

**FIRST WINTER RECORD IN FLORIDA OF THE GOLDEN-
WINGED WARBLER (*Vermivora chrysoptera*)**

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Over the past 25 years, we and others have documented in this journal the first winter records in Florida of 13 species of Neotropical migrants: Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*; Pranty et al. 2008); Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*; Pranty and Ponzo 2012); Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*; Bowman et al. 1995), Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*; Pranty and Ponzo 2012), Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*; Pranty and Ponzo 2013), Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*; Pranty and Ponzo 2012), Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*; Pranty et al. 2005), Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Setophaga caerulescens*; Pranty et al. 2003), Black-throated Green Warbler (*S. virens*; Pranty 2000), Magnolia Warbler (*S. magnolia*; Pranty et al. 2005), Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*; Pranty and Ponzo 2013), Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*; Doyle 2002), and Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*; Pranty and Ponzo 2012). Here, we detail the discovery and documentation of the first Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*; Fig. 1) occurring in Florida during the period 1 December–28/29 February, a bird that wintered in Palm Beach County.

Location.—Wakodahatchee Wetlands, at 13270 Jog Road in Delray Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, is a human-created wetlands system that opened in 1996. The site is 20 ha in size and filters 2 million gallons of highly treated wastewater each day through a series of dikes, canals, and ponds (Palm Beach County 2018). The site has been planted primarily with native vegetation, including southern live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*), and other trees, cycads, and shrubs in the uplands. A 1.2-km boardwalk and concrete path allow public access to the southern half of the site. This path and the abundant birdlife have made Wakodahatchee Wetlands a very popular birding site, with more than 5,500 checklists submitted to eBird through February 2020.

Discovery.—The Golden-winged Warbler at Wakodahatchee Wetlands was discovered along the concrete path between two boardwalk segments on 19 November 2018 by Justin Miller, who posted a message to the Tropical Audubon Society Miami Bird Board <<http://www.tropicalaudubon.org/blog/bird-board>>. Miller's post apparently included three photographs of the warbler, but these had been deleted within three months. The first two eBird reports of the warbler, each accompanied by diagnostic photographs that remain online, were from 25 November 2018 (Hamlin 2018, Lester 2018). The warbler continued to be reported to eBird from Wakodahatchee Wetlands throughout the winter, with the final photographic records on 11 March 2019 (Gles 2019, Groskopf 2019) and the final non-verifiable report on 16 March 2019 (Rapoza 2019). Between its first and last dates, the Golden-winged Warbler at Wakodahatchee Wetlands was reported to eBird for 23 days inclusive. The longest durations that the warbler was not reported to eBird were 21 days (13 December 2018–3 January 2019), 15 days (25 January–8 February 2019),



Figure 1. Female Golden-winged Warbler at Wakodahatchee Wetlands, Palm Beach County, Florida, on 9 February 2019. This individual, which wintered onsite, furnishes the first winter record of the species in Florida. Photograph by Bill Pranty.

and 11 days (28 February–10 March 2019).

Description and behavior.—The following description of the Golden-winged Warbler at Wakodahatchee Wetlands is based on our observations over ~10 minutes on 9 February 2019 as the warbler foraged 2–4 m above us in a group of oaks. The Golden-winged Warbler was a small, arboreal landbird about 13 cm in length. It foraged actively, often probing the undersides of clumps of leaves, in the manner of a Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorus*). The Golden-winged Warbler had a yellow forehead and crown and grayish-black throat and ear patches bordered broadly by white, identifying it as a female. The wings were pale gray with a large yellow patch on the greater and median coverts. The underparts were white with gray flanks. The bill and irides were black, and the legs and feet were grayish with the underside of the feet pale yellowish. We heard a sharp *chip* note on two occasions. During our observation, the Golden-winged Warbler foraged in the company of several other small landbirds, namely Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila cerulea*), Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*), Northern Parula (*Parula americana*), Palm Warbler (*Setophaga palmarum*), American Redstart (*S. ruticilla*), Pine Warbler (*S. pinus*), Yellow-rumped Warbler (*S. coronata*), Yellow-throated Warbler (*S. dominica*), Prairie Warbler (*S. discolor*), and Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*).

Status and distribution.—Golden-winged Warblers breed from southeastern Saskatchewan and southeastern Quebec south to southern Minnesota, northern Georgia,

and southern New York. They winter from Guatemala and Honduras south to Venezuela and Colombia, tending to arrive later in fall and departing earlier in spring than many other Neotropical migrants (Confer et al. 2011). Apparently Trans-Gulf migrants, Golden-winged Warblers generally migrate from the Mississippi River east to the Appalachian Mountains during both spring and fall (Confer et al. 2011). In Florida, the Golden-winged Warbler is a “rare to very rare transient in spring and fall over most of Florida, casual on e[ast] coast” (Stevenson and Anderson 1994:542) or a “regular, very rare to uncommon transient throughout, more frequent during fall” (Greenlaw et al. 2014:189). The verifiable range of dates in Florida based on specimen records is 7 April–5 May and 6 August–25 October (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Non-verifiable observations extend beyond these dates, with one winter report in Lee County 11–29 February 1996 (Pranty 1996). Thus, the Golden-winged Warbler at Wakodahatchee Wetlands represents the first verifiable winter record in Florida. eBird shows two other wintering records in the United States: one male at Madera Canyon, Pima County, Arizona, on 22 December 2007 (Dionne 2007) and one female at Caw Caw Interpretive Center, Charleston County, South Carolina, on 8 February 2016 (McCullough 2016).

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