

CFO-ORC FILE # 2001-151ACCEPTED

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD X

rec'd 1/17/02

Species: Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*)**Date:** 3 May 2001 **Number seen:** one **Sex:** unknown **Plumage:** Basic**Locality:** Along ditch east of 34 Rd, N of VV Rd **Elevation:** about 3880'**Nearest town:** Big Ben **County:** Bent**Time observed:** about 15:45-15:50 MDT**Duration of observation:** about 4 minutes

Description: On my way from Neenoshe Reservoir to Hasty, I decided to hit my secret spot in NE Bent Co. to see if this promising spot would finally yield a goodie. I had worked most of the best area (about 10 minutes), when I came across a small flock of *Catharus* thrushes. The second bird I looked at (the first was a Swainson's (SWTH)) was obviously a Gray-cheeked (GCTH)! I had seen two GCTHs earlier that day at Lamar with Joe Fontaine and Marshall Iliff. However, we had parted at Neenoshe, as they had to drive back north to Ft. Collins. Shame, that. I watched it for most of the five minutes that it was in view, often quite in the open, with the other two thrushes, foraging among leaf litter on the southern ditch bank. Quite wonderfully, the third thrush was a Hermit, so I got excellent comparisons of all three birds at close range! But, unfortunately, the owner of the property to the south started walking around in the area to the south of the thrushes, and the birds bolted to cover.

The bird was a cold brown-backed *Catharus*, with roughly the same color from head to tail tip, though the head was slightly grayer than the rest of the upperparts. The auriculars were grayer than the crown, though those two body parts did not particularly contrast with each other as they were of the same tone and the colors blended at their meeting. The large eyes were dark and there was a vague and thin, gray eyering. The bill was bicolored - mostly dark but with a pale-based mandible. The malar stripes were black, not the dark brown typical of SWTH. The chin and throat were unmarked white and there was very little buffiness around the black spotting on the sides of the breast. The spotting petered out on the lower sides, with the flanks appearing unmarked grayish. The belly and vent were white. The wings exhibited very long primary projection, the distance of which was about equal to the length of the longest tertial. There were no buff-tipped greater secondary coverts that I could see, so I could not determine the bird's age. The legs were pink.

Similar species eliminated by description: SWTH easily eliminated by head pattern and coloration, bill pattern, and malar coloration. Bicknell's Thrush is eliminated by lack of an obvious rufescent primary panel, tail coloration, and, possibly, by primary projection. Most Veeries ruled out readily by upperparts coloration and underparts spotting. Those scary grayish Veeries from the Pacific NW are eliminated by bill pattern and, perhaps, by primary projection.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): I heard no vocalizations

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen in excess of 130 Gray-cheeked Thrushes and 100s to 1000s of the other North American *Catharus*, except for Bicknell's, of which I've seen about 10.

Light conditions: sky overcast

Optical equipment used: Swarovski 8.5x42

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest distance at 3 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: none

Other observers who saw the bird independently: none

If photographed, type of equipment and film: I did not photograph

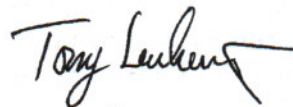
List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: none

b) after observation: none

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature:



Address: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: This report was written on 17 January 2002 from notes written shortly after the sighting.