# First record of Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* for Azerbaijan

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The Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* is a widespread species north and east of the OSME region (Harbard 2010). It breeds across Russia and east from the Urals as far as Kamchatka and south to Afghanistan, northern India and the sea of Japan. In the northern Urals, their breeding range is just inside the Western Palearctic, but every autumn they appear well inside the WP in seemingly increasing numbers. In autumn, however, most of the breeding population probably migrates through northeastern China, moving down to the species' winter quarters, which extend from central Nepal south to the Malay peninsula. The breeding range is vacated August–September and birds arrive in the winter range from mid October, departing again late March–early April. It is a passage migrant in Iran (Scott & Adhami 2006), a rare migrant in Kazakhstan (Wassink 2015) and there are a few observations in Georgia (Lepage 2016). There are regular records of *P. inornatus* as a winter visitor in Israel and Oman (IRDC 2015).

A group of Swedish birders, including IS and Emil Lundahl, discovered the first Yellow-browed Warbler for Azerbaijan during a three-day-long migration study at the Besh Barmag bottleneck (40° 59′ N 49° 13′ E *c*80 km northwest of Baku, Azerbaijan, Heiss 2013). On the last day, 28 October 2015, at 13.50 h, the group decided to scan the coastal bushland after morning migration had weakened. When reaching the wetter marsh area *c*1 km south of the rubbish tip, IS and EL heard a series of distinct calls, each a high pitched, multisyllabic "tze-veet". We recognized the calls as being those of Yellow-browed Warbler. The bird uttered 7 characteristic calls before IS and EL reached its position. We were standing 20–30 m from the source. Conditions were ideal as there were no other loud noises or calls at the same time. We localized the sound from a group of smaller trees at the edge of the vegetation before the beach. When arriving at the tree we did not see any movement and decided to text the other eight birdwatchers of the group. After 2–3 minutes IS and EL found a *Phylloscopus* warbler deep into the base of the tree. IS and EL positioned themselves on each side of the tree and tried to get a better view of the bird but we could only see its silhouette behind the branches. EL played a commercial recording of the call made by Yellow-browed Warbler from his mobile phone which the bird reacted to by flying towards him and moving up to the top of the dense tree. There IS saw the wing-bars during a split second view in his binoculars. Shortly after the bird took off and flew to the next gathering of trees further towards the rubbish tip.

The bird was located again when we were reunited with the other birders. Before meeting up, the bird uttered another two distinct calls. All group members agreed that the bird was a Yellow-browed Warbler. It was seen again briefly when flying into a smaller tamarisk. This was only 2–3 m from IS and Erik Sjögren who were able to see the birds' moss green back and clear wing-bars. The bird called a third series of two calls as it moved quickly to the same area of trees it was discovered in. Its behaviour was very much like the many Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* that were observed at the same place, often shy and quite skittish. It stayed low and deep in the trees so that the birding group only had brief views, it was lost after *c*30 minutes.

Identification was based on the typical calls together with what was seen during the few glimpses. Discussion of ID concerned Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*. The call of *P. humei* is described as a slightly descending 'tsui', 'chwee' or 'weesoo', drier than that of *P. inornatus* and more often repeated. Yellow-browed Warbler calls are a penetrating high-

pitched and more clearly rising 'suu-eet', 'swee-ooo' or 'seweest' (Clement 2014). Jonsson (1992) described them as "a longish indrawn tsueeht often with peculiar lisping tone" for *inornatus* and "... a clearly double-note tze-veet or sle-wee" for *humei*. Distinguishing *inornatus* from *humei* can be tricky in late autumn/winter as they both may become rather grey. During this time of year most sightings in Europe are separated by their calls (Luijendijk 2001). It is stated that *humei*'s call is rather prone to vary whilst *inornatus*'s not. Both taxa can react to each other's song and call. The calls of *humei* can roughly be divided into single-tone and multisyllabic calls. The latter are mostly disyllabic calls, but trisyllabic calls also occur. The 'classic' *humei* call is a somewhat sparrow-like 'tswee-up', with an obvious downward inflection. But they also have a less obviously multisyllabic call but still with a gap between syllables. There are examples of *inornatus* calls which are slightly more single-tone-like. This can thus be more *humei*-like. The duration of the contact call has proven to be a significant key to distinguishing the species in these cases (Luijendijk 2001).

The bird observed in Besh Barmag was only using one type of high-pitched call with a clear upward inflection and long duration. Without a recording device neither the length nor the frequency was measured. Even so the fact that the bird gave a typical call during the whole observation without any double-notes proves that the bird was not *humei*. The short views showing a deep moss-green back and strong wing bars also suggest that this individual was not a dull-colored bird but a very typical individual. We have good experience of Yellow-browed Warblers during the autumn in Sweden. IS has seen more than 15 birds there and heard more. The group leader Tomas Axén Haraldsson, an experienced guide in the region, concluded that this could only be Yellow-browed Warbler.

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