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# A sight record of the Crescent-chested Warbler from lowland Sonora

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THE CRESCENT-CHESTED WARBLER (*Parula superciliosa*) is a species of humid mountain forests, including pine-oak and broadleaf dominated associations of Mexico and Central America (American Ornithologists' Union 1983). Although it is generally considered a resident throughout its range, a recent record for Arizona (Heathcote and Kaufman, this issue) and the sight record reported here indicate that this little-known species may at least occasionally wander or disperse outside its known range.

On December 24, 1977, I observed a Crescent-chested Warbler in riparian habitat along the Río Yaqui at Highway 15 in Sonora, Mexico. The bird was feeding with a mixed flock in the middle and upper canopy of cottonwood (*Populus*) and willow (*Salix*). The flock included Yellow-rumped Warblers (*Dendroica coronata*), Orange-crowned Warblers (*Vermivora celata*), Black-throated Gray Warblers (*Dendroica nigrescens*), a Wilson's Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*), Ruby-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus calendula*), a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*), and a Solitary Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*).

When first glimpsed, the bird was in the upper canopy, and a ventral view brought to mind a Northern Parula (*Parula americana*) or a Tropical Parula (*P. pitayumi*). The former species occurs sporadically in Sonora, while the latter is relatively common in southern Sonora. However, when this bird was seen more clearly, a bold white supercilium was evident. This characteristic is lacking in the other two members of this genus. The bird's overall size appeared close to that of nearby Orange-crowned Warblers, but

the general shape differed somewhat, in that the bird appeared slightly smaller, perhaps longer-billed, with a more rounded breast and a more slimly tapered posterior. The entire head and nape appeared gray, broken only by a highly contrasting white supercilium that widened posteriorly. The wings were dark, contrasting with a bright green upper back. No wingbars were evident. The throat, upper breast, and upper sides were bright, clear yellow with a small, ovoid, reddish smudge on the upper breast. The rest of the underparts were white. The underside of the tail showed a fair amount of white. The upper surface of the tail was not seen well.

The occurrence of this species in Sonora was predicted by Sutton (1951), but to date, very few records exist for this Mexican state. Further, this species is typically found at much higher elevations than this near sea-level occurrence (4,000 to 11,000 feet; Skutch 1979, Binford 1968); this sight record may represent a new low-elevation occurrence as well.

Based upon other observations during the winter months, this occurrence is not entirely out of character for this species in northwestern Mexico. Wintering individuals are often found in numbers in flocks with other wood warblers, especially with North American migrants that winter in Mexico. Relatively large numbers of Crescent-chested Warblers have been found within a single flock in the broadleaf forest of the Rancho Liebre Baranca, Sinoloa, during the non-breeding season (Terrill *pers. obs.*; G. Rosenberg, K. Rosenberg *pers. comm.*). This phenomenon may be interpreted as evidence

of regular dispersal or migration, although it does not reveal the proportion of the population that disperses, nor the distance involved. Finally, the subspecies *V. s. sodalis*, which breeds in northwestern Mexico, has been regarded as a partial migrant by Miller *et al.* (1957)

The Río Yaqui flows out of the Sierra Madre Occidental at its northern terminus. It is not unreasonable to suggest that this individual warbler followed the riparian habitat downstream. Winter conditions can be quite intolerable for an insectivorous bird in the northern Sierra Madre. Further, it is not unreasonable to expect future occurrences in lowland areas, especially in this type of situation, that is, in riparian areas along rivers that flow out of high mountains, especially at the northern end of the range of the Crescent-chested Warbler.

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