

Curve-billed Thrasher Record Number: 80-21
17 Nov 1980 Classification: A-P
west of Solon, Johnson Co., IA
*Newlon, *Kent, *Petersen, *Myers, *Moore
*Schaufenbuel; P-0168, Newlon 1981, IBL 51:25,28,33;52:41

DOCUMENTATIONS

Michael C. Newlon
Thomas H. Kent
Peter C. Petersen
Joe Schaufenbuel
Robert K. Myers
Francis L. Moore

PHOTOGRAPH

Michael Newlon, P-0168 (IBL 51:22)

REFERENCES

Newlon, M.C. 1981. Curve-billed Thrashers in Iowa. IBL 51:21-24.
Field Reports: IBL 51:25, 28, 33
Photograph: IBL 51:22, P-0168; Am. Birds 35:190, 1981, P-0168
Records Committee: IBL 52:41

VOTE: 5 I-P, 2 abstain

- I, Wish they all had this much information.
- I, see photo.
- I, Ex. photo. Mine is fair -- greater distance.
- I, Eye color abnormal, but everything else seems good. Could abnormal metabolism lead to disorientation as well as abnormal eye color?

represented Ohio's first definite record and perhaps the first for the Great Lakes area.

CUCKOOS THROUGH WOODPECKERS—There were good numbers of Yellow-billed Cuckoos this fall; a nest with eggs was still being incubated near L. Waveland, Ind., Aug. 31 (ABr). Black-billed Cuckoos were rather scarce; lingering individuals were detected at Chicago (JL), Spfld. (H) and in LaGrange County, Ind. (Haw) Oct. 11, 4 and 2, respectively. Ohio's third **Groove-billed Ani** was found at Columbus Aug. 10 (†J). A Barn Owl was present in Ashland County, O., Sept. 29 (JP). What may prove to be the greatest-ever invasion of Snowy Owls first arrived during the last part of November; at least 12 were reported from Illinois by the end of the period; the earliest were: Nov. 2 at Rockford, Nov. 4 at Sterling and Nov. 8 at Ottawa; one appeared in s. Illinois at Union Co. Cons. Area Nov. 19; the species was reported from 7 Iowa locations (first Oct. 14), 2 Missouri locations (*Nov. 13) and numerous Ohio locations (earliest Nov. 9) including seven along L. Erie, Nov. 26 (WS). The Illinois/Indiana Burrowing Owl remained on location until Sept. 24 (m.ob.); another was observed in Cass County, Mo., Sept. 22 (†JJe). Only a few Long-eared and Short-eared owls were reported, with not more than two or three birds at any one location. Very few Saw-whet Owls were detected, even by banders; one was heard at Chesterton, Ind., Aug. 19 (KB) and another located at Michigan City Oct. 4 (KB *et al.*).

A Whip-poor-will was calling in Tippecanoe County, Ind., until Sept. 21 (DA) and another at Athens, Ill., through Sept. 18 (K); a few individuals were sighted later. The largest concentrations of Com. Nighthawks were: 1000+ at Waukegan Aug. 20 (JN); 500 at Columbus Sept. 9 (BSI); daily flights of up to 150 at Chicago Aug. 26–Sept. 2 (PC, RGo); and 140 at Cherokee, Ia., Aug. 28 (DB). A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was reported from Ledges S.P., Ia., Nov. 20 (DN); at this late date, observers should consider the possibility of other species; *e.g.*, a possible Rufous Hummingbird was reported from Beverly Shores, Ind., Sept. 21 (†PG) and Oct. 15 (†RGr). The 160 Com. Flickers at Chicago Sept. 10 (JL) were noteworthy. Many Ohio observers indicated increasing numbers of Red-bellied Woodpeckers. There were mixed reports about Red-headed Woodpeckers; it appeared that many would spend the winter months in areas where they are not usually encountered. Observers opined that Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were not so plentiful.

KINGBIRDS AND SWALLOWS—Except for 4 small-to-moderate flocks reported (12–28 birds Aug. 14–Sept. 5), the E. Kingbird migration was rather poor. Extra-limital occurrences of W. Kingbirds included singles at Chicago Aug. 21 (†RGo) and in Warren County, Ind., Aug. 28–Sept. 6 (†KB, m.ob.). The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Washington County, Mo., Sept. 2 (DJ) was considered unusual there. An E. Phoebe at Rockford, Ill., Nov. 9 (LJ) was the latest date ever there. The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Spfld., Nov. 13 (†H) was exceptional. Olive-sided Flycat-



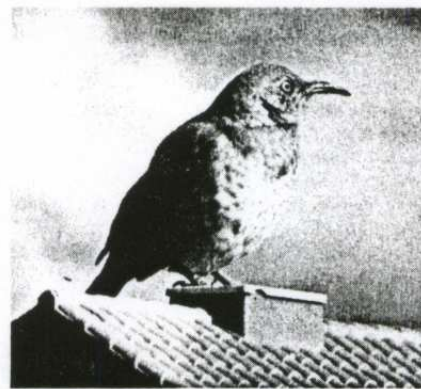
Burrowing Owl, Hammond, Ind., Aug. 24, 1980. Photo/ Tim C. Keller.

chers passed through the Region in relatively good numbers Aug. 9–Sept. 20 (m.ob.). Large concentrations of Tree Swallows were: 3000 at St. Joseph, Mo., Sept. 29 (L); 2000 at M.T.N.W.R., Oct. 4 (BR); 1500 at Spfld., Oct. 4–5 (H); 1000 at St. Louis, Sept. 15 (PS); 1000 at Swan Lake N.W.R., Oct. 12 (BGo); and 400+ at Pulaski County, Ky., Sept. 4–5 (JE1). There were 2000 Bank Swallows at M.T.N.W.R., Sept. 23 (HW) and 6000 Rough-winged Swallows at St. Joseph, Mo., Sept. 21 (L); the latter species was found to be quite scarce in many areas. Concentrations of Cliff Swallows were: 800 at Clinton, Ill., Aug. 2 (RCh); 600 at Cherokee, Ia., Aug. 20 (DB); and 100 Aug. 17 at both Spfld. (H) and Columbus (J); five were still present at I.B.S.P., Sept. 21 (JN). The 10,000 Purple Martins at Waukegan, Aug. 24 (JN, TC) was an annual occurrence; smaller numbers were building up around Chicago earlier in August (m.ob.); there were no large concentrations reported elsewhere.

CROWS THROUGH WRENS—Two Fish Crows were heard and seen in Madison County, Ill., Sept. 1 (PS). Tufted Titmouse seems to be increasing in several areas—most notably in Indiana. The Red-breasted Nuthatch invasion began in mid-August and was widespread by late August–early September; observers reported one to eight birds at most locations. The Brown Creepers at Louisville Aug. 23 and in both Summit and Delaware cos., O., during August were probably summer residents since the migration was not detected until later. The Winter Wren population experienced a slight recovery, as did Carolina Wren populations.

MIMIDS THROUGH SHRIKES—Mockingbird populations made modest gains in the s. and c. portions of the Region, but remained scarce in the n. The **Curve-billed Thrasher** at Solon, Ia., Nov. 17–30+ (RBe, m.ob., ph.) constituted the second record for the state. Hermit Thrushes were less common than typical and there were mixed reports about Swainson's Thrush; 200 of the latter species at Chicago, Sept. 2 (JL) was exceptional, not typical; one was still present at Spfld., Oct. 26 (H). There was a paucity of Gray-cheeked Thrushes and a near-normal movement of Veeries. There may have been a slight recovery of E. Bluebirds; 253 at Cherokee, Ia., Oct. 3 (DB) was exceptional; 150 were reported from Red Rock Ref., Ia.,

(*vide* GB); 70 were noted in Summit County, O., Oct. 11 (WS) and 30 immatures were banded at Rockford during the period (LJ). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at S.C.R., Nov. 12 (L) was rather late. Observers believed that Golden-crowned Kinglet demonstrated a remarkable recovery; birds arrived *en masse* at Chicago Sept. 17 (PC, RGo); 84 were observed at Cleveland Oct. 7 (M); and 100+ were found along Indiana's lake shore Oct. 4 (KB *et al.*). The Ruby-crowned Kinglet population was nearly back to normal. Poor numbers of Water Pipits were encountered; the only exceptions were flocks of 100 in Seneca County, O., Oct. 24 (TBa) and at Spfld., Oct. 25 & 28 (H). There were good numbers of Cedar Waxwings. Three N. Shrikes were reported: singles at Waterloo, Ia., Oct. 18 (TS); Cherokee, Oct. 19 (†MB); and in Allen County, Ind., Nov. 28 (Haw). The two Ohio reports of Loggerhead Shrikes were both near Columbus Oct. 20–Nov. 2; another was found at Chicago Sept. 28 (JL).



Curve-billed Thrasher, Solon, Iowa, Nov. 18, 1980. Photo/ Michael Newton.

VIREOS AND WARBLERS—The Nov. 9 presence of a White-eyed Vireo at M.M.W.A., was unexpected (JP); another at Franklin, Ind., Oct. 18 (BGi) was also noteworthy. Solitary Vireos were apparently rather scarce. Comments relative to the warbler movement included: "poor fall," "way down," "scarce," and "unimpressive"; moderate waves were detected at Chicago Aug. 18 and at Kentucky Lakes Sept. 28 (JEr). A Worm-eating Warbler was banded at Spfld., Aug. 28 (K). There was a moderate movement of Golden-winged Warblers and an above-normal flight of Blue-winged. Brewster's Warblers were "reported" from Summit County, O., Aug. 12 (DPe) and Ft. Wright, Ky., Sept. 23 (EG). A Tennessee Warbler had appeared in Winneshiek County, Ia., by Aug. 9 (JSc) and one lingered at Savannah, Ill., through Nov. 1 (BSh). A N. Parula was banded at Spfld., Nov. 4 (K). Fifty Magnolia Warblers were present at one Chicago area Sept. 2 (JL); one was still there Nov. 3 (PC, RGo). Thirty Cape May Warblers were reported from Chicago Sept. 1 (JL). The Sept. 11 presence of a Cerulean Warbler at Fox I., Ind. (Haw) was exceptional there. September 20 was rather late for a Yellow-throated Warbler at Spfld. (H). The **Sutton's Warbler** of Indiana fame was last observed Aug. 10 (*vide* DA). There were good numbers of Bay-breasted Warblers especially around Chicago; one was detected at

piller), 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, Wapsipinicon 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 life 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 Branahagen, 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,

80-21

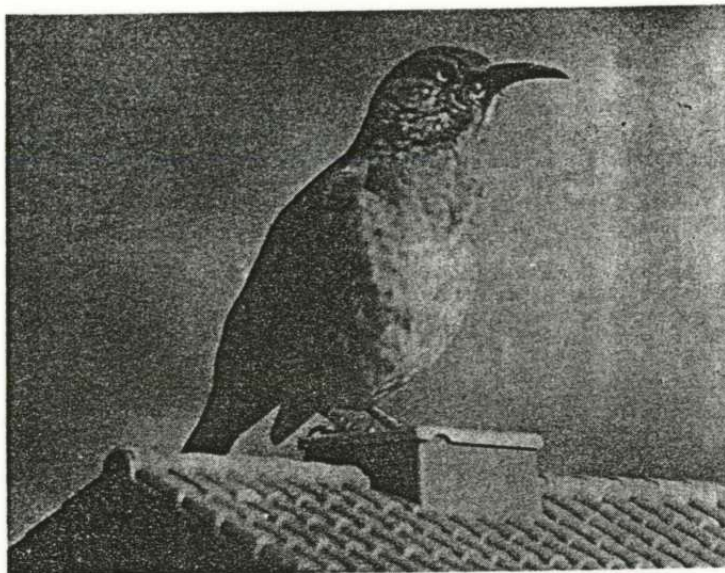


Figure 1. The Solon, Iowa, Curve-billed Thrasher

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.

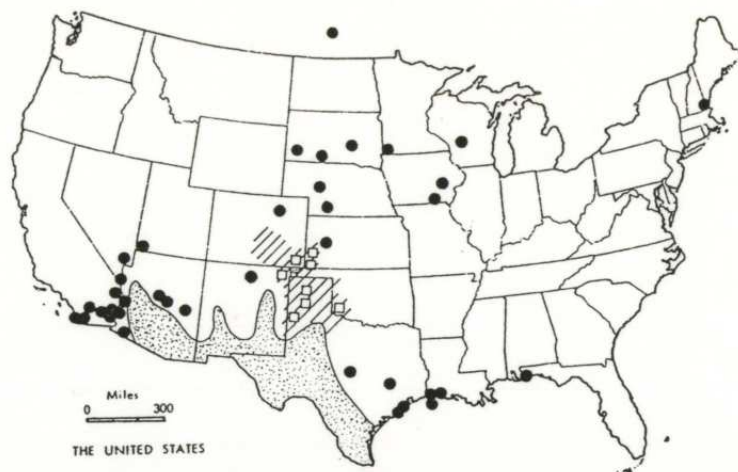


Figure 2. Range map and summary of vagrant records for the Curve-billed Thrasher. The breeding range is stippled, and the region of frequent winter records is hatched. Open squares indicate locations of casual or extra-limital breeding, and solid circles designate locations of vagrant birds. The breeding 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 subspecific 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.

Literature Cited

- A.O.U. (1957). *Check-list of North American Birds*. Lord Baltimore Press, Baltimore.
- Bailey, A. M. and Niedrach, R. J. (1965). *Birds of Colorado*. Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver.
- Bent, A. C. (1948). *Life Histories of Northern American Nuthatches, Wrens, Thrashers, and Their Allies*. Bull. U.S. National Museum, Vol. 195.
- Dawson, W. L. (1923). *Birds of California*. South Moulton Company, San Diego.
- Johnsgard, P. A. (1979). *Birds of the Great Plains*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.
- Ligon, J. S. (1961). *New Mexico Birds*. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Lowery, G. H. (1974). *Louisiana Birds*. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge.
- McCaskie, G. and Prather, R. R. (1965). *Condor* 67:443-444.
- McCaskie, G., Stallcup, R., and De Benedictis, P. (1967). *Condor* 69:311-312.
- Oberholser, H. C. and Kincaid, E. B. (1974). *The Bird Life of Texas*. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Peterson, R. T. (1980). *A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Phillips, A. M., Marshall, J., and Monson, G. M. (1964). *Birds of Arizona*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.
- Sprunt, A. (1954). *Florida Bird Life*. Coward-McCann-National Audubon Society, New York.
- Sutton, G. M. (1967). *Oklahoma Birds*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.
- Wallace, L. (1975). *Iowa Bird Life* 45:96.
- Whitney, N. R., et al. (1978). *The Birds of South Dakota*. South Dakota Ornithological Union, Vermillion.

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).

80-21

11 March 1981

Mike Newlon
Iowa City Ia

Dear Mike,

The Records Committee of the IOU accepted your record of Curve-billed Thrasher at Solon Iowa first seen in 18 Nov 1980 as a record with tangible evidence by 5 votes for and 2 abstaining because they were involved in the record.

Comments were as follows:

"Wish they all had this much information."

"Ex. photo"

"Eye color abnormal, but everything else seems good. Could abnormal metabolism lead to disorientation as well as abnormal eye color?"

Thank you for sharing this record and the outstanding photographs with the committee.

Sincerely,

Tom Kent
Secretary, Records Committee

1. Species Curve-billed Thrasher (Toxostoma curvirostre) 2. Number 1

3. Location Solon, IA

4. Date: 11-17-80 5. Time Bird Seen: 10:50 AM to 10:55 AM
(Hide Tom Kent)

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):

Bird about 11" long, build similar to brown thrasher: plump elongate body, long tail ~~feathers~~ ^{square-tipped with rounded corners}. Bill long, markedly decurved; eye bright yellow. Bill and legs dark. Plumage dull brownish-grey, darker on upperparts and paler on breast + belly. Irregular grey spotting on chest. Trace of white at corners of tail. Two faint pale wingbars.

[Added later, from memory: spots on chest of wide tear-drop shape: 

eye color not typical, according to Peterson, Field Guide to W. Birds and Munson and Phillips, Birds of Arizona.

7. Description of voice, if heard: —

8. Description of behavior: eating at bird feeder, perching atop feeder.

9. Habitat - general: mixed cropland/timber/houses.

specific: yard with small trees; adjacent to brushy creek bottom.

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:
The two often grey, speckle-breasted thrashers, Bendire's and sage, have smaller, less decurved bills; Sage has much stronger ventral marking and wing-bars, is smaller.

11. Distance (how measured)?
15' - 45' (est.)

12. Optical equipment: 8x40 binoculars, 750mm telephoto

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
Bright sunny day; bird at a 90° angle to line connecting observer and sun.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
Have seen many curve-billed thrashers (AZ, TX); have seen Bendire's once (AZ), Sage once (CO).

15. Other observers: Tom Kent

16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
Mrs. Bewidge identified it but doubted her judgement and called me; TK and I confirmed it.

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
Robbins + Zim - Birds of N. Am. - did not affect it; consulted after notes taken.
Munson + Phillips: Birds of Arizona ~~illustrations~~: wing bars, tail spots, strong spotting suggest us of the eastern sub-species (T. c. curvirostre: e. AZ, s. N.M., e. TX, n. I. c. oberholzeri: South TX).

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 10 hrs. This account transcribed from notes made immediately after the observation.

Signature: Mitchell C. Newton Address: 408 Wakes St.

Date: ~~11-17-80~~ 11-17-80 City, State: Iowa City IA 52240

1. Species Curved-billed Thrasher 2. Number 1
3. Location 1 mi west of Solon IA
4. Date: 18 Nov 1980 5. Time Bird Seen: 10⁵⁰ to 10⁵⁵

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):

Size of Brown Thrasher. All gray with white throat and crissum.
Long decurved bill - all dark almost black. Bright yellow eye. Faint face patch. Tips of greater wing coverts and outer lesser coverts with thin (<1mm) fringe of lighter gray forming a very thin indistinct wing bar. Bright white edge to tip of outer tail feathers - 5mm.
Breast light gray irregular spots on lighter gray-white background. Gray breast spots same shade as back. Legs dark brown-black.

7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard

8. Description of behavior: Rapidly eating sunflower seeds at feeder, then sat on top of feeder for about 2 minutes.

9. Habitat - general: At feeder in yard of rural trailer home situated near a small creek with lots of cover.

specific:

Home of Ruby + Carl Beveridge RR3 Box 371 Solon IA 52333

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

Brown Thrasher and Long-billed Thrasher are rusty
Bendire's Thrasher has short straight bill.

11. Distance (how measured)?

20 ft (near focus of binoculars)

12. Optical equipment:

8x40 Leitz Thorold

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

Sunny - light to side

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

Seen in Texas and Arizona

15. Other observers:

Michael Kendra - Took photos

16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Thomas Shires

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

Robin before seeing bird and after writing description.

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

5 minutes. Copied verbatim to form 7 hours later

Signature: Thomas H Kent Address: 211 Richards St

Date: 18 Nov 1980 City, State: Iowa City, IA 52240

Curve-billed Thrasher - 1 - about 1 mi. W. Solon,
Ia. 11-19-80 - seen at 11:38 am. For 2-3 min.

Came to feeder, scaring other birds. Fed 1-2 min,
perched on roof a minute & departed.

Seen from about 70', photographed with 500 mm. lens,
color, slide film.

Ad. by - thrasher size & shape, color generally gray, a bit
darker on wings & tail, lighter below, some spotting on breast,
bill longer than Brown Thrasher, more curved, eye pale yellow.
Bird was silent.

Only similar bird Brown Thrasher which would be
rufous on back, wings & tail and be heavily spotted
below with a shorter, less curved bill.

Robbins guide consulted prior to sighting.

Light from side, bright, sunny day.

Peter C. Petersen 11-19-80 12:15 PM

12-13/80
80-21

EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT
RECORD DOCUMENTATION

Species: Curve-billed Thrasher (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) Date: November 22, 1980
Time: 10:00 to 10:10 A.M. Location: Nine-tenths of a mile west of Solon, Johnson County, Iowa Distance: Fifty-five feet Light: Slight overcast during time of observation. Otherwise good light conditions, with the direction of the sun off to the right as the bird was viewed somewhat to the left. Previous experience: None Other observers: I watched the bird along with Bob Myers, Russel Hays, and Francis Moore. Observers previous to our visit include: Tom Kent, Mike Newlon, and Mr. and Mrs. Berringer. All agreed that the identification was correct.

Description: In size the bird appeared to be slightly larger than a Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufus*), having somewhat the same body proportions as this bird also. It, however, had a much longer and much more strongly decurved bill. Its general shape being a long-billed, slender bird with a tail length nearly that of the body. Bill color appeared to be a dull brownish-gray. Eye color was an orange-yellow. The overall color of the bird was a gray being much lighter on the underparts. On the breast and upper belly there occurred some small and indistinct oval-shaped markings, washed with an indistinct grayish buff that extended onto the belly. The throat and undertail area also was washed with same color but to a lesser extent. The tail color was the same uniform grayish that colored the upperparts. On the outside tail feathers, near their tip, there was what appeared to be a small white spot, or spots, that could have been coloration or due to feather wear.

Behavior: As we waited for the bird in a nearby shed it swooped in low from the south with a strong, but low-level, flight and swept upwards to land on the feeder scattering the small flock of House Sparrows that was feeding on the sunflower seeds. The Thrasher then fed on, apparently, hulled sunflower seeds for about ten minutes. Its style of feeding was reminiscent of a Blue Jay, where it would pick a seed and quickly swallow it whole. After feeding it turned and rested briefly before flying back in the direction from which it had come, into a wooded ravine.

Similar species: The bird vaguely reminded me of a Gray Catbird and more so a Brown Thrasher, however body coloration, eye color, and bill-shape were very different from these species. Other thrashers of the Southwest according to the field guides (Peterson's, Robbins', and Pough's) have yellow eyes, have or lack completely heavy breast streaks, or are very brown in color.

JOE SCHAUFENEHEL ST. LUCAS, IOWA 52166 NOVEMBER 23, 1980

Joe Schaufenehel

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

80-21

MYERS

1. Species Curve-billed Thrasher 2. Number 1
 3. Location .9 mi. west of Solon, Iowa
 4. Date: Nov 22, 1980 5. Time Bird Seen: 10:10 AM to 10:15 AM
 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):
 1. Size - seemed a little larger than brown thrasher
 2. Shape - very "thrasher" like - long tail
 3. Color - plain dark gray above - no conspicuous wing bars - ^{or spots} light gray breast, throat + cheek with darker markings (checks) not streaks or stripes on breast.
 4. Bill was dark and very large and very ~~hooked~~ ^{curved} - much bigger than brown thrasher
 5. Eye was orangish and really stood out in the sunlight
 7. Description of voice, if heard: —
 8. Description of behavior: Bird flew in low (like brown thrasher) and swooped up to feeder. It ate sunflower seeds for a few minutes then perched on top feeder before leaving.
 9. Habitat - general: Basically Iowa farm land with wooded areas following streams.
specific: The feeder sits on top a hill overlooking a quite protected area covered with shrubs, deciduous trees and red cedars. A small stream runs thru the wooded area.
 10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:
Brown thrasher is "brown" not gray and has a very streaked breast - bill is not as curved
Mockingbird shows much white on wings. - Long-billed thrasher is more rufous and streaked on breast.
 11. Distance (how measured)? 75 ft. - general agreement of observers
 12. Optical equipment: B&L 7x35's
 13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
Sun was to our right + behind - beautiful day - excellent visibility
 14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
This was my first curve-billed.
 15. Other observers: At this exact time - 1 Joe Schoufenbuel
2. Francis Moore
3. Russ Hays
 16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes
 17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Many have seen the bird.
From our area 1. Tom Stone + 2. Tom Stone Jr.
 18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description
1. Birds of North America - Robbins 4. Audubon Guide Birds North America (West) - Udvardy
2. Field Guide to Western Birds - Peterson
3. " " " Birds of Texas - " All agreed with my description
 19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 2 days
- Signature: Robert F. Myers Address: 1236 Sylvia Ave
Date: 11-24-80 City, State: Waterloo, Iowa 50701

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

80-21

MOORE

1. Species Curve-billed Thrasher 2. Number 1
 3. Location Berridge Residence; .9 mile West of Solon
 4. Date: November 22, 1980 5. Time Bird Seen: approx. 10:15 for about 3 minutes. to _____
 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): Size and shape that of Brown Thrasher. Color was an almost-even gray on back, wings, and tail. Top of head was gray with white throat gray streaking on the breast. Tail was very long and dark gray, darker than the gray color of the back. Wing bars were not evident. Bill was long and decurved for a thrasher in Iowa. Eye was an orange color (or yellowish orange). Bill was black.
 7. Description of voice, if heard: None heard
 8. Description of behavior: flew in to feeder where it picked at seeds and ate a few, acted very dominant over feeder, most actions were thrasher-like.
 9. Habitat - general: Feeder
specific: flew from small wooded ravine (with small creek) to feeder at above residence. the type of habitat that a Curve-billed Thrasher might be found in in its native area.
 10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain: Gray Catbird has a black cap and black eye. Brown Thrasher is rufous brown and not gray.
 11. Distance (how measured)? approx. 75' (eye)
 12. Optical equipment: 7x35mm Bausch + Lomb rect prism binoculars, Nikkomat FTN w/400mm lens
 13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Sun was shining full on bird - which was North of my position. Sun was behind my back and as I faced the bird.
 14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: No previous experience with this species.
 15. Other observers: Bob Myers, Joe Schaufenbuel, Russell Hays
 16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes
 17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Tom Stone, Tommy Stone, Tom Kent, others.
 18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: Birds of North America, Robbins; Just used to help verify description as seen and noted.
 19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 8 Hours.
- Signature: Janice L. Moore Address: 264 Western Ave.
- Date: November 22, 1980 City, State: Waterloo, IA 50701