

# LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

## REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for. Attach additional pages or files as necessary. Please print or type for hard copy. For electronic copy, be sure to save this file to your computer before entering text. Attach field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed (if hard copy), mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216, or e-mail electronic copy as an attachment to Paul Edward Conover at <[zoiseaux@lusfiber.net](mailto:zoiseaux@lusfiber.net)> .

1. English and Scientific names: **Black-throated Gray Warbler** (*Setophaga nigrescens*)

2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage): 1 female, age unknown

3. Parish: St. Landry

Specific Locality: 564 Sunset Strip, Sunset, LA

4. Date(s) when observed: 18 Oct 2019

5. Time(s) of day when observed: 8:15 am

6. Reporting observer and city/state address

Reporting observer: Erik I. Johnson
City: Sunset
State: LA

7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): none

8. Other observers who *independently identified* the bird(s): none

9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): It was overcast – even light. Although I was entirely looking nearly straight up toward the bird, it was not silhouetted, but was probably the contrast was somewhat accentuated. I was able to get branches and pine leaf clusters behind the bird most of the time to get a good look at colors and pattern.

10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Vortex Razor ED 10x42

11. Distance to bird(s): 30-40 ft, overhead

12. Duration of observation: about one minute

13. Habitat:

Rural residential. The bird was seen along a tree line on the north side of my property. The property to the north is cattle and the whole area is a mix of open lawns/pasture with scattered patches of trees, mainly deciduous (and live oak), but also some pines, which were probably planted a few decades ago – they are evenly spaced along the edge of my property, as well as the neighboring property to the south.

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):

I saw the bird fly in at treetop level from the west to east and land in the pine right above me. It then began moving about, staying near the top of the pine tree the entire time. Because was black (or really dark gray – lighting made things probably a little more contrasty) and white (see #15 below), I was anticipating a Black-and-white Warbler, but it did not move like that, and instead more like a typical “*Dendroica*”. It was mostly sticking to branches that were about as thick as its body, so I was getting partial looks of the bird the entire time, with the branch obscuring a bit of its underparts, but as it moved, I could clearly see the sides of the head, sides of body, and all of the underparts and underside of tail. After about 30 seconds in that pine, it made a short flight to the next pine to the west, about 20 feet away, which was a dead pine with no pine needles. These were the best looks and I could see all the details of the face. I then tried to get a digi-bin photo (I had left my regular camera in the house because there were a few rain drops when I started the yard survey at 7:40). I looked down to get set up, and when I looked up, ready to fire no more than 5 seconds later, the bird was gone. I searched up and down the tree line for 20 minutes, but could not relocate it. There were a handful of other warblers in the area (Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Yellow-rumped, and Parula) that were also not really sticking around – they were all foraging, but weren’t sticking to one spot.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species; body bulk, shape, proportions; bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species, *or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids*):

A “*Dendroica*” warbler, with typical bill size/shape and body size/shape of that group. The bird looked reasonably fresh, in and by the all-white throat would be a female in non-breeding plumage, but I’m uncertain of the age (possibly adult by being relatively contrasty, but not sure how much the lighting could have affected my impression of that?). The bird was largely black and white with essentially all white underparts from the

chin to the vent, but with limited grayish streaking (maybe 2 or 3 “rows”) along the flanks. The face was distinct and the clincher for identifying the bird. I was able to see the face from various angles (but never the crown/top of head) and make out the entire pattern on several different occasions during the minute-long observation. The most obvious was the dark grayish-black “mask” (no eyering, and the eye was embedded within) that was broad and loosely rectangular, not exactly following the contour of the auriculars. So in other words, not quite like the darker patterning in BT Green, Townsends, Blackburnian, etc. This mask was slightly broken against the shoulder/lower nape by white from the throat slightly cutting in, i.e., not making the mask perfectly continuous with the rest of the body. The supercilium was very broad (broader than something like a Tennessee, waterthrush, etc.) and seemed to narrow toward the bill (or widen toward the nape, depending on how you look at it). I was straining to see the pale yellow spot above and front of the eye, and was able to see it twice from different positions as the bird continued moving. It was “pinched” off by a little dark separating it from the rest of the supercilium. That pretty much nailed it for me.

As I watched the bird, I could also see dark grayish wings with two white wing bars. I really didn’t get a chance to study the tail much – I recall that it was generally folded the entire time, and slightly notched, but didn’t get a good look at color or pattern. The legs appeared darkish, without any distinct pattern – I didn’t notice anything about the feet standing out (i.e., not pale or yellowish) in color.

16. Voice: not heard/silent

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):

The face pattern is really distinct to this species, but superficially recalls a fall male Black-and-white, which doesn’t have as rectangular of a black “mask” and a much narrower supercilium; foraging styles are also very different between the two, and this bird never exhibited that creeping nuthatch-like behavior. It also had no yellow on the throat, face, flanks, etc., so that rules out pretty most other warblers that would have a lot of black in the face (Yellow-throated, Blackburnian, etc.).

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): no, sadly

19. Previous experience with this species: I’ve seen the species several times in Louisiana – I have 6 prior sightings recorded in eBird, the most recent was in Dec 2015 (City Park, NOLA – a well-documented, long-staying bird). I also saw a Grand Isle bird five times (winters 2012-2013 and 2013-2014). I have more limited experience with the species on the breeding grounds (Jul 2013 in Washington and April 1993 in New Mexico).

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation: none

b. after observation: Sibley Guide to Birds of N.A. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition; Dunn/Garrett Warbler Guide (Peterson series circa 1997); eBird/Macaulay library of Oct-Mar photos

21. This description is written from:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	notes made during the observation.	Are notes attached?	<a href="https://ebird.org/checklist/S60713687">https://ebird.org/checklist/S60713687</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	notes made after the observation.	At what date?	I finished this report about two hours after the observation.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	memory		
<input type="checkbox"/>	study of images		

22. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain: Yes, 100%. I realize it wasn't an extended study/observation, and unfortunately don't have photos to back it up, but I have no question about what I saw.

23. Date: 18 October 2019

Time: 10:25 am

24. May the LBRC have permission to display in whole or in part this report and accompanying photos on the LOS-LBRC website and LBRC Facebook page? YES

If yes, may we include your name with the report? YES