

A Kentucky Warbler in western Placer County — First record for the Central Valley

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On 15 November 2002 I received a telephone call from Gary Grenfell of Granite Bay, Placer County, reporting that Virginia Vandermeer had discovered a Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*) in his back yard while she was looking out the kitchen window at about 1545. I arrived there at about 1600 and the three of us observed the bird until dark (about 1700). It was foraging primarily in leaf litter. It would appear and disappear into a hedge of English Laurel (*Prunus laurocerosus*) bordering a lawn, about 18 m slightly up slope from the back of the house.

The warbler was unmistakable (Figure 1 and photo on back cover). It was a bright (adult?) male, clearly showing yellow spectacles with a black crown and dark back. The spectacle was incomplete, starting at the lores, continuing above the eyes, then down behind the eyes and stopping there, forming a hooked appearance. Light flecks on the dark crown were sometimes visible. The black on the face was below the eyes, and extended from the dark bill to behind the eyes and down through the malar area. The tail was short, and there were no wing bars. The underparts from throat to the crissum were entirely yellow. The legs were pale yellowish. No call notes were heard on this day.

The habitat of the area is a suburban development in a hilly Interior Live Oak (*Quercus wislizenii*) woodland with granite outcrops. Many native oaks are interspersed with native and nonnative trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants forming ornamental gardens. The elevation is 150 m.

On 16 November the bird was present on and off all day. It foraged on the ground close to the cover of the laurel shrubs occasionally jumping in the air, ostensibly to capture flying insects. It would also perch on a clump of mushrooms (probably Honey Mushroom *Armillaria mellea*) and conduct sorties from there as well. I heard one call note this day. It was a loud, deep chip. The bird was not present on 18 November or thereafter.

In addition to the three people mentioned above, the following observed the warbler on 16 November: Mike Baumgartner, Todd Easterla, Gil Ewing, Louise McCullough, John Sterling and family, Tim Steurer, Fritz Steurer, John Trochet, George Waldie and Bruce Webb.

The Kentucky Warbler generally breeds in the United States from the 100th meridian east to the Atlantic Ocean, and south of the Great Lakes. It winters from the lowlands of eastern Mexico to Panama. In the west, it is of annual occurrence in California, with 115 records through 1995, mostly in the spring (Dunn and Garrett 1997). Most of the records for the state are coastal. There is only one previous record from an interior county in

northern California of which I am aware, a bird seen at Donner Pass, Nevada County, 24 May-27 June 1992, during a year that produced an unusually large number of Kentucky Warblers in the state (Heindel and Patten 1996). The bird reported here is apparently the first for Placer County and the Central Valley (David Yee, pers. comm.).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LITERATURE CITED

Dunn, J. and K. Garrett. 1997. A Field Guide to the Warblers of North America. Houghton Mifflin Company, NY.

Heindel, M. T., and M. A. Patten. 1996. Eighteenth report of the California Bird Records Committee: 1992 records. *Western Birds* 27:1-29.



Figure 1. Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*) in Granite Bay, Placer County, 15 November 2002 (see also back cover).
Photo © William Grenfell