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## MacGillivray's Warbler in Cedar County, Nebraska

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#### MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER IN CEDAR COUNTY, NEBRASKA

MacGillivray's Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*) is considered by Johnsgard (1980) to be a rare spring and fall migrant in western Nebraska, with most records from the Panhandle, but reported from as far east as Platte Co. Bray et al (1986) consider it regular and cite a specimen taken in Boone Co.,. Whatever the status, this warbler is infrequently encountered in Nebraska, and separating this species from Mourning Warbler (*Oporornis philadelphia*) can often be difficult. Some authorities believe the two to be conspecific, although Hall (1979) found very few hybrid specimens and Salt (1973) found that they did not respond to the playback of each other's song in the suggested overlap zone in Alberta (Robertson 1980).



-- Ed M. Brogie photo

It is the authors' opinion that for any record of a MacGillivray's Warbler in central and eastern Nebraska to be entirely convincing the bird should have in-hand data taken on it or extremely well documentation of multiple field marks, which must include tail length in reference to the body. Reasons are as follows: MacGillivray's Warblers are characterised by having a broken eyering, although both male and female, adult and immature, Mourning Warblers may have incomplete eyerings (Wood and Beimborm 1981); while MacGillivray's have black lores and most Mournings have gray lores, some populations of Mourning Warblers are black lored (Robertson 1980). The above mentioned characteristics are not fully explained in any of the major field guides, although they do state that separation and field identification of immatures of these species is often very difficult or next to impossible.

The key factor in differentiating these two warblers in-hand is tail and wing length. Lanyon and Bull (1967) and Wood and Beimborm (1980) say to separate these species by using the following measurements (in millimeters)

of tail and flattened wing length:

		Wing	Tail	Wing minus tail
Lanyon and Bull data	Mourning Male	58-67	45-53	10-18
	Female	55-54	43-52	10-15
	MacGillivray's Male	57-65	49-63	2-10
	Female	55-62	47-58	2-10
Wood and Beimborm	Mourning	57-67	42-53	10-18
	MacGillivray's	55-65	47-63	2-10

The following is the easternmost occurrence of MacGillivray's Warbler in Nebraska and the first record of this species for the northeastern part of the state.

On 20 May 1986 we trapped and banded a male MacGillivray's Warbler in Cedar Co., Nebraska, 3 miles west of Laurel. The Warbler was banded by David Stage (Master Permit # 21582) and given the band # 1740-01031. The bird was characterized by having white crescents above and below the eye and black lores on a gray head. The throat was also gray, with a thin black area at its base which sharply contrasted with the bird's yellow breast.

As stated previously, these characteristics can fit both Morning and MacGillivray's Warblers. However, this Cedar Co. bird had a wing length of 58.5 mm and a tail length of 61.0 mm. The tail and the wing minus tail measurements are clearly outside the range for Mourning Warbler and clearly confirm the species as being a MacGillivray's Warbler. The bird was held overnight and photographed before being released the next morning.

Two days later, on 22 May, Ed M. Brogie, Paul Pearson, and the authors were successful in observing the MacGillivray's Warbler in the same hedgerow from which it was captured. By taking turns of crawling into the dense hedge and having the others "drive" the bird past we all were able to get good views of this secretive warbler. Ed, at one point, had the bird less than one foot away at eye level. It was looked for the next day, but was not seen again.

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Addendum: Observation of two additional *Oporornis* warblers in Cedar Co.

On 22 May, within 20 minutes of observing the MacGillivray's Warbler, the four of us also found a female Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) and a male Mourning Warbler. The Connecticut exhibited the characteristic eyering of the species, had a grayish head with a lighter colored throat, yellow undertail coverts, and noticeably large feet which it used to walk rather than hop. The male Mourning lacked an eyering, had a dark gray head and throat, with a black bib which contrasted sharply with the yellow breast. It also showed yellow undertail coverts as it hopped above us while feeding.