

WV BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT FORM

Please Type or Print Legibly

Species:	Western Tanager (Piranga ludoviciana)	Number: (leave blank)			
Location:	Monroe County	Date:	4/7/18	Time:	08:00
Bird Seen:	4/1/18	To:	4/13/18	Age/Sex:	2nd calendar year Male

Description: In lieu of physical material substantiating a record (e.g., specimen, diagnostic photograph, vocal recordings) a complete written description can serve as verification for the biological record. Please be as thorough as your field notes allow. Do not feel constrained by the space provided. Additional supporting descriptions/illustrations may be attached. Note that photographs or recordings WILL NOT BE RETURNED but become part of the permanent record for the observation.

Structure: (Overall size and shape plus details on the head, feet, tail, etc.)

Stocky passerine larger than a Tufted Titmouse, smaller than an American Robin. Bill was a yellow-tan color, thick based. Medium-sized, rounded head. Dark eye. Thick body. Medium length wings with primary tips extending past the rump but not the undertail coverts. Tail was medium length with a slight notch when perched at rest.

Plumage: (e.g. markings, coloration, molt)

Forehead and immediate encircling the bill was reddish orange. Crown and nape had yellow and blackish feathers admixed creating a mottled appearance becoming more yellow at the base of the nape. Cheeks were are similarly lightly mottled. Breast and belly were yellow with very faint mottling. Back was black with some scalloping still evident. Rump was yellow. Upper wing bar was yellow, lower wing bar was off-white. Undertail was yellow as tail was blackish above and below. No sign of cage wear.

Description of any vocalizations, if heard:

None heard.

Description of behavior:

Bird was seen visiting a feeding station. Mostly coming to a suet cage. Interacted with the other birds visiting the feeders. When not feeding, the bird seemed to make a circuit through the trees surrounding the property of the home owner. Visits to the feeders were frequent

Habitat: (General and Specific)

General: Residential home yard with bird feeders

Specific: Small open yard at around 2200 feet elevation surrounded by mostly wooded lots with mixture of conifers and deciduous trees. Small creek nearby with some other home lots that were more open.

Circumstances of observation: (Include details of distance to bird, optics employed, lighting in relation to observer and the bird)

Seen in clear unobstructed views from 20-100 feet. Light was overcast morning light with no precipitation or fog. Swarovski EL 10x42 binoculars. Canon 100-400mm L lens for photography.

Previous experience with this species:

Seen a handful of times out west on birding trips.

Experiences with similarly appearing species which are eliminated by your description: (Please be specific)

Scarlet and Summer Tanagers are both frequently encountered every year in the state, with Scarlet observations outnumbering Summer. Hepatic Tanagers have been encountered on many western trips. I have no firsthand experience with Flame-colored Tanager or hybrids. However, all those are easily eliminated.

Other observers: (Names, Addresses, E-mail please)

If the others agree with your identification they can sign this form here. If they care to provide additional details they can submit their own report.

Kyle Carsen - [REDACTED]

Mollee Brown

Judith Polan and family - Original finder, homeowner and should receive top billing for the official record

David Patick - [REDACTED]

Mike Griffith - [REDACTED]

Gary Rankin - [REDACTED]

Additional observer signature:

Additional observer signature:

Additional observer signature:

Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and especially how did these influence this description:

None needed.

How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

4 months

Name:

Derek D. Courtney, MD

Address:

Date:

Signature:

Mail to: WV Bird Records Committee
Attn: Wil Hershberger
170 Stallion Ct.
Hedgesville, WV 25427
Or E-mail to:
wilhershberger@mac.com

Please use the space below to add any appropriate details you feel were missing from the above form or to expand on any answers whose allotted space was insufficient for a complete response:

This is a reasonably straightforward identification given the unique plumage aspects of male Western Tanagers. The bill size and shape, along with body size and shape, differentiate this from other passerines without much pause. The possible confounders then become other tanagers. All the adult male tanagers in breeding plumage are easily eliminated based on plumage. A Scarlet Tanager molting into alternate plumage, even if it showed limited red on the head, would not have a black back, nor would it have black wings with one yellow and one white bar. Hepatic and Summer Tanagers are both basically all red or yellowish birds depending on molt and never have such dark backs and wings, and they have no wing bars. Flame-colored Tanager would be even a bigger rarity and is completely unexpected for the area. Nevertheless, Flame-colored Tanager would have a streaked back and large white spots on the tertials. Auriculars are more well defined as dark. The head is streaked on female and on immature birds extending down along the nape. Reddish also bleeds down onto the breast, whereas this bird shows pretty much full alternate breast coloration without reddish influence. As for potential hybrids, this bird really doesn't show any intermediate characteristics. Western x Flame-colored can be potentially confusing but that the lack of any back streaking, remnant head streaking, or white patches in the wing outside of the wingbar. Also, the possibility of this type of hybrid would be exceedingly rare for the area. As for provenance, there was no sign of cage wear on this bird, nor did the bird behave in a manner which would raise suspicion. The timing of this, coupled with the age of bird, seems to fit a broad vagrancy pattern of western passerines into the east. Furthermore, this species is a known wanderer and its appearance on the eastern side of the continent is pretty much expected annually.

Please note: photos are from the original finder and property owner. Her initial ebird checklist can be seen here: <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44149845>



