and the fourth for Tobago, and were my only sightings during nine years of field work in Trinidad and Tobago (1993–2002).

Key words: distribution, Nearctic migrants, *Parula americana*, sight records, Tobago, Trinidad

Resumen.—PRIMER REGISTRO VISUAL DE LA PARULA NORTEÑA (*PARULA AMERICANA*) PARA TRINIDAD Y EL CUARTO REGISTRO PARA TOBAGO. Reporto registros visuales de un macho de la Parula Norteña (*Parula americana*) en Pointe-a-Pierre, Trinidad, el 22 de febrero de 1998, y un macho en Buccoo, Tobago, el 9 de febrero de 1998. Estos registros constituyen el primero para Trinidad y el cuarto para Tobago, y fueron los únicos registros durante nueve años de trabajo de campo en Trinidad y Tobago (1993–2002).

Palabras clave: distribución, migradores neárticos, *Parula americana*, registros visuales, Tobago, Trinidad

THE NORTHERN PARULA (*Parula americana*) is a Nearctic migrant that breeds in North America and winters chiefly in Central America, the Greater Antilles, and the northern Lesser Antilles (e.g., Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997, Moldenhauer and Regelksi 1996). Thus far the only South American records appear to be from continental islands in the southern Caribbean, including the Dutch Antilles (Voous 1983), Islas Los Roques (Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps 1978), and Tobago (French 1991), and a single record from the mainland on the Peninsula de Paraguana of Venezuela (Bosque and Lentino 1987). In this note I report the first sight record of this species for Trinidad and the fourth for Tobago.

TRINIDAD OBSERVATION

While visiting the Pointe-a-Pierre Wildfowl Trust on 22 February 1998, I paused by the bridge crossing the pond's overflow and began whistling imitations of the Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*), alternating with spishing, in an effort to attract migrant warblers in the surrounding secondary forest. Moments later a Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) popped into view and soon disappeared. About 10 min later a Northern Parula flew into the branches of a tree directly above me. During the next 4 min (15:05–15:09 h) it moved about on branches 8–12 m above me. During that time I was able to view its broken eyering on several brief occasions through 7×35 binoculars. The underparts were plainly visible, but the upperparts were difficult to view. After the bird flew away I could not relocate it and

searched in vain for the bird at the same locality on 18 and 21 March 1998, plus during each successive winter through 2001–2002.

In my field notes I wrote: “white belly, yellow lower breast, extensive bright orange wash across breast, more extensive than Tobago bird, some bluish across upper breast, yellow throat; dark above, with white broken eyering; couldn't tell if upper or lower eyering was wider; definitely saw breaks on both sides of eyering; ... also noted white wingbars, I believe; dark bluish above; chirping loud and repeatedly, which caught my attention.”

TOBAGO OBSERVATION

While birding at Buccoo Swamp on 9 February 1998, I found a Northern Parula just 3 m away in a tree at the edge of a secondary forest only a few meters from a mangrove lagoon at 06:52 h. I watched it from 5 m for about 45 sec until it flew away across the lagoon. I then walked around the lagoon while alternating bouts of spishing with whistled imitations of the Eastern Screech-Owl. Halfway around the lagoon I saw an immature White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*), a male Yellow Warbler, a male American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*), a male Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*), and a Northern Waterthrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis*). On the other side of the lagoon I momentarily observed the Yellow Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, and finally the Northern Parula all in the same tree, scolding the phantom owl. This time I viewed the Northern Parula from only 3 m away during 07:23–07:25 h. The resident White-fringed Antwrens (*Formi-*

civora grisea) also responded to the owl calls.

In the first entry in my field notes I wrote: “yellow breast, dark back, broken white eye-ring below and above eye; ...wing bars seen; no dark band seen across chest; no light spot noted on back.” After obtaining better views, my second entry stated: “lower eye ring broader than upper eye ring; yellow throat, slight bluish-gray wash just below, then more extensive orangish wash across chest, then extensive yellow on lower breast; white belly.”

DISCUSSION

The broken white eye ring, darker band across yellow breast, and more extensive white on belly of both birds distinguished them from the Tropical Parula (*P. pitiayumi*; Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997), which is resident on Trinidad but not on Tobago (ffrench 1991). The distinctive blue-gray band across the chest of both birds indicated that each was a male. I did not note whether the remiges, alula, and primary coverts were edged greenish, which is indicative of a first-winter male, but the Tobago individual which I observed closely did not appear to have the pale supraloral streak typical of an immature. My observation of the white arc below the eye being broader than the upper arc on the Tobago bird matches Dunn and Garrett's (1997:201) description of a “conspicuous white arc under the eye, with a slightly smaller arc above the eye.”

These records constitute the first for Trinidad and the fourth for Tobago, and were my only sightings during nine years of extensive field work in Trinidad and Tobago (1993–2002). Both have been accepted by the Trinidad and Tobago Rare Bird Committee (White and Hayes 2002). Previous records from Tobago include a female captured at Grafton Estate on 19 December 1974 (ffrench 1975), a female seen by G. Blidberg and S. Samuelsson at Little Tobago on 1 November 1977 (ffrench 1979), and a female seen by D. Fisher at Grafton Estate on 18 January 1985 (ffrench 1991).

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