

FEATURED PHOTO

HYBRID TOWNSEND'S × YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS FROM OREGON AND ARIZONA

ALAN CONTRERAS, 795 E 29th Ave., Eugene, Oregon 97405;
acontrer56@gmail.com

On 6 June 2010 I was birding at the headquarters complex at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Oregon when I noticed what appeared to be a slightly odd-looking Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*) in one of the trees. I lost track of the bird and shortly thereafter heard what sounded like a rather plain song of a Yellow-rumped Warbler (*D. coronata*). A moment later the Townsend's-like bird came back into view and sang the same song. Townsend's Warblers have a rather varied sound repertoire, and I have heard them sing shortened or partial songs, but I had never heard one sing a sweet, rich "cheedle cheedle cheedle" like a Yellow-rumped Warbler before.

As I watched the bird, I realized that it had a longitudinal yellow spot in the center of the crown, an extensive black area on the upper breast with a mixed black-and-yellow throat showing a pattern unlike that of a typical first-year male Townsend's, and a whitish rear to the supercilium, none of which a Townsend's should have. At that point Duncan Evered, co-director of the Malheur Field Station, arrived. He was able to get the bird in his scope and saw that the left wing had more white than expected for Townsend's. The greater coverts on that wing showed two feathers with an extended white edge of the kind that an Audubon's Warbler (*D. c. auduboni*) usually has and which the Myrtle Warbler (*D. c. coronata*) usually does not. The right wing had a simple dual wingbar pattern like that of a Townsend's.

We concluded that the bird was a hybrid Townsend's × Yellow-rumped Warbler on the basis of the distribution of yellow and black on the throat, green mixed with gray and black on the back, a yellowish suffusion on the rump, song, and the extended white on the left wing. The bird could not be found the following day or thereafter.

From the white wing feathers, I first concluded that the bird was probably a Townsend's × Audubon's hybrid, but certain details suggest that the Yellow-rumped parent might be Myrtle Warbler. First, the song was a simple extended warble on one pitch, which in my experience is a song type associated with the Myrtle Warbler, while Audubon's tends to change pitch partway through, typically dropping lower. However, there is considerable variation in the songs of the two forms. Also, the supercilium turned from yellow to white at the rear of the face, which seems a more likely feature of Myrtle parentage than of Audubon's, given that the Myrtle has a thin white supercilium and Audubon's does not. I do not think that a definitive assignment of the Yellow-rumped parent to subspecies can be made from the available evidence.

This hybrid combination appears to be quite rare. Audubon's was not listed as having hybridized with Townsend's by Cockrum (1952), McCarthy (2006), Pyle (1997), or Dunn and Garrett (1997). Hybridization between the Myrtle and Townsend's was mentioned by Dunn and Garrett (1997) as having been reported twice and was listed as "possible" by Pyle. A hybrid Myrtle × Townsend's Warbler was in Carpinteria, California, 23 November–3 December 1983 (Lehman 1994; specimen to Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh).

The maps in Dunn and Garrett (1997) imply that the zone of overlap of Townsend's and Audubon's includes a large area from the central Oregon Cascades north and east to the Blue Mountains, most of montane Washington, southern British Columbia, and the Rocky Mountains of southwestern Alberta. Townsend's overlaps with the Myrtle in a smaller but still substantial region including the southern Canadian

Rockies, southwestern Yukon, southeastern Alaska, and the northwestern corner of British Columbia.

Troy Corman found and photographed another Yellow-rumped × Townsend's Warbler hybrid near the confluence of the Agua Fria and Gila rivers, Maricopa County, Arizona, on 28 April 2010 (Figure 1). The Arizona bird also has ambiguous Yellow-rumped parentage (a compact area of yellow on the throat suggests Audubon's, but the wing bars are very simple, and the supercilium has a whitish rear, suggesting the Myrtle). It had an unusual song (Corman 2010).

I thank Dwight Porter, a professional photographer based in Portland, Oregon, for remaining at the Malheur headquarters all morning, generating the superb photos featured on this issue's back cover. Special thanks to Troy Corman of Arizona for granting permission for use of his photos. Sievert Rohwer, Troy Corman, Kimball Garrett, and David VanderPluym offered helpful comments on a draft of this article, especially on the question of whether the bird's non-Townsend's parent could be identified clearly as the Myrtle or Audubon's. Joe Morlan assisted with reference material.

LITERATURE CITED

- Cockrum, E. L. 1952. A check-list and bibliography of hybrid birds in North America. *Wilson Bulletin* 64:140–159.
- Corman, T. 2010. Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) × Townsend's Warbler hybrid (*Dendroica coronata auduboni* × *D. townsendi*), near confluence of Agua Fria and Gila rivers, Maricopa County. Arizona Field Ornithologists online records, www.azfo.org/gallery/2010/html2/Audubon_s_x_Townsend_s_Warbler_hybrid_SWPhoenix_Corman_20100428.html, accessed 6 July 2010.
- Dunn, J., and K. Garrett. 1997. *Warblers*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Lehman, P. E. 1994. *The Birds of Santa Barbara County, California*. Vertebrate Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara.
- McCarthy, E. M. 2006. *Handbook of Avian Hybrids of the World*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Pyle, P. 1997. *Identification Guide to North American Birds, part 1*. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.



Figure 1. Hybrid Yellow-rumped × Townsend's Warbler near the confluence of the Agua Fria and Gila rivers, Maricopa County, Arizona, 28 April 2010.

Photo by Troy Corman