

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

CFO-ORC FILE # 1998-105ACCEPTED (7-0)rec'd 5-16-98✓NEW STATE RECORD ☐UNUSUAL RECORD ☒**Species:** Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minmus*)**Date:** 9 May 1998**Number seen:** one**Sex:** unknown**Plumage:** Alternate**Locality:** Ft. Lyon SWA**Elevation:** 3870'**Nearest town:** Ft. Lyon**County:** Bent**Time observed:** about 15:40 MDT**Duration of observation:** about 12 seconds

Description: While leading a trip at Ft. Lyon for the CFO convention, I found a Gray-cheeked Thrush along the edge of the forest along Road HH near the entrance road. I had seen numerous Swainson's Thrushes at the site for recent, but not direct comparison. The bird was obviously a *Catharus* thrush (it walked, was a medium-sized passerine, pinkish legs, spotting on breast). I found the bird on the ground, but shortly after I found it, it flew up and perched in a tree facing mostly away from me. It turned its head a little once and provided a clear, though brief, view of the face. While the bird was on the ground (mostly facing away from me, but with a bit of its chest visible), I noted that the chest was spotted with blackish and that its back appeared darker and colder than those of the Swainson's Thrushes I had been seeing. I was waiting for it to turn its head so that I could check out its face when it flew up to a perch. Shortly after it landed on the perch (mostly facing away from me), it looked at me briefly with its left eye and then turned its head away again. I noted that its face was dark and plain -- no obvious eyering, no buffy anywhere. I also noted a strong, black malar stripe. A few seconds later, it flew away into the forest.

I did not notice the tail coloration, specifically, but my impression was that the entire upperparts were the same cold gray-brown color. I also did not note the bill color, nor could I judge the extent and specific pattern of the spotting underneath. Though the sighting was brief, I am thoroughly convinced that it was a Gray-cheeked. Also, despite the bird being in heavy shade, I believe that the shade was not making the bird look dark and eliminating contrast in the face.

Similar species eliminated by description: Swainson's Thrush (eastern and western races) is eliminated by dorsal coloration and face pattern. Also, most Swainson's Thrushes have malar stripes that are brown and are thus not as strongly contrasting and obvious as those on Gray-cheeked. Those Swainson's with darker malar stripes still do not have black malars and they're usually edged with brown. The bird in question had a highly-contrasting, black malar. Hermit Thrush which does have a black malar, can be ruled out by dorsal coloration and face pattern and, perhaps, by lack of a contrastingly-colored tail. Veery is eliminated by dorsal coloration (eastern races) and by the bird having blackish spotting underneath (all races). Eliminating Bicknell's is more problematic, but the bird did not appear to be small and the lack of buffy tones in the face also suggests that the bird was not this species.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): I heard none.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen in excess of 120 Gray-cheeked Thrushes (including at least 15 in the hand) and 100s to 1000s of the other North American *Catharus* (including from 6-200 of the various species in hand).

Light conditions: sun behind me, but the bird in heavy shade

Optical equipment used: Zeiss 7x42

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest distance at 30 feet

Other observers who saw the bird with you: none

Other observers who saw the bird independently: One participant on the field trip reported a Gray-cheeked Thrush from the same area some 25 minutes later. I had not told him of my sighting of the bird before he saw it.

If photographed, type of equipment and film:

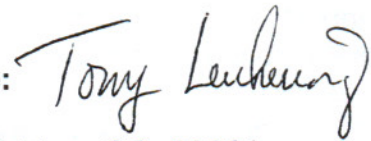
List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: none

b) after observation: none

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature:



Address: Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Picadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: This report was written on 12 May 1998 from memory.