

A NEW RACE OF YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER
FROM NORTHWESTERN FLORIDA

BY GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON

SOME years ago, when I was on the staff of the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, I noticed that all the specimens of Yellow-throated Warbler, *Dendroica dominica*, collected by W. E. Clyde Todd and W. W. Worthington at Whitfield, Walton County, Florida, seemed to have exceptionally long, slender bills. Wondering whether these might belong to an undescribed race, I proceeded to examine specimens of *Dendroica dominica* in various museums and to collect fresh material as opportunity offered. Eventually I amassed a considerable series in my own collection: five males from eastern Oklahoma; two males and one female from Georgia; one male from Tamaulipas, México; four males and one female from southeastern Louisiana; one male and one female from southern Mississippi; and 13 males and five females from Florida.

All these specimens (now before me) are adult except three males in first-winter plumage from Orange County, Florida. The whole series is in excellent condition, not even the breeding birds being badly soiled or worn. The western birds—that is, those from Mississippi, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Tamaulipas—are separable at a glance from the others by virtue of the whiteness of the supraloral area. This area is *pure white* in the Tamaulipas male (February 22), in a male from McCurtain County, Oklahoma (April 20), in a female from Lacombe, St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana (May 7), and in a female from Gulfport, Harrison County, Mississippi (March 17). In all the others the white is very faintly tinged with yellow about midway between the nostril and the top of the eye. All these “western” birds are short-billed. They belong to the race *albilora*.

The eastern birds—that is, those from Georgia and Florida—resemble each other closely insofar as color of the supraloral area is concerned. In some individuals the yellow of this area fades abruptly to white in the region of the nostril, but on the whole the series is uniform in having a yellow supraloral spot. The series is, however, readily separable into two groups on the basis of bill proportions. Most of the birds have thickish, rather heavy looking bills; but nine have long, very slender bills. All but one of these individuals are breeding birds from one locality—Walton County, Florida—and no specimen from Walton County, Florida, has a short, thick bill. As a group the Walton County birds are so uniform and so readily dis-

tinguishable from breeding birds of peninsular Florida that describing them as a race seems fully warranted. I propose that they be called

***Dendroica dominica stoddardi*, new subspecies**

TYPE.—(Plate 1). Adult male in slightly worn breeding plumage; George M. Sutton collection No. 11008; collected near Freeport, Walton County, Florida, April 16, 1950, by Herbert L. Stoddard, Sr. The exposed culmen of this specimen measures 15 mm., the wing 64, and the tail 49.

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS.—Similar in color to *Dendroica dominica dominica* (Linnaeus) of southern New Jersey, southern Maryland, Delaware, eastern Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and peninsular Florida, and obviously very close to that race, but bill conspicuously slender. Not close to *D. d. flavescens* Todd, a long-billed race having pale yellow (rather than white) breast and belly. Wholly unlike *D. d. albilora* Ridgway in having yellow supraloral spot and long, slender bill.

RANGE.—So far as is known, the Choctawhatchee Bay area of coastal northwestern Florida.

REMARKS.—*Stoddardi* is not intermediate between the nominate race and *albilora* except in a geographical sense. Thomas D. Burleigh, in his thoroughgoing 'Bird Life of the Gulf Coast Region of Mississippi' (Occ. Papers Mus. Zool. La. State Univ., No. 20: 448, 1944) has called attention to the "wide gap . . . on the Gulf Coast between the breeding ranges of *dominica* and *albilora*." *Albilora* does not, apparently, breed farther east along the coast than Pearlinton, Mississippi. How far west along the coast a yellow-browed form breeds remains to be ascertained, but from what I see before me I suspect that this westernmost of yellow-browed coastal populations is *stoddardi*.

Stoddardi embodies, then, not a tendency toward the white brow and short bill of *albilora*, but a wholly independent evolution toward longness and especially toward slenderness of bill. Where the dividing line between *stoddardi* and *dominica* lies remains to be discovered. The exposed culmen of a male specimen (Max Minor Peet collection) taken by Mr. Burleigh at Pensacola, Escambia County, Florida, on April 7, 1947, measures 14 millimeters. This is below the average bill-length of 23 breeding males from Walton County, Florida, but it is also above the average, as well as above the maximum, for 12 Georgia and peninsular Florida birds (Table 1). Three breeding males from Gainesville, Alachua County, Florida, are too short-billed for *stoddardi*. Their bills measure 12, 13 and 12.5 millimeters (UMMZ nos. 58011, 58014, and 58012, respectively). Three fall males from St. George's Island, Maryland, are rather long-billed, but not nearly slender-billed

enough for *stoddardi*. Their bills measure 13, 14 and 14 millimeters (UMMZ nos. 113055, 113050 and 113052, respectively). A winter bird (December 25) in the Peet collection from Miami, Dade County, Florida, probably is one of these long- and heavy-billed Maryland birds.

Table 1 gives a concise concept of the bill-length of Walton County birds, but the slenderness of the bill in these same birds has to be seen to be believed, hence my drawing of the type (Plate 1). The slender-

TABLE 1
LENGTH IN MILLIMETERS OF EXPOSED CULMEN OF MALE
YELLOW-THROATED WARBLERS

<i>Number of specimens</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Range</i>
23 <i>D. d. stoddardi</i> (breeding)	Walton County, Florida	15.1	14.0-17.0
1 <i>D. d. stoddardi</i> (spring)	Pensacola, Escambia Co., Fla.	14.0	
1 <i>D. dominica</i> (winter)	Miami, Dade County, Fla.	15.0	
12 <i>D. d. dominica</i>	Peninsular Florida and southern Georgia	12.5	11.5-13.0
3 <i>D. dominica</i> subsp. (fall)	St. George's Island, Maryland	13.6	13.0-14.0

ness is especially perceptible from below. Had I, during the course of this study, found a single short-, thick-billed breeding bird from the Choctawhatchee Bay district I would have questioned the validity of *stoddardi*, which apparently has a very restricted range. Mr. Stoddard, who personally collected several of the specimens used in my study, informs me that he could discover no distinctive feature of the habitat of the Walton County birds.

The series of breeding *stoddardi* on which this study was based is an exceptionally fine one and I am grateful to the authorities of the Carnegie Museum for their courtesy in letting me use their specimens. The type, it should be noted, is not by any means the longest-billed bird in my own series. I made a point of choosing an individual with bill-length close to the average. I regret that I did not have a larger series of breeding birds from eastern Florida and eastern Georgia and hope that someone will make a point of measuring such a series.

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