Notes on the vocalizations of Golden-crowned Warbler
(Basileuterus culicivorus)

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In the following we briefly analyze and compare voice of the different races of Golden-crowned Warbler (Basileuterus culicivorus). We also try to quantify the extent of any vocal differences using the criteria proposed by Tobias et al. (2010), as a support for taxonomic review.

We have made use of sound recordings available on-line from Xeno Canto (XC) and Macaulay Library (ML).

An overview of song per race, illustrated with sonograms:

"culicivorus group" (with brasieri, flavescens and godmani) of C America
Song is a short melodious phrase, consisting of several sweet notes but ending with an emphasized higher-pitched note: "wee-chu-wee-chi-WEE!" or similar.

"cabanisi group" (with occultus, austerus and indignus) of N Colombia and NW Venezuela
Song is a series of repeated almost identical notes covering a very large freq. range, and reaching maximum frequencies of 9-11kHz.
"auricapilla group" (remaining five races) of NE & S Venezuela and CE South America. Song is typically a short series of repeated notes followed (sometimes after 1-2 transition notes) by 2-4 more emphatic notes.

olivascens (Venezuela)

Trinidad

segrex

Brazilian races
The three groups have clearly a different song.

The "culicivorus group" is vocally the most distinct, typically 4-5 notes with a narrow freq. range, followed by a single emphasized note (typically higher in pitch but occasionally different, see example below). However, in all cases the last 1-2 notes are always very different from the previous ones.

In comparison with *cabanisi* group, notes have a much lower max. freq. (score 3) and songs consists of a higher number of different note shapes (score 2). Total score 5.

In comparison with *auricapilla* group, differences are less straightforward to quantify given there is more variation in the latter group. Initial note(s) much lower-pitched (score 3) and about all notes are different in shape (score 1). Total vocal score 4.

*cabanisi* group differs from *auricapilla* group in having basically a single note shape (1-2) and all notes at high pitch (score 2-3). Total vocal score about 4.

A note of caution however:
An example of *olivascens* (see above) is less typical for the *auricapilla* group, and there is also a single recording of the extreme E side of *cabanisi* which is indistiguishable from the former (here presumed to be of race *cabanisi*, but bird was not seen):

This requires further investigation as it suggests an area of clinal change, and reduces the confidence about the vocal score for the last two groups.

As a final remark, the closely-related White-bellied Warbler *B. hypoleucus* has about the same song as the *auricapilla* group.
This note was finalized on 27th June 2016, using sound recordings available on-line at that moment. We would like to thank in particular the many sound recordists who placed their recordings for this species on XC.

References


Recommended citation