

FIRST SIGHT RECORD OF PHILADELPHIA VIREO (*VIREO PHILADELPHICUS*) FOR CURAÇAO, NETHERLANDS ANTILLES, WITH NOTES ON OTHER MIGRANT SONGBIRDS

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Abstract.—We observed a Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*) on 1 April 2000 at Malpais, Curaçao, the first record for the Netherlands Antilles. We also present observations of several migrant warblers.

Resumen.—PRIMER REGISTRO VISUAL DEL VIREO DE FILADELFIA (*VIREO PHILADELPHICUS*) EN CURAZAO, ANTILLAS HOLANDESAS, CON NOTAS SOBRE OTRAS AVES CANORAS MIGRATORIAS. Se describe el primer registro del Vireo de Filadelfia (*Vireo philadelphicus*) en Curazao, Antillas Holandesas, y se presentan algunos datos de otras aves canoras en migración hacia el norte.

Key words: Blackpoll Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Curaçao, *Dendroica pensylvanica*, *Dendroica striata*, Netherlands Antilles, Northern Parula, Northern Waterthrush, Ovenbird, *Parula americana*, Philadelphia Vireo, record, Red-eyed Vireo, *Seiurus aurocapillus*, *Seiurus noveboracensis*, *Vireo olivaceus*, *Vireo philadelphicus*

THE PHILADELPHIA VIREO (*Vireo philadelphicus*) breeds in northern North America and regularly winters from southern Mexico south to western Panama (American Ornithologists' Union 1998) but is not known to occur east of the Canal Zone in Panama (Ridgely and Gwynne 1989, Ridgely and Tudor 1989). In South America, there are three fall records, all in northwestern Colombia (Hilty and Brown 1986), and the species has not been previously recorded from Curaçao or the other Netherland Antilles (Voous 1983). The Philadelphia Vireo has also been recorded only rarely from the Bahamas, Cuba, and Jamaica, and as a vagrant from the Cayman Islands and Antigua (Raffaele *et al.* 1998).

While surveying and audio-recording birds on 1 April 2000 at Malpais, Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles, we visually identified a Philadelphia Vireo. We had arrived at the site at dawn (06:15 h AST) and had been counting various marsh birds, columbids, and other resident species from a wide dam at the southwestern end of a small wetland. In the moist soil below the dam was a thicker growth of vegetation, including some relatively large trees as high as 12–15 m. Beginning at approximately 07:30 h AST, we moved into this thicker vegetation and began “spishing” – making sounds imitating various scolding and alarm calls of birds – to lure birds in from the surrounding area for visual identification. We had found that this technique worked well in past years to attract both resident and migrant birds in various habitats on Aruba. Several migrants appeared, including two or three Northern Waterthrushes (*Seiurus noveboracensis*), two or three Northern Parulas (*Parula americana*), one Ovenbird

(*Seiurus aurocapillus*), one Blackpoll Warbler (*Dendroica striata*), and the vireo. We studied the vireo for 15 min, from as close as 5 m, with 10x50 and 10x40 binoculars under excellent light conditions as the bird investigated our “spishing” sounds and foraged nearby.

Description.—The bird had obvious vireo-type bill, thicker and blunter than typical small warbler bill, but not as long or as large as that of Red-eyed Vireo (*V. olivaceus*) or Black-whiskered Vireo (*V. altiloquus*); undersides uniform pale yellow including undertail coverts; back dull greenish; crown gray with light supercilium lacking contrasting dark upper edge; dark lores and dark behind eye. Iris dark but clearly not red. Bird was smaller and shorter than Red-eyed Vireo; crown not as light gray as in Red-eyed Vireo but somewhat darker and less contrasting than in that species.

Analysis.—The blunt vireo-type bill, yellow undertail coverts, and typical vireo behavior separated this bird from the similar-appearing Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*), which winters to northwestern Venezuela (Ridgely and Tudor 1989), and for which there are several records from the Netherlands Antilles (Voous 1983). Red-eyed and Black-whiskered Vireos are the only other vireo species recorded from the Netherlands Antilles that potentially could be confused with Philadelphia Vireo, and both were ruled out by the smaller bill and overall size, lack of dark line above white supercilium, darker gray cap, and, in Black-whiskered Vireo, the lack of dark malar stripe. We were both familiar with identification of Philadelphia Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, and Tennessee Warbler, each hav-

ing 15–20 years of field experience with the birds of eastern North America and having both seen Black-whiskered Vireos on many occasions. The Brown-capped Vireo (*V. leucophrys*) is superficially similar but has a brown, rather than gray, crown and is highly unlikely to occur on Curaçao because it is a sedentary resident of montane forest that occurs no closer than approximately 150 km from Curaçao.

This sighting constitutes the first record of Philadelphia Vireo for the Netherlands Antilles and, considered with the three previous records from Colombia, suggests that the species may be a rare winterer in northwestern Colombia and northeastern Venezuela. Of note is the fact that on the previous day (31 March), at the same location, we observed several other migrant species not detected on 1 April, including two Red-eyed Vireos and one Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Dendroica pensylvanica*). Likewise, several species that we saw on 1 April were not detected on 31 March, including Philadelphia Vireo, Northern Parula, and Ovenbird. Such changes in species composition suggest that these birds were spring migrants returning north from a South American mainland wintering area. We note also that Voous (1983) lists relatively few records of several of these species from the Netherlands Antilles, especially during spring migration even though most (with the exception of the more Central American wintering Chestnut-sided Warbler, and the West Indian wintering Northern Parula) winter regularly on the South

American mainland.

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