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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

WOOD THRUSH

Hylocichla mustelina

Location: About 1 mile north of Ft. Lyons Wildlife Easement; east of Las Animas; Bent County, Colorado

Date: May 8 and 14, 1995

Setting:

I was birding with Brandon Percival on both days when we saw this bird. Brandon actually found the bird each time. This area is a small tree lot at the intersection of Roads 16 and JJ about 1 mile north of Ft. Lyons Wildlife Easement. It is an abandoned tree lot on the site of an old farm. Most of the trees are large cottonwoods, birches or medium-sized elms. The trees were barely leafed out so there was little foliage for the bird to hide in. On the 8th Brandon first observed the bird on the ground under a scraggly elm. On the 14th he found it high in a dense grove of small cottonwoods. In both cases the bird gradually moved up high into the trees but afforded very good views. When it wanted to, it moved slightly to place a limb between itself and the observer making it hard to locate if you weren't looking directly at it. We saw it from 3:50-4:05 p.m. on the 8th and late in the afternoon of the 14th for several minutes. The weather on both days was fair and the light was very good to excellent. We observed the bird from 25-75 feet distance in our binoculars (mine a B & L Elite 10x40). I heard that Norm Earthal also saw this bird.

Description:

The bird was an adult in breeding plumage. It was a large thrush, about 9" long, almost the size of an American Robin. It had an upright posture and long bright pink legs that looked proportionately long. It was a plump, rather short-tailed bird. The bird was alert and sometimes slightly raised the crown feathers, giving it a vaguely crested appearance. This shape and posture gave the bird a distinctive appearance. The bill was medium-heavy, straight, blunt, and mostly dark with a yellowish base to the lower mandible. The entire uppersides were an even, unmarked cinnamon-brown, brightest on the crown and duldest on the tail. The color was nearly as bright as the upperparts of a Brown Thrasher. There were no wingbars. The undersides were gleaming white with faintly buffy-gray loser flanks. The sides of the throat, breast and upper belly were heavily spotted with long rows of bold blackish spots. The spots were smallest on the throat and largest on the sides of the breast. The center of the lower breast was white and the inner rows of spots against this white center were also small. There was a strong white eyering and pale lores giving a vaguely spectacled appearance. The face was blackish with fine white speckling. The eye was black.

Similar Species:

Only the other Catharus thrushes are at all similar. All are smaller and slimmer. The eastern Veery is less bright cinnamon above, lacks the eyering and black face and has very light breast spotting. The Hermit Thrush is redder at the rear end, not the front end, lacks the heavy black spots and black face. Swainson's and Gray-cheeked thrushes are much grayer, lack the strong eyering, black face and heavy black breast spotting. The Brown Thrasher is longer, slimmer with a long, not short, tail, has white wingbars and a curved, not straight, bill.

Experience with Species:

I have seen Wood Thrushes in Texas, Illinois and Wisconsin and one in Boulder on October 2, 1988.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

Mark Janos
10 Sedum Ct.
Pueblo, CO 81001

Mark Janos

Colorado Field Ornithologists-Sight Record Form

Species: Wood Thrush. Scientific Name: *Myiobolus mustelina*.

Dates: May 8, and May 14, 1995.

Number of birds seen: 1. Sex: unknown. Plumage: breeding adult.

Locality: Southeast and Northeast corner of Road JJ and 16.

Nearest town: Fort Lamy, Bent County, CO.

Times Observed: 2:50-4:05 PM on May 8 and 2:00-4:00 PM on May 14.

Duration of observation: 20 minutes.

Other observers with me: Mark Janos 10 Sedum Court; Pueblo, Colorado 81001
(719)-544-5002.

Other observers who saw the bird independently: Norm Erthal.

Light conditions: excellent.

Optical equipment used: 10X40 Bausch&Lomb Binoculars.

Distance from bird: 30-50 feet.

Describe the bird's behavior: The bird was first spotted by me in an American Elm Tree low to the ground. When I call Mark over the bird flew higher up in the tree and stayed there for 13 minutes and then the bird flew just west to a tree and we watched it for another two minutes and then left. The the later date I spotted the bird low in bushes and then it flew up higher in another tree. At this time Janos and I saw 2 Brown Thrashers and a Veery near the bird.

Describe the bird's appearance: The bird was a small thrush-like bird. The bird's plumage was reddish-brown with bold black spots. The bird's bill was thick and straight. The bird's tail was short and squared. The bird's legs and feet were orange. The bird's eyes were black. The bird had a white eye ring around both eyes. The cheeks were grayish-brown with small whitish spots. The wings and tail were typical thrush shaped. I identified this bird by its reddish brown color, the same color as Brown Thrasher. Also by the bold black spots on the front of the bird. Also by the bird's thrush shape.

Describe the bird's song and calls: The bird did not make any sound.

Describe the habitat: The bird was observed in a woodlot at the SE and NE intersection of Bent County Rds. JJ and 16 in Southeastern Colorado.

How did you eliminate similar species: Veery: This species is smaller and does not have the black spots.

Brown Thrasher and Long-billed Thrasher: These two species are the same color as Wood Thrush, however the thrashers have a longer thinner bill, also longer tail, then the typical short squared tail of thrush.

All other thrashers have long tails. And all other thrush are not as reddish-brown as Wood Thrush.

What is your prior experience with this species and other similar species:

Thrush: This is my first Wood Thrush.
I have seen three in Colorado before 1993. In spring 1993 I saw 4 including
one with the Wood Thrush on 5/14. I have also seen some in North Dakota in 1994.
Town Thrasher: I have seen many over many years of birding in Colorado.
Long-billed Thrasher: I have seen one in Colorado at Chatfield Reservoir in 1993 for
Colorado's Second Record.

List Books if helped with Identification: National Geographic Society's Birds of North
America.

This report was made with help from my neighbor.

Reporting observer: Brandon K. Percival. Signature: *Brandon K. Percival*

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