

1998-106

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

ACCEPTED (7-0)

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (2)
Catharus minimus

Location: Lake Hasty campground below John Martin Res.; Lamar, Bent County, Colorado

Date: May 8-9, 1998

Setting:

We were leading a birding field trip for the CFO convention at about 10:20 a.m. at Lake Hasty campground. The area is a park-like campground with large trees and a lawn, with little ground cover. We found at least two birds of this species as they walked the lawn and fed in small shrubs and on the ground. We observed them well, in good light and at length. I watched the birds from as close as 25 feet with B & L 10 x 40 binoculars. On the 8th I watched one of the birds for about 20 minutes, until about 10:40 a.m. On the 9th there may have been as many as three individual Gray-cheeked Thrushes at the campground.

Description:

The birds were identical -- adult Catharus thrushes (about 7" long, plain above, no wing bars, spotted breast, short tail, and stout, straight bill). Overall the birds were uni-color above, including the wings, from head to tail. The color of the upperparts was a cold even gray-brown, grayer looking than the Swainson's Thrush (also present). Unlike Hermit Thrushes, this birds' tails and rumps were clearly not redder, nor browner than the rest of the upperparts. The faces completely lacked eyerings and both faces and cheeks were very plain, flat gray, showing no contrast with the rest of the head and upperparts. There was no suggestion of paler lores. The undersides were very pale whitish-gray with fairly heavy, distinct, dark gray spots, more distinctly spotted than Swainson's Thrush.

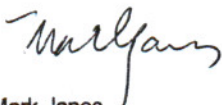
Similar Species:

Thrashers have much longer tails, curved bills. Wood Thrush is larger, richer brown with a distinct eyering and large distinct spots on the breast. The Veery, which was present, is a richer brown, has a lighter face, contrasting with the crown, and has very pale, indistinct spotting on the breast. Swainson's Thrush has a buffy face and an eyering, warmer upperparts. Hermit Thrush has an eyering, a contrasting reddish rump and tail, and flicks its wings.

Experience with Species:

I have seen all the Catharus thrushes in Colorado, including five Gray-cheeked Thrushes in May. I have also seen Gray-cheeked Thrushes in spring migration in Texas.

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



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