

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2016-04-03 00:39:57
Observer's Name	Robin Irizarry
E-mail	robin@ttfwatershed.org
Phone	215-384-3281
Observer's Address	Street Address: 627 Woodland Avenue City: Cheltenham State / Province: Pennsylvania Postal / Zip Code: 19012 Country: United States
Species (Common Name)	western tanager
Species (Scientific Name)	Piranga ludoviciana
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Appears to be an adult female.
Observation Date and Time	03-27-2016 9:20 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S28577951
County	Montgomery
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Cheltenham Village, Cheltenham
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Irizarry residence, adjacent to Cheltenham Little League, Woodland Avenue
GPS coordinates of sighting	40°03'25.1"N 75°05'40.9"W
Habitat	Suburban backyard ~500' east of Tookany Creek on the edge of Montgomery County and Philadelphia. The hillside is comprised of a mix of upland hardwood species, sassafras, red oak, white ash, white pine, black locust. Mown ball fields to the south, large patch of weedy meadow across the tracks to the east.
Distance to bird	30 feet, from inside window where I was seated to hanging bird feeder in the yard.
Viewing conditions	Clear day.
Optical equipment used	Nikon Monarch 7s, 10x42. Photos were taken through the binoculars with my Android smart phone.
Description	Photos attached, as well as in eBird report, Checklist S28577951. Small songbird, larger than adjacent house sparrows but smaller than nearby northern cardinal. Overall pale yellow/brown, undersides lighter than back. Darker gray/brown wings with prominent white wing bars. Pale orange bill. Black, beady eye.

Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

This bird was observed from inside our house, eating seed at our hanging feeder in the backyard. It visited the feeder several times to take seed, preferring to remain at the feeder while eating, not carrying seed off to eat elsewhere. Occasionally the bird landed on the ground below to eat seed.

When the bird left the feeder it flew east to a tree at the edge of our property along the train tracks. Our home is adjacent to the train tracks which serve as the Montgomery/Philadelphia Boundary. I came outside to try for a better look, at which time I watched the bird cross the tracks into Philadelphia. Though I witnessed the bird cross into the city, I was still observing from within Montgomery County myself, so I did not create a separate eBird report for Philadelphia County.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

Overall shape, structure and pattern is similar to females of both eastern tanager species, but scarlet and summer tanager lack the strong wing bars this bird displayed.

Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

Embarrassingly enough the yellow and gray/brown plumage with white wing bars caused me to initially dismiss this bird as a drab pine warbler stopping in at a feeder. Reviewing the photos later it was clear this was something else, a larger bird with a larger bill. I checked field guides for tanagers, but none of our eastern species had the wing bars. Had Brian Henderson, Montgomery County eBird reviewer, not contacted me after looking over the photos himself I might have missed this one. Thank you Brian!

I have been restocking the feeder regularly and additionally put out a few orange halves in case the bird decides to stick around. As of 4/3/2016 there has not been another confirmed sighting, despite multiple birders stopping by to try for the bird from the public parking lot below.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes, the first positive ID came from Brian Henderson (Montgomery County eBird reviewer), who emailed me after reviewing the photos in the eBird report submission.

During

Text: Peterson's Birds of the Eastern United States. ABA Field Guide to Birds of Pennsylvania, Armistead.

After

Expert references consulted - Brian Henderson, Holly Merker (eBird reviewers) Tony Croasdale, George Armistead (DVOC, ABA), Keith Russell (PA Audubon) Martin Selzer, Leigh Altadonna, Peter Burns (Wyncote Audubon). Merlin bird ID app (Cornell)

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

Upload images, audio, video or drawings





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