

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD SIGHTING

43-93-1

A

Species: Long-billed Thrasher

Date(s): Jan. 6, 1993: 12:00-12:15 p.m.; Jan. 7, 1993: 9:35-10:45 a.m.; 11:30-40 a.m.;
Jan. 13, 1993: 10:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.; Jan. 27, 1993: 11:15 to 11:25 a.m.

Locality: Plum Creek, 3 miles upstream from Delta, Chatfield State Park.

Latilong: 11

Optical equipment Binoculars; Nikon camera w/400 mm lens.
Also, Camcorder pictures (not fabulous but OK).

Photographs: I took a roll and a half of pictures, and enclose 18 with this report. Eight are for the permanent C.F.O. records collection; please return the other ten. A description of them accompanies this report. You may visit my home to look at the video pictures, which probably do not add a whole lot to the still photographs.

Description from notes made at the time of observation, and transcribed Jan. 6, 13, 14, and 15, 1993.

Prior experience: I've seen lots of Brown Thrashers but I've never looked at one so closely. Long-billed Thrasher I saw in 1967 in Texas, but I don't remember anything about it. This bird's gray face, like a Fox Sparrow, led me to take field notes.

Number of birds seen: One **Sex:** Unknown **Plumage:** Adult

Light conditions: Jan. 6: Excellent, sunny with sun behind our backs.

Distance from bird, how measured: First, best observation, 25 yards; later, 10-20 feet but lurking in thickets with occasional glimpses of various parts.

Weather at time of observation: Clear, cold -- temperature about 35 degrees. Snow covered the ground--about 4 inches at most. On the south side of some trees, including the one where we first saw the bird, bare ground showed.

Prior weather & number of days since change: Cold for two months; light snow fell (1-2 inches) on Jan. 4, two days before we saw the bird.

Habitat: Cottonwood riparian and wild plum/skunkbush (*Rhus trilobata*) thickets. It showed a feeding preference for areas of bare ground covered with leaf litter on the south side of trees and inside the plum and skunkbush thickets.

Behavior of bird: When Urling first saw the bird, it was feeding on the bare ground on the south side of a medium-sized cottonwood. It eventually flushed into a wild plum thicket, with bare ground within it; it continued to feed, within the thicket.

Almost the entire time we watched the bird fed actively, working through leaf litter bare of snow cover.

Detailed description of bird:

Notes from January 6, 1993 observation:

URLING'S DESCRIPTION:

Really big curved bill; long & curved, ~~bill~~ bill as long as the head.

Really startling yellow-orange eye; bright

Heavy black streaks on very white breast.

Reddish back and tail. Grayish head.

Skulking in bush after we surrounded it; more in the open

Large bird compared to Sage Thrasher.

Relatively tame, i.e., did not flush even though we surrounded it within 10 feet.

*HUGH'S DESCRIPTION:

Size of a Brown Thrasher (which we assumed it to be).

Eye: Bright orange-yellow with black pupil.

Head: Gray, with the gray coming below the eye. Behind the eye--about as far back from the eye as the distance from bill to eye--was a darker crescent-shaped vertical mark.

Throat: White, with black streaks, including one or two mustache marks.

Belly and breast: Whitish with strong black streaks almost to the tail; I did not see the under tail coverts.

Wings and back: Rusty. It had one white wing bar, sort of a scalloped wing bar.

Tail: Also rusty, and long.

Bill: Black, slightly down curved, as long as the head.

January 7, 1993

I took 4 others to see the bird. The observations were not as good because the thrasher lurked in the thickets. I did look particularly at the head, which I saw with the bird facing me. My impression was of a gray crown with interspersed rusty feathers, but still predominantly gray.

My impression this day also was that its rusty wings and back color was not as bright as a Brown Thrasher's.

January 13, 1993

Urling and I observed the bird from 10:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. at distances of 10-50 feet. Dorothy Horton was with us for half an hour of this time. The day was cloudy bright, with occasional bursts of sunshine.

We found the bird working along both sides of the Highline Canal directly over the hill from the site where we first found it. We observed it from every angle at fairly close range. I also took a roll and a half of pictures.

The wings and tail seemed worn. At one point when the bird was vigorously poking into a crevice by a cottonwood trunk, its tail was pushed at a 45 degree angle to his left by the trunk of the tree. This bird feeds with remarkable vigor, tossing leaves into the air 6 inches and behind it 6 inches. It stopped to swallow food only a few times.

Notes on plumage:

Beak: Entirely black. Not pale or lighter at the base. Decurved noticeably. Length about as long as the head.

Head: Entire head gray, except see the discussion of the back.

Eye: Appeared quite orange in indirect (cloudy) light; appeared yellower when the sun was brighter.

Throat: White.

Wings: A subdued rusty-brown color, akin to the tail of a Hermit Thrush. The wings extend to the base of the tail, no further. The right side has one wing bar with white scallops on most feathers, although at one point the bird hid the wing bar entirely. On the left side one wing bar had one scallop and a 2nd wing bar had scallops on two feathers, not adjoining.

Tail: Same rusty-brown color as wings. I noticed one feather on the outside, right side which appeared almost straw-colored; it also was shorter than the rest of the tail by about an inch.

Back: Essentially the same color as the wings and tail. No contrast between tail and back, although when feeding (most of the time) the wings meet and cover the lower back and rump. The upper back color diffused imperceptibly into the gray of the face. Along the top of the head, rusty-brown feathers blended with gray, so that the crown had a tinge of rust-brown about as big as the cap on a catbird; however no discernible demarcation separates the gray from the rust-brown. On the neck the gray seemed to extend almost across the nape, but not quite. The rust-brown color was narrower over the back of the neck.

Breast: Totally white, with no buff. Spots which form the stripes are black, at least in comparison with the rust-brown wings or with the white breast.

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On the lower belly (on one side, at least), immediately above the legs, a small vertical brownish patch extends from the wings vertically toward the legs, somewhat triangular in shape. I doubt if anyone else has noticed this little patch, and I suppose it lacks identification significance. Tracing the shape from a field guide, I revised a sketch from one I made in the field; the main point is to illustrate this patch.

Behind this patch the under tail coverts are white, unstreaked.

Legs: Flesh colored.

Bird's calls or song: Bird has been silent at all times I have seen it (except for the racket it makes scratching in the leaf litter for food).

Similar species: Brown Thrasher has rusty head and face. The immature Brown Thrasher apparently has a gray face, but which contrasts with a rusty cap; this bird lacked such a contrast; I thought that the crown was essentially gray. This bird's bill was longer and more decurved than the Brown Thrasher, and it looked all black, without any light-color at the base. See discussion below.

Sage Thrasher: smaller with smaller bill and no rust color. Other thrashers also lack the rusty color.

When we returned home we referred to the field guides and discovered that the gray head and long, decurved, black bill made it look like, not a Brown Thrasher but a Long-billed Thrasher. It most resembles the picture in the National Geographic Field Guide. The stripes seemed heavier, blacker, and a little more spotty.

FIELD MARKS NOT OBSERVED

Variation from Expected Field Marks of Long-billed Thrasher

On January 6, I thought the top of the head was gray; the field guides show it as rusty. I saw only one wing bar, not two. I did not notice whether or not the throat was white or had streaks.

On January 13 I studied the bird much more closely, with the "benefit" of having studied all the field guides and other information which I could muster.

Each field guide pictures the two likely thrashers differently, and describes different differentiating field marks; this account attempts to address all the differentiating marks suggested.

Master Guide: As you can see from the above description I have not seen a noticeable contrast between the back and the tail. The only color contrast is between the gray face and neck and the wings and back. See sketch. The only two-toned effect was in the face and neck *versus* wings and back.

Nat'l Geographic: The Plum Creek bird matches the few field marks in this text. The illustration shows two strong wing bars, which this bird mostly lacks.

Birds of North America Text offers few field marks. Picture (in my copy) shows a grayer back than the Plum Creek bird, and a more defined cap, which the Plum Creek bird lacks. I also don't think the Plum Creek bird had as much streaking on the throat. The eye is orangey, not pale yellow. Wing bars as above.

Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds (Terres): Matches the sketchy description. Also substantially matches the photograph, except my impression is that the gray of the neck extends higher on the nape—that the rusty color narrows on the hind neck.

Peterson's Mexican Guide (1973): My copy shows a bird much darker than the one we saw; I see little resemblance, except for the gross thrasher markings and the profile. David Pantle's copy of this guide shows a closer color fit, but still too dark.

Bander's Handbook: Subsequently to writing this description, I'm told that the bander's handbook uses two characteristics: primary extension and under-tail coverts.

I did not—and could not—measure the wing extension. The wings are quite short—they extend only barely to the base of the tail.

The undertail coverts appeared white, not buff and I did not detect spotting or mottling, but I was not looking for that characteristic.

Variations from Expected Field Marks of Brown Thrasher

Bill: Lower mandible should be yellow half way to 2/3 of the way out from the base; this bird's bill was all black. Brown's bill has only a hint of curvature; this bird has a noticeably decurved bill and is thinner than a Brown's bill.

Eye: Brown's is yellow; this bird's eye usually appeared orange, though in some lights it was orange-yellow.

Face: Immature Browns apparently have a contrasting orange-brown cap and gray face; on this bird the demarcation between rust on the top of the head and the gray face was diffused. The Brown should have an orange-brown neck; this bird's neck is gray, almost across the nape.

Back: Brown's back should be bright orange-brown; this bird's back is a dull, rust-brown. This color also diffused into the gray of the neck and face.

Breast: Brown's breast should have a beige or buff color, at least on the sides and under tail coverts; this bird's was entirely white. Streaks on the Brown should appear brownish; this bird's were black (probably because of the contrast with the white breast).

EXAMINATION OF SPECIMENS

Urling and I examined specimens in the Denver Museum of Natural History of Long-billed and Brown Thrashers. We looked at all 13 Long-billeds and about 30 Browns.

LONG-BILLED

Breast

Base color of the Colorado specimen is a cream tone; two others from Texas also have a creamy tone; the other Texas specimens have very white breasts.

Streaks: vary in size; are heavier on sides than in center of breast.

Spots which form the streaks appear brownish black to black. The streaks seem heavier, darker.

In fact, the streaks seem about the same color on both species, but the Long-billed's look blacker because of the white breast color; the beige or orange tone to the Brown's breast makes the streaks appear browner.

Bill

We measured (somewhat crudely) the bills of several specimens of both species:

24134 Female 2.3 cm
25037 Female 2.2 cm

24133 Male 2.2 cm
25036 Male 2.4 cm

24822 Female 2.2 cm
28035 Female 1.9 cm
38117 Female 2.1 cm
25345 Male 2.2 cm
24129 Male 2.4 cm

The bills of the Long-billeds appear longer because their bills are not as stout as the Browns, and the lower mandible is thinner and more decurved. It also looked as if the bills on the Long-billed are attached to the head at a different angle; they point down compared to the Brown, which are straighter and which point more or less directly out.

Bill shape: Bill appears longer because it's thinner, and because it is decurved.

Bill color: Usually lighter at the basal half or so of the bottom only. From the side the bills appeared all black.

BROWN

Most have a base color of pale orange or light beige.

Streaks similar in size to Long-billed; on sides, streaks tend toward a rusty color.

Bill straighter and thicker than Long-billed.

Consistently, the base of lower mandible is yellowish for 1/2 to 2/3 of the length, bottom and side. This mark is visible from the side. One specimen had an all black bill.

Head shape: I don't know if you can determine head shape from skins, though it would seem possible since skins still have the skulls.

Long-billed seems to have a steeper forehead than the Brown; this may explain, partially, the different angle of the bill.

Back

None shows strongly contrasty shades, head to back to tail. Color is a brown-rust, a distinctively different color from the orange color of Browns.	No contrast except maybe between wing tips—primaries—(gray) with tail. All specimens were a warm orangey brown.
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Back/tail contrast: faintly visible in daylight on some specimens, but not obvious on any. The texture of the tail feathers differs from that of the back feathers, which may give a two-toned impression.

Wing bars: Variable

Variable

Under-tail coverts:

White; both streaked and unstreaked.

White; most unstreaked; some have streaks.

Tail

Some slightly brighter than backs (see above) on the top.
Underside gray.

Same orange-brown as back and wings.

Underside shows a tinge of orange-brown.

COMMENT

After spending two hours with the bird Jan. 13, two hours with the specimens Jan. 14, and two hours with my photographs Jan. 15, Urling and I are convinced that, improbable as it seems, this bird is indeed a Long-billed Thrasher. All the field marks described above for the Long-billed match the bird at Plum Creek. If it is true that the distinctions are subtle, we have examined the subtleties carefully. All the field marks fit the Long-billed; none fit the Brown Thrasher.

Urling C. Kingery
Urling C. Kingery

Hugh E. Kingery
Hugh E. Kingery

869 Milwaukee Street, Denver CO 80206

BIRD OBSERVATION FORM
MOUNTAIN WEST REGION
AMERICAN BIRDS

Send to:

43-93-100
Hugh Kingery
869 Milwaukee Street
Denver CO 80206

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be accurate. Future bird students—those studying occurrences 50 years from now—must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are helping to further knowledge of ~~bird~~ bird populations. This procedure is required of all extraordinary observations, regardless of the observer. Thank you for your time.

Common Name Long-billed Thrasher
Scientific Name *Toxostoma longirostre*
Obs. date 1/13/93 Time(s) lunchtime, 11-1
Duration of obs. 1/2 hr + 2 hrs
Distance from bird 40', 20', 15', 10'
Light conditions excellent
Optical equip. 8-40 binoculars
Photo equip. _____
Notes made at time of sighting yes Date report prepared 1/20/93
Notes made later from memory _____

Weather at time of this observation.

Sunny + cold

Prior weather and number of days since change

Locality

Plum Creek
Chatfield State Park

Enter number of birds in each category.	GENDER(S)	AGES(S)	PLUMAGE(S)	PHOTO(S)
Total number observed.	Males _____	Adults <u>✓</u>	Breeding _____ Transition _____	Available _____
<u>1</u>	Females _____	Juv/Imms _____	Eclipse _____ Dark phase _____	Enclosed _____
	♀ or Imms _____	2/3 yr birds _____	Winter _____ Light ph. _____	
	Unknowns <u>✓</u>	Unknowns <u>✓</u>	Other _____	

Description of bird: Size, colors, all field marks OBSERVED. - Unique features of this individual, if any.

eye - sometimes yellow, sometimes orange, depending on light + angle

breast - very white with heavy black streaks

bill - entirely black, long, curved

wing bars - a clear white bar on the right wing,
left wing bar was barely visible

wings folded across back and tail a dull rust color

head and back of neck gray-brown with dull rust
~~the~~ color washing down top of head to back color
that matched wings and tail.

wing feathers appeared less rusty at ends because
they were quite worn

Size - ~~lots~~ lots bigger than a sage thrasher, maybe about
common grackle size

When the bird flushed and flew to a new location
his tail ^{spread apart +} appeared to be a brighter rust than when
his tail was closed as he was feeding on the ground.
I think seeing the tail like this depended on the lighting because
I only saw this ^{extra bright} color on the first sighting, & I saw him flush
at other times.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL NOTES, LISTS OF REFERENCES, SKETCHES FROM LIFE, PHOTOGRAPHS, ETC.

Field marks which were not seen. Why not?

Variations from expected field marks.

List similar species and describe why or how you eliminated them. - we consulted all available field g and studied skins at the Denver Museum of Natural History.

Brown Thrasher -

Long billed thrasher had a longer, more decurved, complete black bill; not as rusty a color as brown thrasher; breast was very white with heavy black streaking - no buffy anywhere like brown thrasher.

If someone collected this bird and brought ^{her} him to the D.M.N.H. this skin would definitely fit into the long billed thrasher drawer, not the brown thrasher drawer, due to feather coloration and the black curved bill.

Behavior of this bird. Other species seen with this one. Any interaction between birds?

This thrasher was very tame acting. He busily threw leaves in the air as he searched for food. He was not disturbed by us standing in plain sight 15' away. His tail often got bent at odd angles as he searched through the underbrush.

Habitat at this location. Adjacent or near by habitat, if significant.

Cottonwood riparian - wild plum thickets along a steep east facing bank.

Describe bird's song or sounds.

no sound

Print reporter's name, address, phone

URLING C. KINGERY
869 MILWAUKEE STREET
DENVER, CO 80206

Signature Urling C. Kingery

What is your experience with this or similar birds?

I've seen brown thrashers before, but never spent time observing them as we did this long billed thrasher.

Corroborating observers not reporting separately.

Print Name

Print Name

Print Name

Print Name

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD ☐UNUSUAL RECORD ☒

27-13

27-20

Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: Long-billed Thrasher / Toxostoma longirostre
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)Date(s): January 7, 1993; Photographed January 14, 1993*Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: Adult (worn)

Latilong: _____ Distribution Code: _____ Habitat Code: _____

Locality: Chatfield State Recreation Area, on west edge of the floodplain of Plum Creek, about 1 1/2 miles SE of where creek enters Chatfield Reservoir Elevation: 5490'Nearest town: NE 1/4 Sec. 19 T6S, R68W Littleton, CO County: DouglasTime(s) observed: 9:30a - 12:30p on Jan. 7 - 11:00a - 1:00p on JanDuration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): From several seconds to many minutes at a timeOther observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers): Hugh Kingery - 869 Milwaukee, Denver 80206 333-0161
David + Sherrill Pantle - 1782 Locust St., Denver 80220 333-8352
Pete Mulholland - prospective DFO memberOther observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers): Duane Nelson - 1619 Ford St., Golden 80401 277-9748
Joe Roller - 13040 W. 16th Dr. - Golden 80401 233-4476
MANY OTHERS !!Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light): Sky clear, sunny, snow cover, lots of bright light. Bird was obsn from several perspectives and sun angles, from bright sun to deep shade, often under a thick tangle of brush.Optical equipment used (e.g. power, types): Zeiss 10X40 B/GAT*Distance and how measured: between 15 and 50 ft. - eyeballIf photographed, type of equipment and film: * Nikon N8008, Nikkor 500mm f4 E w/1.4x teleconverter, Gitzo tripod, FujicWho else photographed the bird: Hugh Kingery, Duane Nelson, Joe TenBrink SO SEVERAL OTHERSDescribe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying): Feeding under trees + shrubs in leaf litter, vigorously scratch-towhee fashion. Flight rapid and "frantic" upon being flushed; flew 50-300' each time. Unresponsive to "pishing".Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observed in the field: Overall size, shape, pattern like Brown Thrasher, except: cheeks and nape "warm" gray; crown more rust than nape; upper back like crown; lower back reddish-brown; wings and tail bright rufous, brightest parts of bird; breast spots and streaks black very bold against an almost white background; one faint white wing
Overall upper-part coloration not as bright rufous nor as

Description (continued): ^{uniform as Brown Thrasher.} Bill dark gray, very long, decurved, nearly as long as head; bill lacks pale flesh or yellowish areas at base typical of Brown Thrasher. Eyes bright orange, not the bright yellow typical of Brown Thrasher.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

Silent.

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird: Riparian floodplain of Plum Creek. Patch, grassy meadows, clumps of woody shrubs, scattered trees, and groves of small to medium-sized cottonwoods. Ground snow covered, except under dense shrubs and trees, where bird was feeding.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species? The only other possible similarly appearing species is Brown Thrasher. The field marks described above as diagnostic for Long-billed Thrasher effectively eliminate Brown Thrasher, when taken together.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? I have observed Brown Thrashers hundreds of times, but have not studied them closely. I saw several Long-billed Thrashers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas in January, 1993. I studied them to the extent necessary to distinguish them from Brown Thrasher using the same field marks noted on the Colorado bird.

List books, illustration, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

0) Before observation: National Geographic Field Guides to Birds of North America, 2nd ed.

a) At time of observation: Did not refer to field guides; discussed field marks with other observers.

b) After observation: Consulted several other field guides and monographs.

This report was written from reports made during X, after observation _____, from memory _____ Field notes attached.

Date and time ^{this} report was written: Jan. 10, 1993 (before I photographed bird on Jan. 7, 1993)

Reporting observer: J B Hayes Signature: J B Hayes

Address: 1517 W. Briarwood Ave. Littleton, CO 80120 303-7984

All reports will be maintained permanently at the address below:

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DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CITY PARK
DENVER, CO 80205

* Attached photos (2) confirm the field marks I noted on Jan. 7, 1993. Photos also show short primary extension and whitish undertail coverts, said to be diagnostic for Long-billed Thrasher.

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

43-93-100

A

NEW STATE RECORD ☐ 2nd UNUSUAL RECORD ☒

Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: Long-Billed Thrasher 1 Toxostoma longirostre
(Verdacular Name) (Scientific Name)Date(s): 1-14-93Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: Alike Plumage: (winter) ^{but no} ~~seasonal~~ ch

Latilong: _____ Distribution Code: _____ Habitat Code: _____

Locality: Chatfield State Park Elevation: 5500 ft.Nearest town: _____ County: DouglasTime(s) observed: 12:15 P.M. to 3:45 P.M.Duration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): 3 hrs. 15 min.

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

none -

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

J.B. Hayes 1517 W. Blairwood - Littleton, CO 80120 798-9683Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light): Feeding bird in and out of underbrush, occasionally in good sunlight. I moved so sunlight at my back.Optical equipment used (e.g. power, types): Swift 8.5 X 4.4 powerDistance and how measured: As close as 8 ft.If photographed, type of equipment and film: Minox 70 x 700-200mm lens 1600 ASA filmWho else photographed the bird: J.B. Hayes, Hugh Kingery - many othersDescribe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying): Bird fed busily and continuously. Scratching with feet and throwing leaves about with bill, eating insects and larvae thus exposed. Some wilted berriesDescribe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observed in the field: The CBR reported the bird as a suspect Long-billed Thrasher, so I consulted field-guides so I would know what to look for. It was over 10 in. long with a distinctively curved bill. Back and upper tail brown with only a hint of red. Head was greyish. Eye bright orange - I thought it about the same color as Rufous-sided towhees eye. Throat white. Upper belly and breast

Description (continued): Whitish with dark spotty streaks to bell and unmarked from there to under tail coverts. Undertail white with dark edgings and loops. Long tail

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

Almost continuous series of different cheeps, zips etc.

Not very audible - (couldn't hear w/o hearing aids.) Its scratching and thrashing about were most audible.

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:

Brushy, ~~low~~ undergrowth & dead limbs among dead leaves underneath Cottonwoods bordering Highline Canal.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

Brown Thrasher (deemed only likely candidate) doesn't have such a sharply curved bill, grayish head. This bird's white underpart contrast with Brown's buffy colored. The bright orange-red eye on this bird would eliminate Brown thrasher.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

1st sighting - it proved. Brown thrasher seen many times and was nesting on my Breeding Bird Atlas Block last summer ^(last) chance. This bird much more tolerant of my close presence.
List books, illustration, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) At time of observation: Nat'l Geographic guide

b) After observation: Audubon Master Guides, Aud. Encyclopedia Bird. of N. America

This report was written from notes ~~reports~~ made during ✓, after observation ✓, from memory

Date and time report was written: 1-14-93 - 6:15 PM.

Reporting observer: Joe TenBrink Signature: Joe TenBrink

Address: 6801 E Miss. A 302, Denver, Colo 80224 - 320-4858

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DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CITY PARK
DENVER, CO 80205

43-93-10

A

1154 South Vancouver Way
Lakewood, Colorado 80228
303-969-6212

Larry Norris Biogeographer

REPORT TO AMERICAN BIRDS MOUNTAIN WEST REGION EDITOR HUGH E. KINGERY

LONG-BILLED THRASHER (Toxostoma longirostre)

17 January 1993 - Chatfield State Recreation Area, Jefferson County, Colorado

Time: 0945-56 Weather: Cold, calm, overcast. Snow cover about 14cm on level.

Description Points:

1. Bill long, decurved, entirely dark
2. Face gray. Cap gray-brown. Nape gray-brown.
3. Iris orange or yellow-orange, depending on the intensity of the light.
4. Back dull brown, not intense brown so often seen in Brown Thrasher (T. rufum).
5. Wings dull brown, with faint white wingbar. I did not note two wingbars.
6. Tail brown, richer than the back, but not as intense as T. rufum.
7. Throat pure white
8. Breast and belly white with large black (or dark) blotches forming streaks from base of throat all the way to near the vent.

The bird gave one loud "tchik" call note. Short, forceful. It probed thrasher-like in the leaf litter below the cottonwoods and winter snow-bent shrubs.

The bird was observed under ideal conditions for eleven minutes at close range (6 meters) with 10X binoculars. Bird was very active and provided many close looks of sides, back, tail, and head. No photographs were taken.

Larry L. Norris

43-93-1
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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

LONG-BILLED THRASHER

Toxostoma longirostre

Location: Chatfield Reservoir; Denver, Douglas County, Colorado

Date: January 23, 1993

This bird was found and identified by Hugh Kingery.

Setting:

I first observed this bird about 2:10 p.m. on a cold sunny day. I found it by ear, hearing it scratching in heavy leaf litter in a line of large cottonwoods and smaller brush along the west bluff parallel to Plum Creek. It actively searched for food and made a great deal of noise as it searched through dry leaves and leaf litter. It spent nearly all of its time on the ground, progressing forward by hopping. Its manner of feeding was to flick leaves aside with a quick sideways movement of its long curved bill. This was followed by a momentary freeze as, with tilted head, it eyed the ground that was revealed beneath the overturned leaves. I watched this bird, with binoculars, for about 40 minutes and left it in peace at about 2:50 p.m. It was rather tame and appeared comfortable as I approached to within 20 feet or so. It kept to the heaviest cover in the line of trees in which it foraged, often disappearing for short periods beneath thick tangles of branches.

Description:

The bird was an adult, about 14" long. Overall it was curve-billed, short-winged and long-tailed. The eye had a deep golden-yellow iris, barely tending towards orange. The bill was all black, including both upper and lower mandibles and the base. It was moderately curved down its length, the curvature apparent in both the upper and lower mandible. The bill was rather slender down its length, from base to tip and was evenly tapered throughout. The face and sides of head were dusky grey, the grey extending forward and connecting over the top of the bill. The grey extended up on the face to the edge of a dull brown crown, and rear-ward back to the grey nape. The head thus appeared quite grey with a narrow brown crown patch. The grey nape graded into a dull brown, barely rufous, back that was suffused with grey. The brown back contrasted with the slightly more rufous-brown tail (which was very long) and wings (which were quite short). The tail was ragged and worn at the tips. The wings showed one thin white wingbar. The primary extension (distance between tip of primaries and tips of longest tertial in folded wing) was about 1/4". The breast was pure white at the center, greyer on the flanks, with rows of distinct oval black spots. These black spots were duskier towards the rear, and smaller. The spots dwindled to small dots on the undertail, giving the undertail a dusky, mottled appearance.

Similar Species:

Differences from Brown Thrasher include: white breast vs faintly tan breast; black breast spots vs dark brown breast spots; grey face and forehead vs more brownish face and forehead; dull rufous-brown tail vs bright rufous tail contrasting with back; short primary extension vs long primary extension; golden-orange iris vs yellow iris; all black bill vs bill with pale base of lower mandible; bill evenly tapered and slender throughout vs thick-based bill with rather straight lower mandible. Other thrashers are less distinctly spotted, lack white wingbars, or are greyer and much smaller.

Experience with Species:

I have seen all the N.A. thrashers including many Long-billed Thrashers in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas as recently as 1990.

This report was prepared from notes made at the time of observation.

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Long-billed Thrasher