

At a Glance . . .

August 1985

August's "At a Glance" bird is a species that is a typical Massachusetts migrant during the last days of that month. Initial impressions of the photograph may mislead one, in that the bird perhaps appears larger than it really is - one of the illusions sometimes created by photographs. Close examination of the bill should dispel concerns in this area, because the bill is obviously too short and thin to belong to any of the orioles or tanagers - species that can show the same conspicuous wing bars present in the photograph. Likewise, the lack of a tiny hook on the bill tip removes the possibility of the bird being a vireo. Therefore, this bird is a parulid (wood warbler) and clearly belongs in the category of species with wing bars. Assuming there are no photo artifacts, the bird pictured appears to be unstreaked beneath. This, when combined with the wing bars, narrows the field considerably, for relatively few parulids exhibit this combination of characters. Also noteworthy is the faint yet obvious dusky patch on the bird's flanks. Coupled with the clear underparts and the suggestion of dusky streaks on the back, the field marks point to a fall-plumaged Bay-breasted Warbler (*Dendroica castanea*). The suggestion of pale legs in the photograph (which are dark in reality) is misleading in terms of confusion with the similar Blackpoll Warbler; however, the cleaner, less streaked underparts and the presence of a flank patch (which is actually buffy) should eliminate confusion. The only other viable candidate is the Pine Warbler, whose larger and longer bill, unmarked back, dusky cheek patch, and usually more streaked underparts serve to distinguish and eliminate that species. This immature Bay-breasted Warbler was photographed in September at Monomoy Island.

W.R.P.



Bay-breasted Warbler

Photo by Wayne R. Petersen

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Can you identify this bird?
Identification will be discussed in the next issue's At a Glance. Bird Observer will award a prize to the reader who submits the most correct answers in 1985. Please send your entry on a postcard to Bird Observer, 462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02178 before the answer is published.

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