Putative intrageneric hybrid New World wood-warbler (Aves: Parulidae) in the Dominican Republic

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Más de la mitad de las reinitas del Nuevo Mundo (Aves: Parulidae) presentan evidencia de hibridación intra- e inter-genérica. En este trabajo documentamos un individuo del género *Setophaga*, fotografiado en un ecosistema de manglar en la República Dominicana el 4 de octubre de 2024. Este individuo muestra características morfológicas compatibles con un híbrido entre Reinita Amarilla Americana *S. aestiva* y Reinita Galana *S. discolor*. Las características diagnósticas del híbrido incluyen una medialuna parcial bajo el ojo y unas estrías gris negruzco en los flancos.

The incidence of intra- and intergeneric hybridisation rates among New World wood-warblers (Aves: Parulidae) is conspicuously higher than that in other avian groups, occurring in over 50% of species[8,9,13]. In North America, including Nearctic–Neotropical migrants that migrate to the Caribbean, the number of intra- and intergeneric hybrids comprises 44 of 47 (93%) species, with the highest number of hybrids (40) found in the genus *Setophaga*[14]. Two examples of intrageneric hybrids have been documented to date in the Dominican Republic: Kirtland's Warbler *S. kirtlandii* x Blackburnian Warbler *S. fusca*[4] and Magnolia Warbler *S. magnolia* x Yellow-rumped Warbler *S. coronata*[5]. In this paper we document a new hybrid record from the Dominican Republic, with photographic evidence of a putative intrageneric hybridisation between the migratory, northern temperate-breeding American Yellow Warbler *S. aestiva* and Prairie Warbler *S. discolor*.

Figure 1. Putative after-hatch-year Yellow Warbler *Setophaga aestiva* x Prairie Warbler *S. discolor* hybrid, in red mangroves *Rhizophora mangle*, Sendero Ecológico El Cangrejo, Parque Nacional Manglares de Bajo Yuna, near Sánchez, Samaná, Dominican Republic, 4 October 2024 (Gerald P. Bauer). The partial black bridle (eye-crescent) and dusky grey to blackish streaking along the posterior flanks of the hybrid are diagnostic features of *S. discolor*.

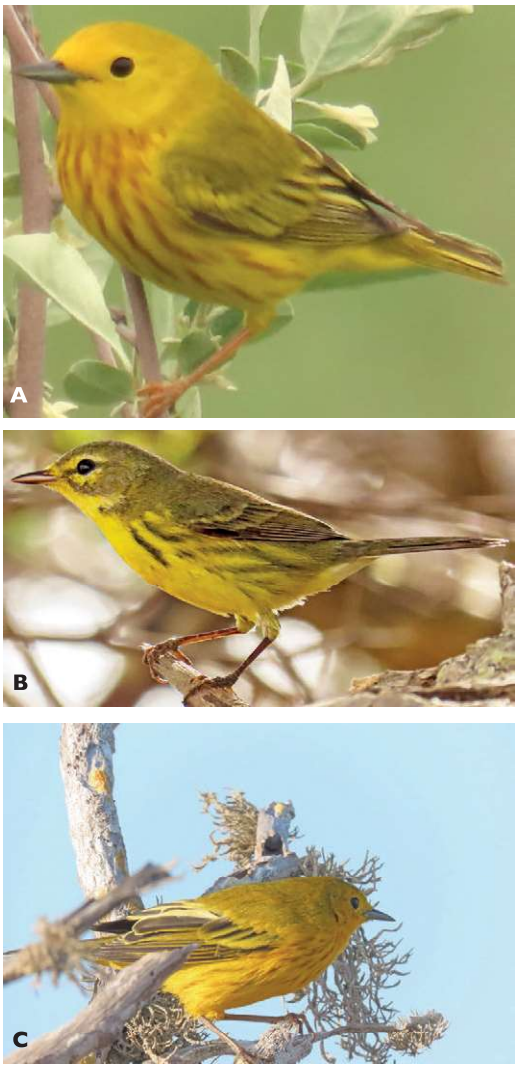

Figure 4. Plumage variation in relevant *Setophaga* warblers, for comparison with Fig. 1. **A** After-hatch-year male Yellow Warbler *S. aestiva* perched in autumn olive *Elaeagnus umbellata,* Jackson County, Michigan, USA, 22 May 2025 (Oliver Komar); **B** After-hatch-year male Prairie Warbler *S. discolor*, salt flats near Aeropuerto Internacional Las Américas, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 20 November 2020 (Luis R. Paulino); **C** After-hatch-year male Mangrove Warbler *S. petechia albicollis* in black mangroves *Avicennia germinans*, Monte Cristi, Dominican Republic, 7 September 2023 (Luis R. Paulino); **D** First-year male (left) and after-hatch-year male (right) Mangrove Warbler in red mangroves *Rhizophora mangle*, Sánchez, Samaná, Dominican Republic, 20 August 2021 (Luis R. Paulino): note fine faint streaking on the upper breast of both; **E** After-hatch-year male Mangrove Warbler in red mangroves *Rhizophora mangle*, Monte Cristi, Dominican Republic, 7 September 2023 (Luis R. Paulino).

Oliver Komar (Universidad Zamorano, Honduras) to suggest that the bird in question is likely a *S. aestiva* x *S. discolor* hybrid, consistent with patterns documented in standard avian-hybrids databases[1,7]. Comparative plumage variation among *S. aestiva*, the resident Mangrove Warbler *S. petechia albicollis* and *S. discolor* is presented (Fig. 4) to help exclude *S. petechia albicollis*.

Discussion

Our observation of this putative *S. petechia* × *S. discolor* hybrid further substantiates the widespread genomic compatibility and hybridisation potential among parulid warblers[2,15], including species that spend part of their annual life cycle in the Caribbean[12,14]. The occurrence of this putative hybrid is consistent with distributional data from Avibase and citizen-science platforms such as eBird (eBird 2024), which document overlapping wintering or migrating ranges of *S. aestiva* and *S. discolor* in the Caribbean[7,13]. However, given that the hybrid we report was only photographed and no blood or tissue samples were collected for DNA analysis, definitive conclusions cannot be drawn. Nevertheless, we present these observations for further examination and open discussion, and to contribute to the rapidly expanding corpus of hybrid-warbler accounts in the scientific literature.

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