

Species: GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH Catharus minimus
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name-use binomial)

Date(s): May 16, 1976 Time Bird Seen: 1735 MDT to 1737 MDT
Locality: South Boulder Creek, 100 m S of Baseline Road, Boulder Greenbelt
Nearest Town: Boulder, some 2 mi. E of town County: Boulder

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE
None		

Optical Equipment: 8 x 40 binoculars
If photographed, type of equipment used: NA
Light Conditions: Sunny day; I was on W side of creek with sun to my back
Distance from bird (how measured): 10m at first, then 20m when bird flew across
-creek (estimated)-

Number of Birds Seen: One Sex: Unknown Plumage: Thrush

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor:

When first seen, the bird was skulking in a Chokecherry bush, watching me. I watched for about 15s, then he went lower in the bush, out of sight below the west bank. When I came in closer, it flew across to the east bank, taking a low trajectory, about 1m high, then zooming up to another bush, somewhat hidden from view. I sat on the west bank, and after a short time, it went higher in the bush, taking several side and 3/4 rear poses, giving a really good look. Several times it was in full sunlight, then flew north.

Describe in great detail the bird's size, overall shape, plumage and color-pattern. Include details on shape of bill, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to the marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance in field guide descriptions is not enough. Describe what you actually saw in the field:

During the previous 30 min I had seen two Swainson's Thrushes as I walked south along the creek. This bird was the same size, but the eye was quite different, looking too small at first sight. When it flew across the creek, the tail and back appeared to be the same drab brown color, in full sunlight. The neck streaks and breast spots had good contrast against their whitish background.

Having a hunch that it might be a Gray-cheeked, I gave special attention to the face color when it came in view again across the creek. There was no hint of warm tones, even in the late afternoon light - the face was a drab grayish brown, and there was hardly an eye ring. The slight eye demarcation was scarcely visible, giving the eye a small, beady look.

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc:

No song or call given.

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird:

Mixed deciduous trees and shrubs - Plains and Narrowleaf Cottonwoods, Chokecherry, Current in a strip some 20-30m wide along the creek, surrounded by open grassy fields on the east and west. S. Boulder Creek flows almost due north, with stream bed 1-2m below field level. An open thicket, good for migrating warblers.

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

The streaked-spotted neck and breast, shortish tail, and skulking demeanor clearly said Thrush. (Brown Thrasher's yellow eye, long tail, curved bill, rufous brown all conflicted with what was seen). Top of head, back, and tail were all a drab brown, eliminating the Hermit Thrush and Veery. No buffy color on face or eye ring eliminated Swainson's. Lack of eye line eliminates the Waterthrush or Ovenbird. The bill was far more narrow than any seed eater, eliminating all Sparrows. The only real possibility of confusion is with the Swainson's, but I had just seen two to refresh my memory on its field marks.

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

I have all five US *Hyalocichla* on my list - the Wood and Gray-checked from an earlier trip to Virginia and North Carolina, the Veery in Oregon, and the Hermit and Swainson's from numerous encounters in Colorado and California. (Also the Northern Waterthrush in Virginia).

Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation?

Robbins, C. S., B. Braun, & H. S. Zim, Birds of North America, Golden 1966 on the spot, immediately before and after sighting. This gave me good confidence at the time, so I phoned in a possible alert to Marca Schor.

This report was written from notes made during after observation; from memory

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