

Long Point Bird Observatory Rare Bird Report Form

P.O. BOX 160, Port Rowan, Ontario, Canada N0E 1M0 Tel: (519) 586-3531 x 162

lpbo@birdscanada.org - www.birdscanada.org/lpbo



Canadian Migration
Monitoring Network



Réseau canadien
de surveillance
des migrations



BIRD STUDIES CANADA
ÉTUDES D'OISEAUX

In order that any sight record or banding of a rare species can be confirmed for the historical record, it must be properly documented. LPBO cooperators are therefore asked to complete a form in every case where a rarity is being claimed. Guidance as to which species are considered rare in the Long Point area may be obtained from the LPBO Program Coordinator and in the Long Point Area Checklist found in *A Birding Guide to Long Point Area*. Each observer should prepare his/her description independently and preferably before consulting any field guides or other literature.

PLEASE PRINT.

Species claimed: Hermit Warbler

No. of birds: 1

Age: unknown, likely hatch year, first cycle formative

Sex: unknown, likely male-type based on plumage (see below).

Date(s): October 18, 2018

Place: Long Point Provincial Park (Turtle Dunes turn around - 42.57°, 80.37°).

Time(s) of Observation: Sometime between 725 and 1325. Probably around 9.

Who first saw the bird(s): Brandon Holden

Who first identified it: Brandon Holden as Hermit × Townsend's. As Hermit for the purposes of this report Stuart Mackenzie. Others in online forums – see Advanced Birding in Ontario Facebook Group.

Other observers (names and addresses): None.

Any who disagree: N/A

Your previous experience with the species: I have never observed Hermit Warbler, but have observed Townsend's on numerous occasions in British Columbia and Alberta, and a number of suspected hybrids.

Your previous experience with any closely similar species: I have spent more than 30 years enjoying and studying most North America warblers in the field and in-hand.

(a) Formerly: Same as above.

(b) Same day: Species present for comparison: None.

Which were beside it for comparison: Other warblers.

Distance from observer(s): 25 to 250m

How measured: Estimate

Optical aids used: Canon 7D , 600 mm lens.

Weather conditions (at time of observation)

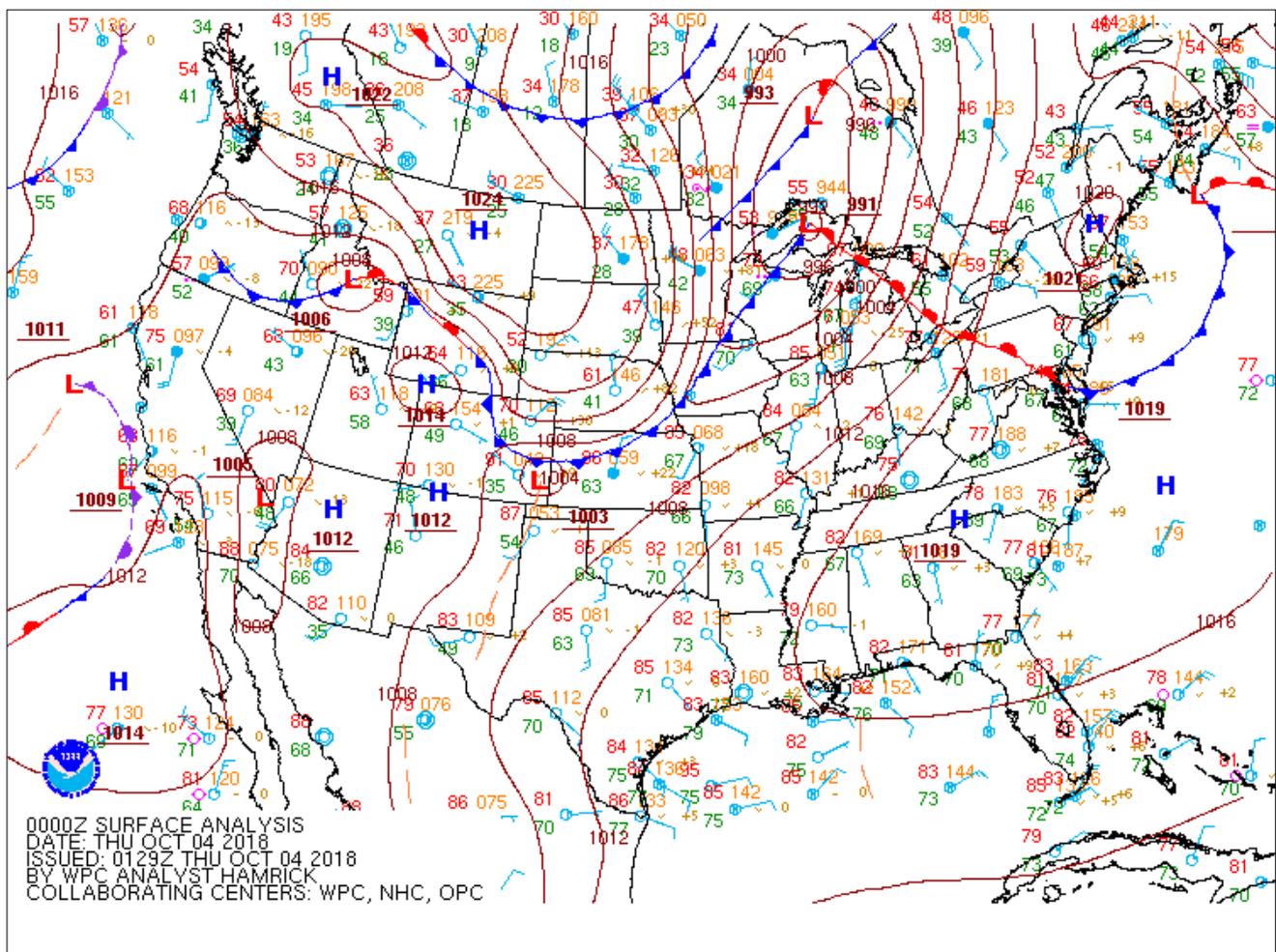
Visibility: 20 km +

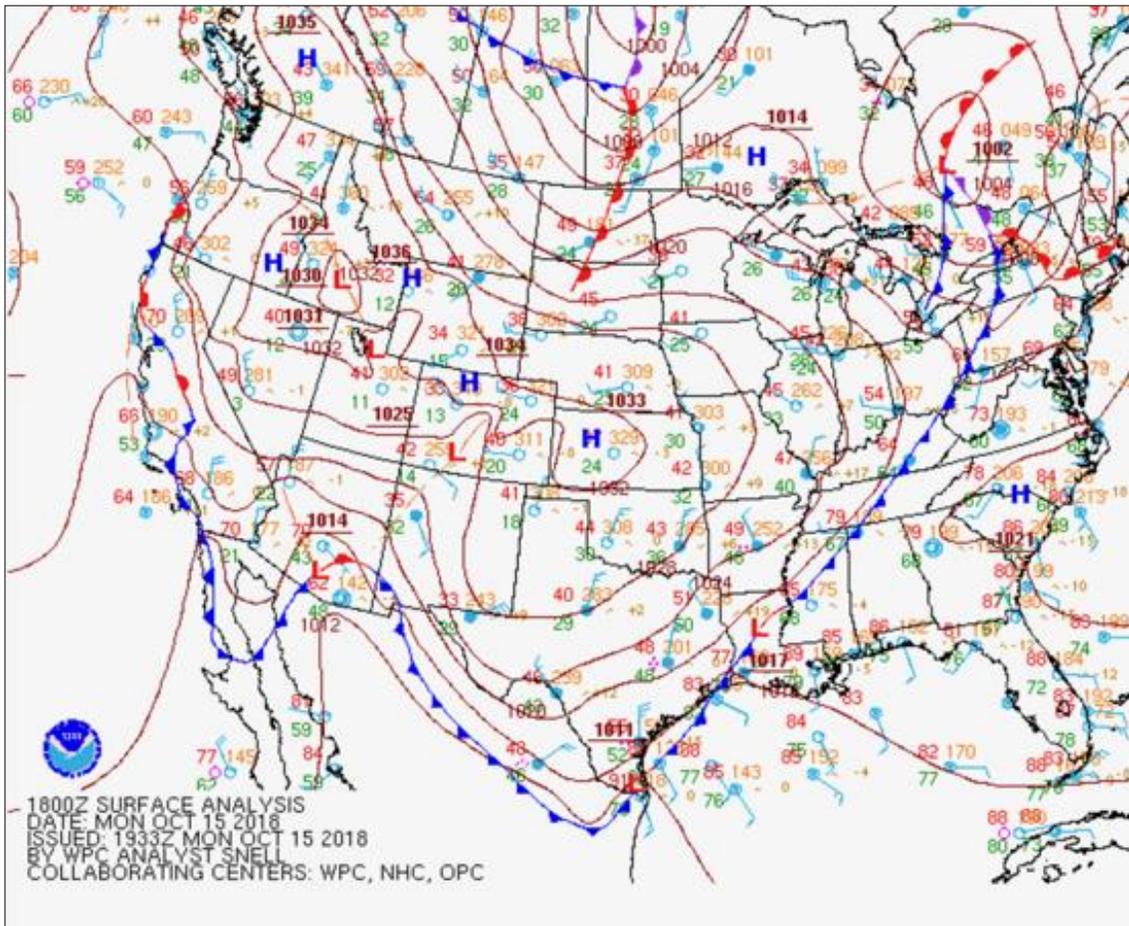
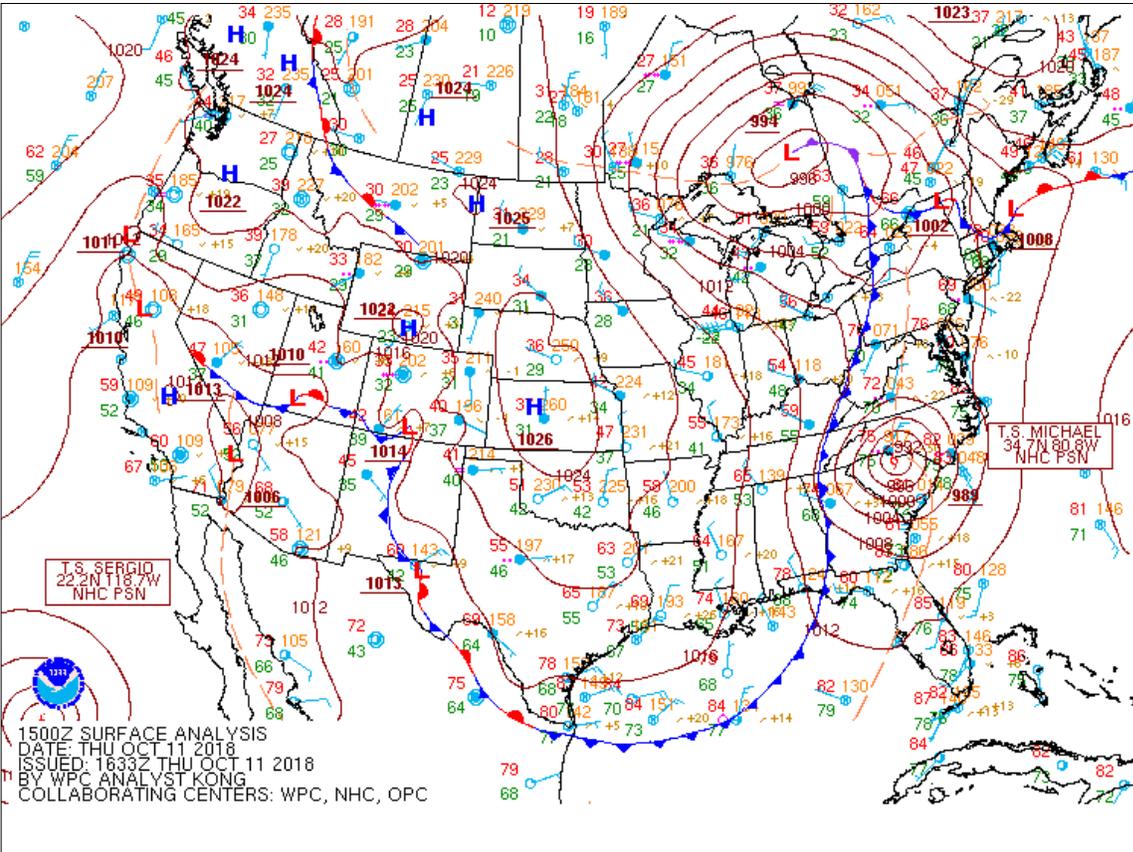
Cloud Cover: 50% to 75%, mostly cloudy

Lighting: Bright

Wind direction and speed: NW Beaufort 3 shifting to SW 3

There are no convincing weather patterns directly associated with this observation, but a few substantial high pressure systems moved through the continent in the weeks and days prior to the observation – October 4, 11, 15 that all would have created favourable conditions for western vagrants. The system on October 4 through 6 involved both a significant up swelling from the SW followed by a high pressure and cold front from the NW, either of which are decent conditions for vagrancy.





Circumstances:

Weather conditions on October 17/18 were perfect for a morning flight at the base of Long Point at the Long Point Provincial Park (Turtle Dunes Campground turnaround) with light to moderate northwest winds. Brandon Holden, and for some time Ken Burrell, were staked out here on the morning of October 18. Sometime between 725 and 125, Brandon observed and took pictures of a warbler flying overhead. Upon further examination of the photos he realized that it was likely a Hermit/Townsend's-type warbler (see below). He later submitted an [eBird Canada checklist](#), and posted the sighting to the Advanced Birding in Ontario Facebook Group on October 19 where there is some scattered dialogue about its identification.

The time of year was perfect for a vagrant of either Hermit (A) or Townsend's (B) warbler as shown through eBird occurrence maps below for both species in October-November.

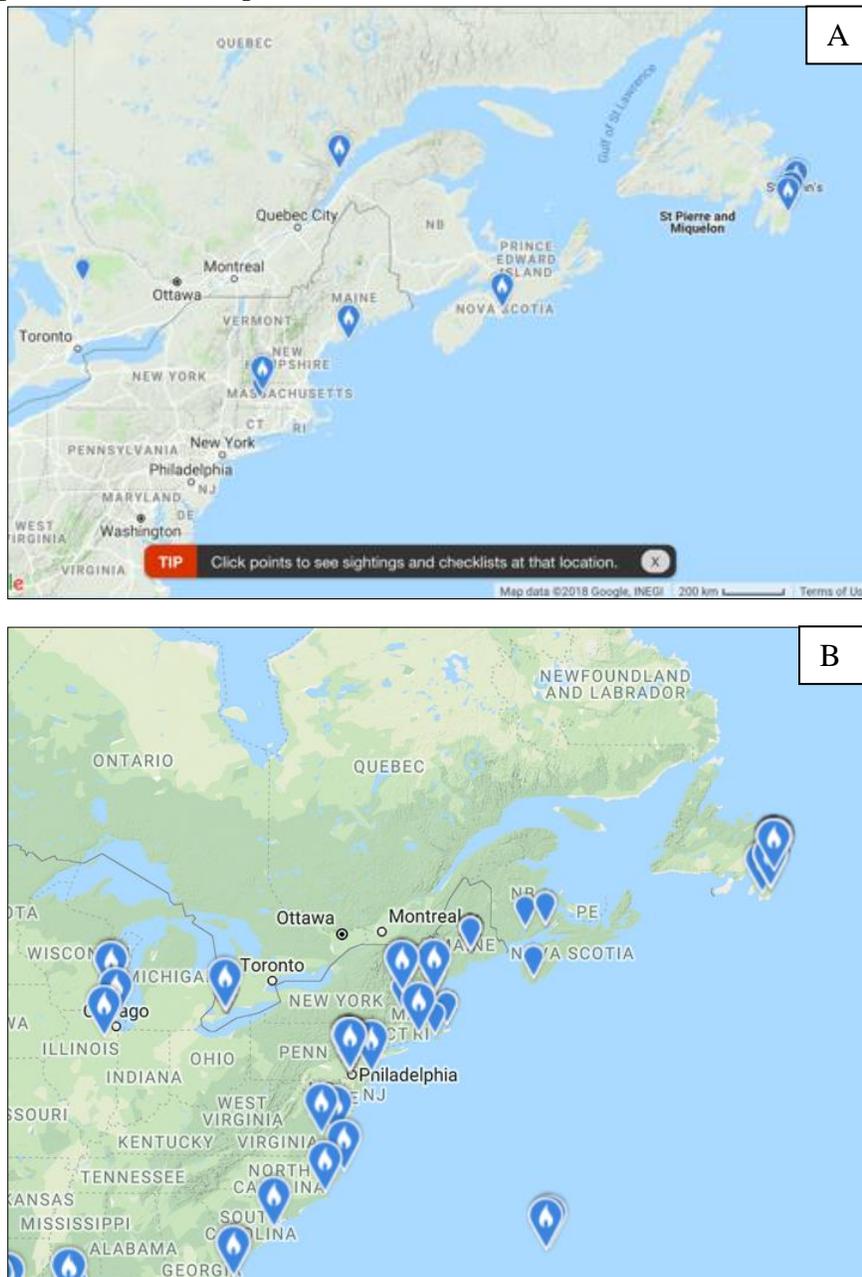


Figure 1. Map of October-November Hermit Warbler (A), and Townsend's Warbler (B) records in eastern North America. There are only two records of hybrids in the current eBird public database (New York and Newfoundland).

Description:

Give separate description for (a) in the field (b) in the hand. Include full measurements and wing formula with hand descriptions. Include reasons for the elimination of other species.

See photographs A through C courtesy Brandon Holden via [eBird Canada](#), and comparison photos D & E of Hermit Warblers with plumages/ages similar to the bird in question.

Specific notes on key characteristics of the bird are in the species comparisons below.

It is most likely a hatch-year, first cycle formative, likely young male-type based on the gray-brown back, bright yellow facial disc, and extensive white in the rectrices.

The case for Hermit Warbler:

- The bird had a clearly defined yellow fascial disc with prominent clear eye, and lacks any eye-line or interruption of the obvious and diagnostic donut-shaped yellow eye ring
- Bird lacks any eye-line anterior or posterior to the eye which is characteristics of Townsend's, hybrids, and Black-throated Green Warbler.
- The darkish auriculars are faint and circular around the posterior edge of the auricular, and not in a triangle (texas-shape pattern) below the eye as characteristic of Townsend's and Black-throated Green. common in first cycle Hermit's of both sexes.
- Grayish/brown back, not green as expected for Black-throated Green or Townsend's, or some hybrids
- Clear white/dusky breast, flanks, belly and undersides including vent and undertail coverts lacking any definitive streaking or colouration

The case against Black-throated Green Warbler:

- White underparts with no yellow wash, or yellow in the vent which is diagnostic of Black-throated Green
- Gray, not green back, and rump
- No, or extremely limited black in malar, throat, or flanks (even HY F should have some).
- Blank face and big eye impression lacking the eye-line typical in Black-throated Green, if even faint, it's always present in Black-throated Greens.

The case against Townsend's Warbler or Townsend×Hermit Hybrid:

- No steaking in the under tail covers, flanks, or malar/throat.
- Little to no yellow wash anywhere in the breast or flanks typically distinctive in Townsend's
- The bird lacks obvious Townsend's facial mask with essential eye-line components, and characteristic yellow crescent under the eye
- The appearance and position of apparent streaking on the underparts are inconsistent between photos suggesting that it may be caused by shadow from the wings above, folds in feather tracts, foot/leg position, or exaggerated dusky streaking which can occur regularly in hatch-year in Hermits. This discoloration or apparent streaking in the photos also seems to be more dorsal toward the centre of the belly than what would be expected on the flanks in a Townsend's or Black-throated Green.

Notes on hybridization:

Hybridization is extremely common in these two species, particularly in more northerly populations (see [Rohwer and Wood \[1998\]](#)). As shown above there are more vagrant records of Townsend's than Hermit warbler in the east, which might suggest that hybrids are more prone to vagrancy, but definitive evidence about the composition of vagrants is lacking. There are only two occurrences of Townsend's × Hermit

currently in eBird, but it's likely that many of these were not reported as such. The higher propensity of vagrancy in Townsend's may be due to their more northerly range which may expose birds to more favourable weather conditions for vagrancy, and/or it may simply be a function of higher population size (– see Ralph and Wolfe (2018) - <https://peerj.com/articles/5881/>), and wider range of Townsend's compared to Hermit Warbler .

Regardless of the bird's genotype, the phenotype being expressed is undeniably Hermit. I feel that there is insufficient evidence in this case to warrant special consideration as a hybrid over the simpler and compelling arguments in support of identification as a Hermit Warbler (see below).

Photographs A through C courtesy Brandon Holden via [eBird Canada](#), and comparison photos D & E of Hermit Warblers with plumage similar to the bird in question.

Photo A.



Photo B.



Photo C:



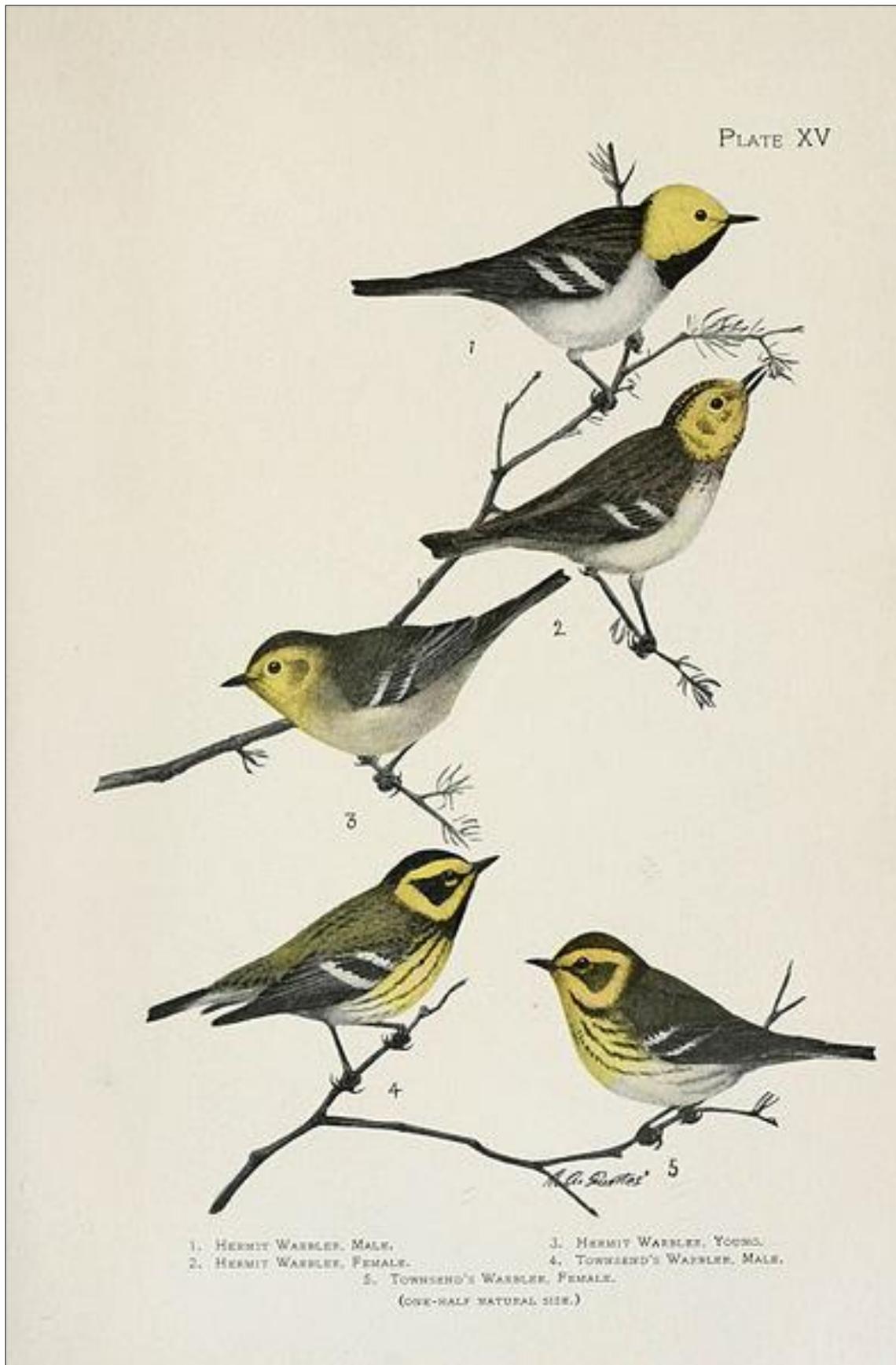
Photo D: Example photograph of a Hermit Warbler in similar plumage to the bird in question Source: <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/hermit-warbler> Unknown photographer.



Photo E: Example photograph of a Hermit Warbler in similar plumage to the bird in question. Source: [eBird](#) / M Photographer: Carol Rose.



Plate A: Louis Agassiz Fuertes' depiction of Hermit Warbler from *The warblers of North America* (1907). Bird in question is similar to 3.



Did you refer to any guides/other literature: Numerous online forums and photos. A Field Guide to the Warblers of North America (Garrett, Dunn, and Schultz 1997), Warblers of the America (Curson, Quinn, and Beadle 1994), The warblers of North America (Chapman 1907). Cornell Lab or Ornithology Macaulay Library.

(a) at the time: N/A

(b) afterwards: N/A

Finally, is this record 100% certain? Yes

Signed:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stuart Mackenzie".

E-mail Address: stu.a.mackenzie@gmail.com

Date: Dec 27, 2018