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Notes

A Winter Record of a Veery in Ontario

On 27 December 1983, we observed a single Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*) at Lakeside Park, Kitchener, in the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, Ontario.

The 18 ha park contains a 1.5 ha kettle lake surrounded by a narrow fringe of aquatic emergents. The eastern side of the lake is dominated by an open, immature forest of poplar (*Populus tremuloides*), while the northern and western sides are shrubby in aspect. The remainder of the park is maintained lawn with occasional large trees, particularly black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), and Norway acer (*Acer platanoides*), and sugar maple (*A. saccharum*). The park is surrounded by residences on three sides and a busy street on the fourth. Habitats of Lakeside Park are described in more detail by Dance (1982).

The bird was first seen at 0845 h at a distance of approximately 7 m. It was facing us, perched 3 m

above the ground on a limb of a Norway maple. With the aid of 7 x 35 and 7 x 50 binoculars we could see the slender, dark bill and the faint brown spots on the upper portion of the white breast. A minute later, it flew into a tangle of wild grape (*Vitis riparia*) and then 10 m up into a sugar maple.

Although the weather was overcast and it was snowing lightly, the brownish back and tail were clearly visible. After approximately two minutes, it flew away and was temporarily lost from sight.

An hour later, it was observed again in a buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). It was 2 m from the ground and was approached to within 3 m. From this distance, all necessary field marks could easily be distinguished: the uniformly coloured tawny reddish brown back and tail; the light brown spots on the upper portion of the breast; the brownish cheeks; and the absence of an eye-ring.

The Veery was observed in this location for three minutes, until we left without disturbing it further. While in the buckthorn, it had its feathers puffed up and appeared to be oblivious of our presence. This, plus the atypical behaviour of perching out in the open, suggested that the bird was under stress. It was not seen again on subsequent visits to the park.

The normal winter range of the Veery is South America from Colombia and Venezuela south to central Brazil (A.O.U. 1983). It has not previously been recorded in Canada in winter (Godfrey 1966) and the latest fall date reported previously for Ontario is 20 October (James *et al.* 1976).

In the southeastern United States, it is an early fall migrant, with the latest recorded dates for Alabama and Louisiana being 26 and 29 October, respectively (Imhof 1976, Lowery 1974). A sight record on 1 January 1877 in Texas was rejected by Bent (1949) because no specimen was secured.

A review of the Winter Season section of *American Birds* revealed that only eight winter Veery records were reported for North America in the past ten years. Two of these were injured or ill birds. The one present at Greenwich Point, Connecticut, 2-8 January 1980 had a damaged wing (Vickery 1980) while a Veery at Geneva, New York, on 28 December 1975 was obviously ill (Kibbe 1976). The other six records in the past decade are: one at Warren, Pennsylvania, on 21 December 1979 (Hall 1980); one at Aransas, Texas, on 8 January 1980 (Webster 1980); one at

Woodstock, Vermont, on 3 December 1976 (Kibbe 1977); one at Phelps, New York, on 16 January 1983 (Kibbe and Boise 1983); one at Little Creek, Virginia, on 27 December 1973 (Scott and Cutler 1974); and one which survived the winter of 1973-74 on Goose Island, Texas (Webster 1974). With the exception of the Texas area, the Veery seems unable to withstand North American winters.

December 1983 was harsher than average, so the presence of the Veery cannot be attributed to exceptionally warm weather. The weather station at the Kitchener-Waterloo airport reported an average temperature of -6°C , six degrees below normal. Two moderately severe snow storms occurred in December, and a total snowfall of 31.5 cm was experienced, more than the total snowfall for the previous winter.

From the literature examined, this appears to be the first winter record of a Veery for Ontario and Canada, and one of very few North American winter records.

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A Winter Record of the Gray-cheeked Thrush in Ontario

The autumn migration of the Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*) through southern Ontario occurs primarily during September and October. Sightings of birds in December, presumably lingering migrants, are very rare. This note reports on the acquisition of the first "winter" specimen of the species for the province.

While birdwatching near the tip of Point Pelee National Park (Essex County) on 8 December 1981, I located a Gray-cheeked Thrush standing quietly under some vegetation. After viewing the bird for several minutes I went to the visitor centre to find others who might be interested in seeing it. Alan Wormington accompanied

me back to the area and we quickly relocated the bird. We were able to approach within four m when Wormington suggested that it might not be able to fly. Indeed, it could not and we captured the bird in order to photograph it. Unfortunately, it died shortly afterwards. The specimen, now in the National Museum of Canada (#75043), is a female and judging from the plumage condition and skull, it is likely an adult (Richard Poulin, pers. comm.). Although the bird showed no apparent injuries it weighed only 27.1 g. Bruce Di Labio of the N.M.C. provided weights of nine specimens taken in Ontario in the autumn and found they ranged from 25.0 g to 35.0 g (average = 30.6 g). This lighter than average weight and the fact that there was virtually no fat on the bird, suggests this individual may have been starving.

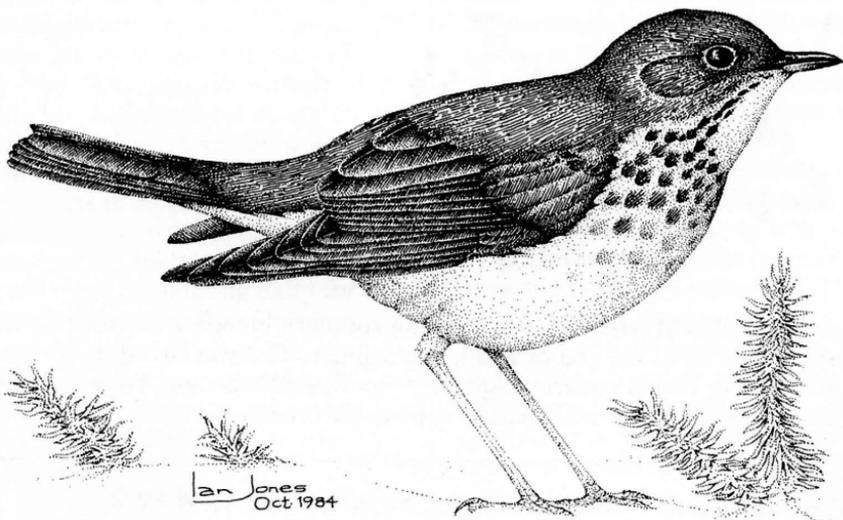
The wing chord was measured

to determine if this individual belonged to the smaller subspecies *C.m. bicknelli*. However at 98 mm, it was well above the 93 mm maximum of that race and represents the common subspecies in the province, *C.m. minimus*.

I have been able to locate only two other winter records of the Gray-cheeked Thrush for Ontario. The first was of a bird seen by W. Ellsworth at Hillier, (Prince Edward County) on 23 December 1969 (*Aud. Field Notes* 24:499) and the second, a bird seen near Kingston (Frontenac County) on 18 December 1977 by F. Avis and A. Hutchinson (*Amer. Birds* 32:461-462). In both cases good details were submitted (T. Sprague and R. Weir, pers. comm.).

I would like to thank B.M. Di Labio, Dr. Ross James, R. Poulin, T. Sprague and R. Weir for their assistance in locating information for this note.

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Atlas Mystery Map

The breeding distribution of the Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), as determined by the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, was illustrated in the last issue of *Ontario Birds* (2:40-41). In this issue the distribution of a mystery

bird is portrayed. Can you identify the species? Send your answers to the Editors before 15 November 1984; names of those who identified the species correctly will appear in the December issue of *Ontario Birds*.

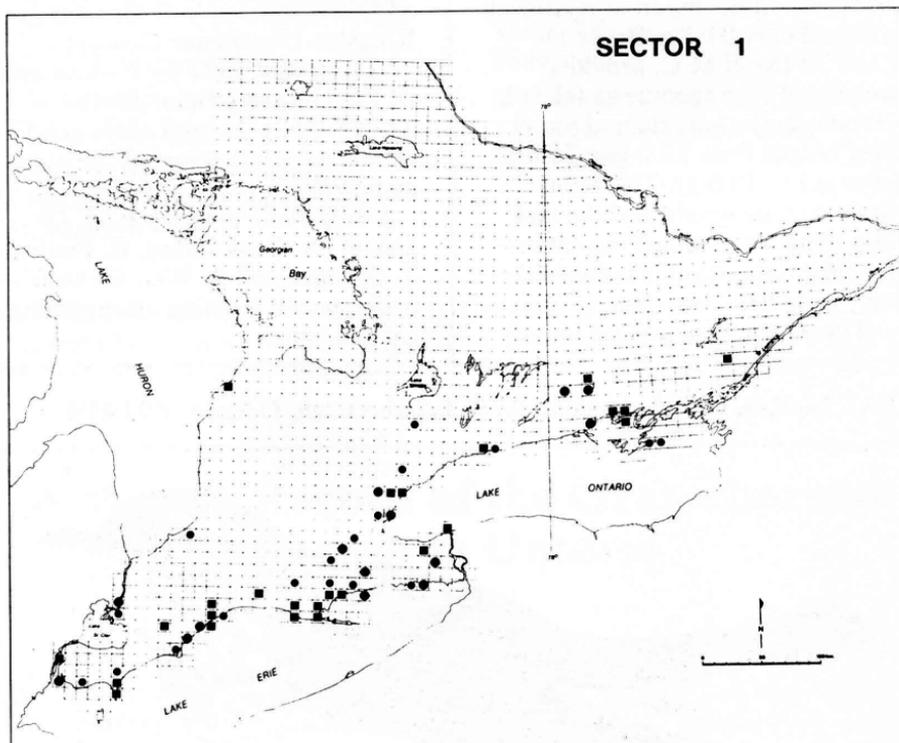


Figure 1. Atlas Mystery Map 1 showing southern breeding distribution for mystery bird up to the end of 1984, according to Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. Within 10 km squares: Square = confirmed breeding, large circle = probable breeding and small circle = possible breeding.

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