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A Dusky Warbler (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*) on Southeast Farallon Island, California

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Southeast Farallon Island, located 42 km west of San Francisco, California, has long been recognized for its capacity to attract vagrant birds (DeSante and Ainley 1980). The appearance there of a Dusky Warbler (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*) on 27 September 1980, however, exceeded our most imaginative expectations. It is only the fourth record for the species in North America and, more important, the first for any member of this widespread Eurasian genus south of Alaska.

After several days of clear skies and strong north to northwest winds, the morning of 27 September brought diminished winds and overcast skies to Southeast Farallon. Accompanying this change in weather was one of the season's better migrant passerine groundings. This wave was characterized by relatively large numbers of Hermit Thrushes (*Catharus guttatus*), Ruby-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus calendula*), and Golden-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*), lesser numbers of Varied Thrushes (*Ixoreus naevius*), Townsend's Warblers (*Dendroica townsendi*), and Puget Sound White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys pugetensis*), and one Rusty Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia morphna*). This species assemblage strongly implied a northwestern coastal origin for the wave, although at least 10 individuals of various "eastern" wood warblers also appeared that day.

Around 0945, Pyle joined Brian Pendleton, who was puzzling over a strange call note emerging from some low scrub near the east end of the island. The note, transcribed as "tchk" or "chak," was striking for its loudness and dryness; it seemed especially odd after the bird was flushed and found to be a small wood warbler-like passerine. The bird was chased for about 3 min, but a view adequate for identification was not obtained because of the bird's furtive habit of seeking out low thick cover. Only "nervous" wing and tail flicking, a buff-white supercilium, and dull uniformly colored upperparts were noted before the bird flew up the steep hill leading to the lighthouse and disappeared over a ridge.

At 1030 Boekelheide relocated the bird and captured it in the island's Heligoland trap. With the bird in hand, the six persons present on the island (including Henderson, Lee Astheimer, and Peg Abbott) were able to arrive at the correct identification: Dusky Warbler. The bird weighed 7.7 g at capture, had no fat, and was measured and photographed (Fig. 1). Additional photos are on file with the California Bird Records Committee of the Western Field Ornithologists and at the Point Reyes Bird Observatory.

An attempt was made to keep the bird alive for transport off the island on the next day's scheduled boat, but it died during the afternoon. The specimen was deposited in the collections of the California Academy of Sciences (CAS 70314) and was confirmed to be an immature female of the nominate race by John Bull (pers. comm.) and Ben King (pers. comm.) at the American Museum of Natural History. The bird had no molt, a partially pneumaticized skull, and minute ovaries. The upper mandible was entirely dark and the lower was dark with a yellow base. The legs were dark brownish-gray with yellow soles. The eye was dark olive-brown. Some measurements were: exposed culmen, 7.5 mm; culmen from nostril, 6.7 mm; tarsus, 27 mm; flattened wing, 62 mm; and tail, 49 mm.

The Dusky Warbler breeds in central USSR from the Ob River east to the Anadyr Basin (Williamson 1962) and winters in the Himalayas and southeast Asia. Ticehurst (1938) recognized two races, the nominate, which is found over most of the species' range, and a darker, more resident Himalayan form, *P. f. weigoldi*. The species has a fairly good potential for vagrancy as evidenced by at least 35 documented west European records between 1958 and 1980 (Svensson pers. comm.). There have also been three occurrences

Fig. 1. Dusky Warbler (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*), Southeast Farallon Island, California, 27 September 1980. Photo by Brian Pendleton.

on extreme western Alaskan islands: one on St. Lawrence 6 June 1977 (King et al. 1978) and two on Shemya, western Aleutians, 18 and 18–23 September 1978 (Gibson 1981).

The occurrence of the Dusky Warbler on the Farallones could be accounted for by either "180°-reverse misorientation" or "mirror-image misorientation" (to the southeast rather than to the southwest), the latter proposed as a mechanism for the occurrence of eastern North American vagrants in the west (DeSante 1973). It is interesting to note that the wing length of the Farallon bird was longer than all of the 225 female specimens measured by Ticehurst, and the tip of the second primary (numbered ascendantly), which fell between those of the eight and ninth, was proportionally longer than 87% of 453 specimens (Ticehurst 1938). This suggests an origin for the bird from the northeast extremity of the species' breeding range. If we assume this to be the Anadyr region (175°E, 65°N), the mirror-image (across the 175°E meridian) of a "normal" migration route to southeast Asia via an area near the south China coast (a total distance of about 8,000 km) would pass very near to the Farallon Islands (a distance of about 5,000 km). Because of the northeastern locality of the Anadyr Basin and the curvature of the earth, however, roughly the same misdirected migratory route would result had the bird undertaken a reverse migration, flying approximately 180° opposite to its normal direction. In either case, the bird would have arrived on the Farallones by a flight from the north or northwest, a path also suggested by the company with which it arrived.

Finally, it seems likely that favorable weather conditions prevailing over much of the Northwest Pacific (and perhaps reflected in the strong north to northwest winds recorded on the Farallones before 27 September) could have been instrumental in the Dusky Warbler's passage to North America. These same conditions may also have assisted a Mongolian Plover (*Charadrius mongolus*), an "unprecedented" eight Ruffs (*Philomachus pugnax*), and two Red-throated Pipits (*Anthus cervinus*), which also reached northern California in the fall of 1980 (Evens and LeValley 1981).

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