

Curve-billed Thrasher

28 Jan 1981

Rathbun Res., Appanoose Co., IA

*Scott,*Newlon,*Kent

to Mar 1981; Newlon 1981, Scott 1981, IBL 51:33,52:42

Record Number: 81-01

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Michael C. Newlon, 31 Jan

Thomas H. Kent, 31 Jan

PHOTOGRAPH

Fred and Ginny Drum, Feb 1981, P-0007

Bill Heusinkveld, winter 1981, P-0020

REFERENCES

Newlon, M.C. 1981. Curve-billed Thrashers in Iowa. IBL
51:21-24.

Field Reports: IBL 51:31, 33

Scott, C. 1981. The Curve-billed Thrasher at Rathbun. IBL
51:35.

Records Committee: IBL 52:42

VOTE: 7 I-P

[no comments]

piler), and Barb Wilson.

Other species seen during census period: Pine Siskin.

34. SIOUX CITY (15 mile diameter centered on Sioux City Auditorium, area covered same as previous years.) Dec. 20: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Temp. -3-15; wind: 5 mph from SE. Clear to partly cloudy, no snow cover, Missouri River open, other streams and rivers partly open, food supply abundant due to mild winter.

Observers (7) in 5 parties: Larry Farmer, Marla Grier, Marge Kennedy, Ray Kennedy, Robert L. Nickolson (compiler), Ed Sibley and Morgan Webb.

35. SPIRIT LAKE (Vicinity of Spirit Lake - exact area not given). Dec. 20: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Temp. -6-+17; wind: 3 mph from NW. Skies clear in a.m. becoming completely cloudy by early p.m. Snow cover: none in most areas, 10 percent in heavily wooded areas. Winter food conditions - good to excellent.

Observers (10): LaVonne Foote, Doug Harr (compiler), Dale and Gwen Hedin, Bob Keir, Bob Madsen, Jim and Linda Marshall, Bob Moats, Barbara Nelson.

36. TRISTATE 556 (A 15-mile diameter circle centered on mile 556 of the Missouri River to include Hamburg and Waubonsie State Park in Iowa, Nebraska City, including Arbor Lodge Park, in Nebraska with adjacent farmland, and a small portion of northwest Missouri.) Jan. 3: 7:15 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Temp. 10-25; wind: 0-15 mph from NW. Breezy and cold to start, becoming still, sunny and pleasant later. Water frozen, except Missouri River (ice-free) and some springs.

Observers (3) in 1 party: Ione Getscher, Ross Silcock, Barbara Wilson (compiler).

Details of unusual observations: Lincoln's Sparrow documented.

Comments: A new and promising area with some excellent and varied habitat.

37. WATERLOO (A 15 mile diameter circle centered on center of Sec. 2 Maxfield Twp., Bremer Co., Ia., including Sweet Marsh, Wapsipiconic River bottom, Seven Bridges Park, and surrounding farmland.) Jan. 3: 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Temp. 0-5; wind: 10-30 mph from NW. Clear, cold, breezy day with trace of snow on ground and water mostly all frozen.

Observers (7) in 3 parties: Antoinette Camarata, Russell Hays, Milo Mecham, Francis Moore, Bob Myers (compiler), Tom Stone and Tom Stone Jr.

Details of unusual observations: A gray (male) Northern Harrier was seen flying low over Sweet Marsh. White rump and long wings and tail were noted. The fairly mild winter has left many Red-headed Woodpeckers in our area. We have had several groves containing Long-eared and Short-eared Owls all fall.

38. WESTFIELD (15 mile diameter circle centered on section 16, Sioux township, Plymouth county and including Big Sioux river bottoms.) Jan. 4: 5:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Temp. 10-18; wind: 15-20 mph from ESE. Cloudy, no snow, scattered open spots on Sioux River.

Observers (4) in 3 parties, plus 1 at feeders: Carol and Larry Farmer (compiler) and Pat and Paul Williams.

Other species seen during census period: Robin and Northern Harrier.

Comments: This Christmas count is only one of many niches of northwest Iowa affected by the untimely death of Carolyn Benne.

39. YELLOW RIVER FOREST (Center NE corner S8 T96N, R3W). Jan. 3: 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Temp. 0-5; wind: 5-25 mph from NNW. Clear, no snow cover, water partly open.

Observers (14) in 5 parties: Florence Albright, Francis Arness, Alan Branham, Garth Carlson, Julie Einspahr, Ruth Fretheim, Darwin Koenig (compiler), Pat and Paul Koenig, Marlene Michel, Arnold and Dolores Rohm, Joe Schaufenbuel, Warren Wicks.

Curve-billed Thrashers in Iowa

MICHAEL C. NEWLON
408 Wales Street
IOWA CITY, IOWA

From early November 1980 to the date of this writing (February 1981) a Curve-billed Thrasher (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) has come regularly to the feeder of Carl and Ruby Jean Berridge of Solon, Iowa. Thanks to their hospitality it has been seen by dozens of birders and excellent diagnostic photographs taken. This was the first documented record of the species for Iowa, although there was a previous sight record from Spirit Lake (Wallace, 1975).

The Solon Curve-billed Thrasher is generally similar to a Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) in size and build but is uniform grey above; the underparts are paler grey, with teardrop-shaped spots of darker grey on the breast, and the undertail coverts are washed with buff. There is a dark malar stripe. The heavy, strongly-decurved bill is dark grey, as are the legs. It has two faint pale wingbars, rather distinct breast spotting, and white spots in the corners of the tail; these are characteristics of birds found in the eastern portions of the species' range, from the Arizona-New Mexico border eastward. The iris color of the Solon Curve-billed Thrasher is deep yellow, however all field guides consulted state that iris color in this species ranges from pale orange to deep red. It is possible that the yellow iris indicates immaturity, as Brown Thrashers in their first fall have pale yellowish-grey irises that turn to bright yellow by the following spring. Bendire's Thrasher (*Toxostoma bendirei*), never recorded from Iowa, does have a yellow iris and is similar in plumage to the Curve-billed, but has a shorter, straight bill unlike the deeply decurved bill of the Solon bird. (The Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus*, which has occurred in Iowa, is smaller and shorter-tailed than the three species mentioned above, is dark brown above and heavily streaked below, and has two conspicuous white wingbars, white spots in the corners of the tail, and a short, rather thrush-like bill.)

A photograph of the Solon bird was sent to Gale Monson of Tucson, Arizona, co-author of *Birds of Arizona*. He concurs in its identification as a Curve-billed Thrasher and states that it is probably of the subspecies *celsum*, found from eastern Arizona to western Texas.

The Solon Curve-billed Thrasher came to the Berridges' feeder every 1-2 hours and ate steadily for about five minutes, then sat on the roof of the feeder for a short time before flying off. As the winter weather became colder, it began to shield its legs from the cold by squatting on its tarsi while it was at the feeder. When not feeding it spent most of its time in a nearby brushy creek bottom. When it first arrived at the Berridges it drove all other birds, even Blue Jays, away from the feeder, but as time went on it became more tolerant.

A second Iowa Curve-billed Thrasher was reported on January 28, 1981, by Charlotte Scott. This bird had been at the feeder of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Drumm, on the north shore of Lake Rathbun at the western edge of Honey Creek State Park, Appanoose County, since late September 1980. On January 31, Tom Kent, Tom Shires, and I, through the courtesy of the Drumms, were able to see and to photograph this bird. Compared to the Solon curve-bill, this bird had a much more orange iris, larger white patches in the tail, and fainter wingbars. Like the Solon bird it spent most of its time in a brushy creek bottom near a cleared area with several houses and large yards. It often roosted atop a bird feeder but was not observed to eat there, preferring to search the ground beneath the Drumms' grapevines for dried fallen fruit, to scratch in the leaves underneath shrubbery.

81-01

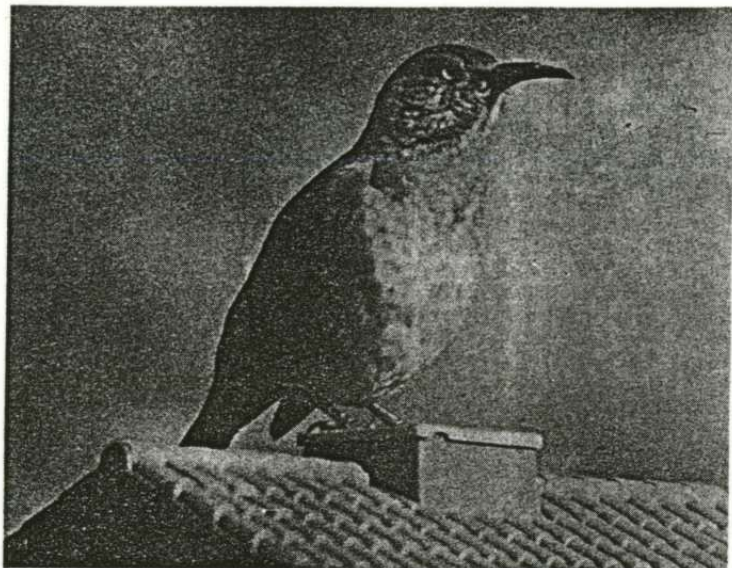


Figure 1. The Solon, Iowa, Curve-billed Thrasher

and to search the grass of their asparagus bed.

In an effort to place these Iowa records in context, Rick Hollis, Tom Kent, Pete Petersen, and I have researched the normal distribution of the Curve-billed Thrasher and made a search for records of vagrant individuals. The results are shown in Figure 2. The breeding range of the Curve-billed Thrasher in the U.S. extends from west-central Arizona to central Texas and the southern Texas coast, with an isolated population in extreme western Oklahoma. Within this range it occurs in cactus desert, mesquite, brushland, and suburban shrubbery. Its range is bounded by the low barren creosote-bush desert of western Arizona, the montane forests of northern Arizona and New Mexico, and the open grasslands of the high plains. It is non-migratory and perhaps because of this is an infrequent vagrant. Most have been recorded close to the boundaries of the normal range, in fall or winter. The Curve-billed Thrasher is a casual straggler to the lower Colorado valley and the Salton Sea, but is extremely rare in other areas of southern California, southern Nevada and Utah, northern Arizona and New Mexico, and east Texas. It has been recorded on the Gulf Coast as far east as the western tip of the Florida panhandle, with most of the records coming from Louisiana.

To the northeast of the normal range the situation is different. There the Curve-bill has a striking tendency to occur as a long-distance vagrant, in a broad triangle extending from eastern Colorado to Manitoba and Wisconsin. The sole east coast record, from New Hampshire, is in line with an extension of the southern border of this triangle. What is the source of these long-range vagrants? The most likely source is the Texas panhandle, western Oklahoma and Kansas, northeast New Mexico, and southeastern Colorado. Here the Curve-billed Thrasher is a

sparse or casual breeder. Many of the breeding records are recent and represent extension of the known breeding range, indicating that the species may be expanding, as was suggested by Sutton (in Johnsgard, 1979). Despite its apparent rarity as a breeder, in this area the curve-bill is a frequent winter visitor, often at feeders, and is recorded annually on some Christmas Counts. This may represent winter wandering in response to cold weather and a reduction in the food supply, as is shown by Cedar Waxwings and Robins in Iowa. If this is so then the breeding population of this part of the range may be larger than the small number of nesting records would suggest. Some of these vagrants may "overshoot" and end up in the northern midwest. A presently unanswered question is why these birds have such a strong tendency to move north rather than east: there are apparently no records from eastern Kansas, eastern Oklahoma, Arkansas, or Missouri. This absence is all the more puzzling in view of the general tendency of western vagrants to move east and south rather than north.

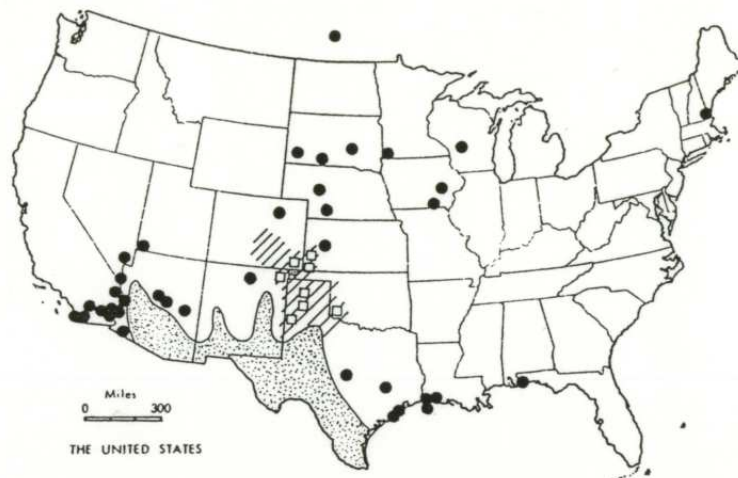


Figure 2. Range map and summary of vagrant records for the Curve-billed Thrasher. The breeding range is stippled, and the region of frequent winter records is hatched. Open squares indicate locations of casual or extra-limital breeding, and solid circles designate locations of vagrant birds. The breeding range is compiled from the A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds (1957), Oberholser and Kincaid (1974), Johnsgard (1979), Phillips, Marshall, and Monson (1964), Sutton (1967), and Ligon (1961). Records of vagrants are taken from the above references and in addition from McCaskie and Prather (1965), McCaskie, Stallcup, and De Benedictis (1967), Dawson (1923), Whitney et al. (1978), Bent (1948), Peterson (1980), Sprunt (1954), Lowery (1972), Bailey and Niedrach (1965), and a search of American Birds-Audubon Field Notes: all bold-faced records back to 1950 are included, as well as all records from 1972 to 1980, and Christmas Count records from 1977, 1978, and 1979. In addition state bird books and-or annotated check-lists for all states except Montana, Idaho, Nevada, and Mississippi were consulted.

Confirmation of the origin of the vagrants requires determination of the sub-specific identity of both the source population and the vagrants. The source population is assumed to be *celsum* since this is the subspecies breeding in the Oklahoma panhandle (Sutton, 1967). The Solon bird has been tentatively identified as *celsum*, as has a specimen collected in southeast Colorado (Bailey and Niedrach, 1965). No other vagrants have been identified as to subspecies except the sole specimen from Florida, which was *palmeri*, the race from western Arizona (Sprunt, 1954).

It is interesting to note that although the Curve-billed Thrasher is a bird of the southwestern desert, it shows considerable cold-hardiness. One survived three consecutive winters at a Buffalo City, Wisconsin, feeder, and another spent two winters at a feeder in South Dakota. This shows that lack of a regular food supply or the presence of competing species, rather than winter climate, must determine the northern boundary of the species' range.

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FIELD REPORTS

FALL 1980

Thomas H. Kent, Field Reports Editor
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, IA 52240

WEATHER AND HABITAT CONDITIONS

This fall was generally warm and dry. Except for a short-lived snow storm in October, the weather in late fall was mild and water areas remained open.

GENERAL TRENDS

The mild weather was associated with many late records including Common Loon, Lesser Golden Plover, House Wren, Gray Catbird, and several warblers. Waterfowl were notably late and dispersed throughout the season so that concentrations appeared to be down. Red-breasted Nuthatches heralded a widespread invasion of northern species. Increased numbers of Pine Siskins and Purple Finches were followed by many sightings of Snowy Owls, Evening Grosbeaks, Red Crossbills, and White-winged Crossbills. Only one Common Redpoll was noted. Hawks were reported in good numbers and there were several sightings of Red-shouldered Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Golden Eagles, Peregrine Falcon and Merlin.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

A Brant shot at DeSoto NWR may provide the first tangible evidence of this species in Iowa. There are a number of old records dating into the last century, but none provide sufficient evidence for placing Brant on the Official List of Iowa Birds. Perhaps the most exciting bird of the year was a Curve-billed Thrasher which took up residence at a feeder near Solon in Johnson Co. Casual species documented during the period included Ross' Goose, Black, Surf and White-winged Scoters, Prairie Falcon and Yellow Rail. Sandhill Crane was also reported. Two accidental species will be referred to the Records Committee for evaluation.

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

- Common Loon:** 1 on 28 Nov. at L. Macbride (RHo) was late.
- Eared Grebe:** There were 4 reports, the first a very early bird in winter plumage: 11 Aug. at Little Clear L. Pocahontas Co. (RC), 7 Sep. at Willow S. (BWi), 14 Sep. at Little Wall L. Hamilton Co. (HZ), and 25 Oct. at Lizard L. Pocahontas Co. (RC).
- Western Grebe:** 1 at Big Spirit Lake on 15, 21 Oct. (DH); 1 at Montezuma Poweshiek Co. on 22 Oct. (DK); 1 at DeSoto NWR on 2, 29 Oct., 2 Nov. (+JR, m.ob.). The 2 Oct. date (EK fide JD) is early.
- Pied-billed Grebe:** Barb Wilson monitored grebe populations at Willow S. Mills Co. throughout the fall. Two active nests were present in Aug. Pied-billed counts started with 31 on 2 Aug., peaked at 212 on 9 Sep. and dropped to 9 on 10 Nov. just before the ice drove them south.
- American White Pelican:** Large flocks on 9 Sep. were 570 in Ida Co. (DBi) and 200 at Hamburg (IG). Willow S. populations varied from 89 on the early date of 1 Sep. to 240 on 16-17 Sep. to 17 on 15 Oct. (BWi).
- Double-crested Cormorant:** Record early dates were 1 Sep. at Willow S. (BWi) and 3 Sep. at Coralville Res. (TK). A late date was 22 Nov. at DeSoto NWR (TB, m.ob.). Peak numbers were 51 at Willow S. (BWi), 50 at Red Rock Res. (GB), 25 at Coralville Res. (TK) and 22 at DeSoto NWR (HZ).
- Great Blue Heron:** There were 17 nests at Rathbun L. compared to 34 a year ago (CS). Peak numbers were 200 at Red Rock Res. in Sep. (GB) and 55 at Coralville Res. on 3 Sept. (TK).
- Little Blue Heron:** There were reports from Rathbun Res. (CS, BR fide JD), Cone M. (RHo, TK), Sweet M. (RMy, FM, TSJr), and Union S. (TSJr, TSt, RHa), all in Aug. except for 1 on 8 Sep. at Colyn WMA (BR fide JD).
- Cattle Egret:** Two reports: late Aug. at Colyn WMA (JC fide JD), 30-31 Aug. at Sweet M. (FM, TSJr, RMy).
- Great Egret:** Peak numbers were 60 at Red Rock Res. on 6 Sep. (RMy), 40 at Rathbun L. on 17 Aug. (CS) and 26 at Coralville Res. on 3 Sep. (TK).
- Snowy Egret:** Two reports: 22 Aug. at Waterloo (TSJr) and 30 Aug. at Sweet M. (+RMy, +FM, TSJr).

at Davenport from 6 Dec. to 14 Feb. (PP, TK), 6 at Waterloo on 1 Jan. (RMy), 1 at Shenandoah from 21 Dec. to Feb. (+RP, +MS), 1 at Seymour in Feb. (CSco), and 1 at Ames from 19 Jan. to 24 Feb. (HZ), and several in Iowa City in Jan. and Feb. (TSh, RHo fide TK).

Vesper Sparrow: Details were given for one seen near Cedar Falls on 14 Feb. (RMy, FM, RHa).

Harris' Sparrow: Wintering birds were noted in Story, Polk, Marion, Sioux and Fremont Cos. (m.ob.).

White-throated Sparrow: 6 wintered at Davenport (PP); 1 was singing at Waterloo on 27 Dec. (FM); 1 was at Iowa City on 13 Feb. (TSta).

Lincoln's Sparrow: 1 was at a feeder in Mills Co. from 28 Dec. to 24 Feb. (BWi).

Swamp Sparrow: 1 at Waterloo on 31 Jan. was considered unusual (FM).

Lapland Longspur: The only report was a flock of 400 near Sioux Center on 2 Jan. (JV).

Snow Bunting: Several flocks were seen in Dickinson Co. in early Feb. (DHa) and 1 was at Rathbun Res. on 31 Jan. (TK, TSh, MN).

+ — documented.

CONTRIBUTORS

Dick Bierman, Cherokee; Sam Blanchard, Council Bluffs; James Dinsmore, Ames; Douglas Harr, Larchwood; Dennis Henrickson, Estherville; Thomas Kent, Iowa City; Darwin Koenig, Montezuma; Carl Kurtz, St. Anthony; Rene Laubach, Des Moines; Francis L. Moore, Waterloo; Dean Mosman, Elkhart; Robert K. Myers, Waterloo; David A. Newhouse, Boone; Peter Petersen, Davenport; Ruth Phipps, Shenandoah; Conrad F. Schlemmer, Council Bluffs; Charlotte Scott, Seymour; Marie Spears, Shenandoah; Thomas Staudt, Iowa City; Robert Thornburg, Pleasantville; John Van Dyk, Sioux Center; Barbara Wilson, Hastings; Hank Zaletel, Ames.

OTHER OBSERVERS

Carl Bendorf (TK), Steve Dinsmore (JD), Russell Hays (FM, RMy), Rick Hollis (TK), Randy Johnson (JD), Mike Mecham (FM), Richard Mooney (HZ), Michael Newlon (TK), Richard Nuss (HZ), Margaret Oard (HZ), Chris Reed (PP), Ron Spengler (DH), Joe Schaufenbuel (FM), Thomas Shires (TK), Betty Walters (RP).

COMMENTS

According to my records, all except five of the 275 species listed on the IOU Field Checklist were seen in Iowa in 1980. Of these five, Mute Swan and Whimbrel are clearly not regular species. Carolina Wrens, which were greatly reduced over the last few years, were absent in 1980. They should gradually return as they have cycled in the past. Bewick's Wren has disappeared from the state over a much longer period of time. Does anyone know of any remaining strongholds? If so, let me know. The status of the rare and elusive Sharp-tailed Sparrow in Iowa is not known. Seventeen species not on the Field Checklist which were adequately documented in 1980 included Ross' Goose, Black Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, Prairie Falcon, Sandhill Crane, Yellow Rail, Glaucous Gull, Burrowing Owl, Say's Phoebe, Curve-billed Thrasher, Varied Thrush, Mountain Bluebird, Yellow-throated Warbler, Western Tanager, Pine Grosbeak, and Lark Bunting. Thus the Iowa list for 1980 is 287, four less than 1979. However, three additional species are still pending review by the records committee (Brant, Ferruginous Hawk, Hoary Redpoll). If I have missed any species, please report them to me along with appropriate documentation.

The quality of field reports continues to improve. In the next year I hope we can continue progress on reporting methods and species to concentrate on. We will discuss these issues at the spring meeting. Hope to see you there.

GENERAL NOTES

The Curve-billed Thrasher at Rathbun — In September a friend, Ginny (Mrs. Fred) Drumm, mentioned that she had a strange gray, long-tailed bird in her yard. Her home is on the north shore of Lake Rathbun — a 25-mile drive from Seymour. I suggested it might be a N. Mockingbird and told her to look for white wing patches. The next time I saw her she assured me it wasn't a N. Mockingbird — I suggested other possibilities such as Townsend's Solitaire. Then I was gone for a month and Christmas intervened before I saw the Drums again, but they still had the bird. Ginnie reported it was getting (?) mottling on its breast and had an amber-red eye. I asked her to check the length of its bill, and she called to say it was as long as the distance on through its head. She never did mention the decurved bill, but we were both sure by now that it was a Curve-billed Thrasher.

By this time I was making trips trying to see the bird, and finally on January 28, I had a very good look, and could confirm it. It came first to the Drum's asparagus bed where it worked in under the dead foliage seeming to use its long bill more than its feet. Then it flew to a perch nearby (it has never eaten at their feeder) and sat for some time so that I was able to observe that it is indeed gray, gray (absolutely no brown or taupe) with mottling of a darker gray on its breast. The eye is very red, and the bill not as curved as the bird books show. The belly is creamy-white with rich buffy coloring on the flanks. The white on the tips of the outside tail feathers is evident only when it flies and then only as a "hint". I feel this bird is a plumper bird than our Brown Thrasher, but it may be because he has his feathers fluffed more in our cold weather.

Other birders who were unable to see him in the Drum's yard and who went to brushy area toward the Lake always reported that they heard him before they saw him — his prodigious scratching seems to have paid off however, as he has survived two snowstorms with no help from anyone in what has to be alien habitat.

I think the bird book picture that looks the most like the Rathbun bird is the one in The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds. Charlotte Scott, Seymour.

OBITUARY

EARNEST W. STEFFEN

Earnest W. Steffen was a noted Iowa bird artist and a member of I.O.U. since 1940. He died at a nursing home in Maquoketa, Iowa, on January 5, 1981. Interment was in the Maquoketa cemetery. His wife, Grace, preceded him in death in April 1980. They had been married for 58 years. Earnest built the house in which they lived at 1000 Maplewood Drive N.E. in Cedar Rapids.

Earnest was born in Grundy County on January 31, 1891. His father went to town to buy a perambulator for him but came home with a copy of Ridgeway's Manual of North American Birds instead. At the age of 8 Earnest started drawing pictures of birds from descriptions given in that bird book. When he was 10 years old he started drawing them over on ruled tablet paper and coloring them with wax crayons. His interest in drawing birds continued through his college days at Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa, where his studies included Art. Upon graduation he taught school. He retired in 1956 after teaching physically and mentally retarded children for 22 years in Cedar Rapids.

During summer vacations and after retirement Earnest and Grace traveled extensively and visited nearly all of the national parks in the United States. They camped out which gave Earnest an opportunity to observe and sketch the birds in their natural habitat. He painted every species of bird that he ever saw — nearly 400.

81-01



Curve-billed Thrasher
Winter 1981 Rathbun L.
Bill Hensinkveld

P-0020

The Curve-billed Thrasher at Rathbun

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BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

81-16

1. Species Curve-billed Thrasher 2. Number 1
3. Location Rathbun Lake, Appanoose Co IA
4. Date: 31 Jan 1981 5. Time Bird Seen: 1⁴⁵ to 2¹⁵

6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):

A thrasher as large or larger than a brown thrasher. All gray, decurved dark bill, orange eye (not yellow like the bird seen earlier at Solon IA), white throat with two chin marks on each side - one lighter, very fine white wing bars (2), definite white outer tips to tail, scalloped light breast marks (gray on gray), lighter gray under belly and rump.

7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard

8. Description of behavior: We chased it in light wooded bushy areas then to 3 horses in neighborhood where it lit on perches and went in bushes and under porch.

9. Habitat - general: wooded bushy creek valley at edge of small open residential area
specific: Lake shore height near Honey Creek State Park, Rathbun Reservoir

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:

All of brown Thrashers, Sage Thrasher by size, markings and bill, Bendire's Thrasher by color, bill and eye color, also wing bars and tips on tail

11. Distance (how measured)?

25 ft at closest

12. Optical equipment:

8x40 Trinorids

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):

Cloudy gray

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:

Seen in Texas and at Solon IA this winter

15. Other observers:

Thomas Shires, Michael Nealon

Fred + Ginny Drumm
R22
Lake Shore Heights
Moravia IA 52571

16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Fred + Ginny Drumm have had the bird in their yard since ^{late} September 1980. Charlotte Scott

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

none

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 5 minutes

Signature: Thomas H Kent Address: 211 Richards St

Date: 1 Feb 1981 City, State: Iowa City IA 52240

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

81-1 c

1. Species Curve-billed Thrasher 2. Number 1

3. Location Drum feeder, n. shore of Lake Rathbun near Honey Creek St
(Appomattox Co)

4. Date: 1/31/81 5. Time Bird Seen: ~~1:45~~ 1:45 to 2:15 PM

6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):

general size + shape of brown thrasher but slightly larger and more heavily built. long, heavy, strongly-decurved bill. General color pale brownish grey, darker on wings + tail, paler on underparts. Gray, rather inconspicuous spotting on ~~the~~ breast. Conspicuous malar stripe, dull grey-black. Bill + legs dark grey-black. Eye bright yellow-orange. Very conspicuous white patch in outer corners of tail, longer than wide. Two faint wing bars. Buffy wash on lower belly + under-tail coverts.

In flight, wings rounded + rather short; Tail slightly fanned out.

7. Description of voice, if heard: —

8. Description of behavior: In dense brush in stream bottom. Disturbed, it climbed up in brush then flew first to a sapling-grown open area, then to a garden, finally to a house by another house.

9. Habitat - general: brushy stream valley near an open area of meadows, lawns, shrubbery

specific: (see 8)

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain: grey color, indistinct breast spotting rule out all other thrashers but Bendires, which is eliminated by bill shape. large size + bill structure rule out any thrush.

11. Distance (how measured)?
20-100' est.

12. Optical equipment: 8x40 binocs.

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
dull grey day, few shadows.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
have seen C-bills in TX, AZ, and IAC.; have also seen all of the streaked thrashers + thrushes in N. Am.

15. Other observers:
T. Shinn + T. Kent

16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: —

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
None

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? notes made immediately after sighting. Transcribed 3/10

Signature: Michael Newton Address: 408 Wales St

Date: 3/10/81 City, State: Sever, VA 22290