

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2018-01-01 11:04:53
Observer's Name	Jonathan Heller
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Observer's Address	720 Aspen Lane Lebanon PA 17042 United States
Names of additional observers	Larry Bernhardt, Andrew Keister, Pamela Fisher et al
Species (Common Name)	Western Tanager
Species (Scientific Name)	Piranga ludoviciana
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Basis plumage. Probably a female based on the lack of orange around the base of the bill, but I am not certain if males always show some orange.
Observation Date and Time	12-31-2017 2:30 PM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S41492908
County	Lancaster
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Middlecreek WMA
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Middelcreek WMA -- restricted area. Northeast section of the refuge in the cedar woods.
GPS coordinates of sighting	40.2780921,-76.1842427,14z
Habitat	Cedar woods surrounded by secondary growth and grassy fields.
Distance to bird	ranged from under 20 feet to around 30 feet.
Viewing conditions	partly sunny and very cold. Lighting conditions were good once the bird can out from the cedar.
Optical equipment used	Swarovski

Description	When I saw a medium sized songbird with even lemon yellow underparts I new it was something different and quickly identified it as a Western Tanager based upon the obvious wing bars and the orange/pink bill that was tanager shaped (rather than longer and more sharply pointed as an oriole). The back was darker olive and ranged to more blackish on the wings. The wingbar on the greater coverts was white and easily noticeable, but it wasn't completely solid (the white did not cover the width of each feather). The other wingbar did not extend as far (did not seem quite a long) and seemed to be a bit yellowish in color. The face was all lemon yellow and I did not see any orange around the base of the bill. The eye was dark in color.
Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)	Seemed a bit lethargic at first and was fluttering around in the cedar. I believe it may have been feeding on the berries as were many of the other birds present including robins, waxwings, bluebirds, sparrows and even sapsuckers. When I called Larry and Pam over it was in the interior of the cedar and a bit hard to see. As they kept sight on it I tracked down the rest of the group. Shortly after they go there it moved out of the cedar and sat in a deciduous tree where all were able to get good views from about 30 feet. It seemed almost tame (not sure if this was the cold or the effect of eating too many berries!). Shortly after this, it suddenly flew off to the northeast and I was not able to see if it stopped or kept going.
Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)	<p>There are not too many other possibilities. I did rule out orioles primarily by the shape of the bird and also the shape of the bill which was not as long and pointed as an oriole. The pinkish/ orange color of the bill was also very noticeable.</p> <p>A Scarlet Tanager would also be very unexpected at this time of year. While I have not seen a scarlet with wing bars, they can exhibit a wing bar in the fall. In this case, the wing bars were quite distinct. The wingbars on the greater coverts was bright white. The other wing bar was also very distinct and appeared a bit yellowish in coloration. Finally the bill was pinkish orange which would not be consistent with a Scarlet Tanager.</p> <p>Summer Tanager would perhaps be more expected in winter, but the wing bars rule out that species. The bill also was brighter in color and not as heavy as one would expect in a Summer Tanager.</p>
Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:	This bird was seen very well at close range and all expected field markets were observed. I am quite familiar with this species from out west (from summer visits) and am familiar with Scarlet and Summer Tanagers in various plumages as well as various species of orioles.
Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)	I am 100% positive of the identification given my experiences with this and other similar species and given the opportunity to study the bird at close range and view the field markets mentioned above.
During	None
After	Sibley
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