

The Status and Occurrence of the Hooded Warbler (*Setophaga citrina*) in British Columbia.

By Rick Toochin.

Introduction and Distribution

The Hooded Warbler (*Setophaga citrina*) is a small passerine that is found commonly in the southeastern United States, mostly south of the Great Lakes region (Dunn and Garrett 1997). The species breeds from eastern Kansas, locally in Oklahoma, locally in Montana, throughout southeastern Iowa, to central Wisconsin, to southern Michigan, into southern Ontario, east through to New York State, south to northern Florida, and west along the Gulf States to eastern Texas (Dunn and Garrett 1997). This species breeds casually west and north to southern Minnesota and Massachusetts (Dunn and Garrett 1997). The Hooded Warbler is a migratory species that travels over the Gulf of Mexico in the spring with birds concentrating in large numbers along the upper coast of Texas to coastal areas of Louisiana (Curzon *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). The fall migration takes a slightly more easterly path than the spring. The Hooded Warbler moves through most of Mexico to winter in Central America, from southeastern Mexico to Costa Rica, and rarely into Panama (Curzon *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). A small number of birds winter in northwestern Mexico and in the West Indies. Hooded Warblers are a casual vagrant in Colombia, Venezuela, and the Lesser Antilles in the winter months. This species is a regular vagrant in migration north to the New England states and the Maritime Provinces (Curzon *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). There are records scattered throughout North America well west of the Hooded Warblers' normal range (Dunn and Garrett 1997, Sibley 2000). The Hooded Warbler is not a review species in California by the California Bird Records Committee as there are over 350 state records (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). The Hooded Warbler is a rare species in California when compared to other eastern warblers. The fact it is a rarer vagrant to California likely explains the lack of records along the west coast north of California. In Oregon there are fourteen accepted records by the Oregon Bird Records Committee. In Washington State, there are four accepted records by the Washington Bird Records Committee. The Hooded Warbler is an accidental vagrant to British Columbia with only eight records for the Province (Toochin *et al.* 2013, see Table 1). There are no records of the Hooded Warbler for Alaska (West 2008). There are two September records of the Hooded Warbler for Great Britain and the Azores (Lewington *et al.* 1992, Hamilton *et al.* 2007, Rodebrand 2012).

Identification and Similar Species

The identification of the Hooded Warbler is covered in all standard North American field guides. In all ages the Hooded Warbler likes to feed low in the understory and flycatching for insects (Dunn and Garrett 1997). While Hooded Warblers flycatch, they like to constantly flick and spread their tails (Dunn and Garrett 1997). They are a large bodied warbler with a long tail

(Sibley 2000). The adult males are a beautiful warbler. On the crown, nape, sides of neck, and the throat are black (Curzon *et al.* 1994). This gives the bird its hooded appearance for which it was named. The bill is long and dark in colour (Curson *et al.* 1994). The eyes are large and dark, and there is a dark line from the eyes to the bill base (Sibley 2000). The forecrown and the face are a rich dark yellow colour (Dunn and Garrett 1997). The back, rump, and wings are a rich green-olive colour (Curson *et al.* 1994). There are no wing bars on the wings (Sibley 2000). The tail is long and has a round tail tip (Curson *et al.* 1994). The upper side of the tail has three white outer rectrices, with the rest of the center of the tail dark (Curson *et al.* 1994). The underside of the tail is extensively white (Dunn and Garrett 1997). The outer edges of the tail are dark around the outer edges of the tail (Dunn and Garrett 1997) The breast, belly and undertail coverts are a rich dark yellow colour that is unstreaked (Dunn and Garrett 1997). The legs are a pale pinkish colour (Sibley 2000). On adult females, there can be considerable variation in the amount of black on the throat and head (Dunn and Garrett 1997). Typically females have a little bit of black on the forehead that extends as a light darkish line down the sides of the head and across the chest (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). Some adult females will lack the chest band and just have a dark line on the forehead (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). In extremely marked adult females they closely resemble the adult males (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). The black almost extends down the forehead to the top of the bill, down the sides of the neck and onto the throat (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). These extreme adult females always have a greenish tinge to the black markings (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). There is always a dark line from the dark bill to the dark eyes. The rest of the bird is essentially the same as the adult males (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). The immature and first year birds have no black on the crown, but they do have dark from the bill to the eye (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). The crown, back, rump and wings are olive-green (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). The face and the underparts are extensively yellow (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). The song is a series of slurred notes with an emphatic ending sounding like “*tawee tawee tawee-teeoo*” or it can also be “*tew tew tew tew teo twee tweee teew*” (Sibley 2000). The call note is a flat squeaky “*tlip*” (Dunn and Garrett 1997, Sibley 2000). The flight note is a clear rising “*tsiip*” (Dunn and Garrett 1997, Sibley 2000).

The only similar species to the Hooded Warbler in British Columbia is the Wilson’s Warbler (*Cardellina pusilla*) which is a common summer resident and breeder throughout the Province (Campbell *et al.* 2001). In all ages, the Wilson’s Warbler is a small bird with a long tail (Sibley 2000). The underside of the tail is always dark and lacks any white in the outer rectrices (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). The tail is often raised and flipped about, but isn’t spread or flicked (Sibley 2000). There is never the extensive black on the head and face shown by the Hooded Warbler (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). The adult males have a black cap

that is restricted to the crown of the head (Dunn and Garrett 1997). The bill is short and has a pale base with a dark tip (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). There is no dark line from the base of the bill to the eye (Sibley 2000). The face, throat, neck down to the undertail coverts of the bird are yellow with a broad yellow eyebrow over the eye (Dunn and Garrett 1997). The feet are a pale pinkish color (Sibley 2000). The nape, back rump and wings are olive-green in color with no wing bars (Curson *et al.* 1994). The tail on both sides is dark-colored (Curson *et al.* 1994). The adult females are similar to the males, but the crown is not as black or as extensive as the male (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). The immature and first winter birds are similar to the adult females, but the crown is olive-colored with an olive-colored cheek and a broad yellow eyebrow (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). The song is a rapid series of ten to fifteen short whistled notes “*chchchchchchchchchtetete*” with a definite chattery quality with the last couple of notes dropping in pitch and being delivered faster (Sibley 2000). The call note is a sharp husky “*jimp*” (Dunn and Garrett 1997, Sibley 2000). The flight call is a clear abrupt “*tilk*” (Sibley 2000). The Wilson’s Warbler doesn’t sound at all like the Hooded Warbler, so there should be no difficulty in separating the two species.

Occurrence and Documentation

In British Columbia, the Hooded Warbler is an accidental vagrant, with four out of the Provincial records occurring in the month of December (Toochin *et al.* 2013, see Table 1). There are not enough records yet to generate a large pattern of vagrancy. There are two records from the month of June and one record from the month of September and October (Toochin 2000, Toochin *et al.* 2013, see Table 1). It is interesting to note that Washington has two December records and two June records which match closely the occurrences in British Columbia (Wahl *et al.* 2005, WBRC 2012). In Oregon, the Hooded Warbler follows California’s pattern of vagrancy with birds occurring mostly in the spring, summer and fall (OFO 2012). By far the highest numbers of records for Hooded Warbler come from the state of California which has had over 350 occurrences (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). The bulk of these records occur between April 15 to July 1, with the peak numbers occurring in May (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). In the summer of 1992, there was an invasion of southeastern warblers in California (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). During that one year, there were 76 records (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). This generated California’s only confirmed nesting record on August 9, 1992, with fledgling young at La Canada Flintridge, Los Angeles County (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). Since then, there have been a couple confirmed nests found including nesting attempts by this species in California (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). The occurrence of the Hooded Warbler in the fall in California starts from August 25 to November 28, with numbers of birds peaking from mid-September to mid-October (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). There have been only about ten winter records for California which is not a very high number (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). Given the pattern of vagrancy that is clearly shown in California records,

the records in British Columbia are not the same. In the future, as more records are generated, the pattern of vagrancy in British Columbia may well have more similarity with Oregon and California where the bulk of the records come from along the west coast. It is very likely that the Hooded Warbler will be found in British Columbia in the future. Observers should expect it at any time of year and watch for it in December in coastal areas where late fall warblers are known to occur.

Table 1: British Columbia Records of Hooded Warbler:

- 1.(1) female December 14-16, 1989: Adrian Dorst, mobs (photo) Tofino (Siddle 1990, Campbell *et al.* 2001)
- 2.(1) adult male breeding plumage June 4, 1997: Rick Toochin, Tom Plath, Patrick Mooney, mobs: Cecil Green Park, UBC, Vancouver (Plath 2000, Toochin 2000, Campbell *et al.* 2001)
- 3.(1) female December 12-17, 1997: Doug Brown, mobs (photo) near Sechelt Airport (Toochin *et al.* 2013b)
- 4.(1) adult male December 28-31, 2002: Mike McGrenere, mobs (photo) Miller Road and Glenora Road, Duncan (Cecile 2003, Toochin *et al.* 2013c)
- 5.(1) adult male June 29-July 10, 2007: John van Dort, mobs (photo) Table Creek Forest Service Road, north of Hudson's Hope [appeared to be paired with Wilson's Warbler female](Toochin *et al.* 2013b)
- 6.(1) immature female September 17, 2007: Rick Toochin, Louis Haviland: Jordan River (Toochin 2012)
- 7.(1) adult male November 4-8, 2007: Ed and Thelma Silkens, mobs: John Hart Generating Station, Campbell River (Toochin *et al.* 2013c)
- 8.(1) adult male December 7, 2008: Adam Mitchel: Nitobe Memorial Garden, UBC, Vancouver (Toochin 2013a)

Hypothetical Records:

- 1.(1) immature female August 20, 1978: Glen R. Ryder, Al L. Grass, Jude Grass (photo: inconclusive) Thompson Mt. Rd., Pitt Meadows (Toochin 2013a)

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