Middlewestern Prairie Region
(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

still seen 2/17/78

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTAION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Varied Thrush 2. Number: 1

3. Location Laglin Addition - Long Grove Iowa

4. Date: Approx 1-2-78 5. Time Bird seen: 2:00 to 2:15 (Approx.)

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):
Robin size and shape. Brown back with random specks of dull orange. Dull orange breast with dark breast band. Dull orange lines over the eyes. I did not see feet and do not recall color of beak.

7. Description of voice, if heard:
Not heard

8. Description of behavior:
Feeding under dead leaves

9. Habitat - general:
specific: undetermined (his yard - grass + scattered oaks)

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Similar to thrushes but with dark breast band and lines over eyes.

11. Distance (how measured)? 15 to 20 feet - estimated 12. Optical equipment: None

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
Bird in shade. Sun to right of line of vision.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
None with this species. Thrushes common in this area

15. Other observers:
JoAnn Ferleman and Marge Hansen at various times

16. Did the others agree with your identification?
Yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
Marge Hansen - She saw the bird daily at her feeder from between Christmas + New Years to Feb 1, 78 P.F.

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
Audubon Field Guide - Western Region.
Specmin in MacBride Museum in Iowa City

Paul Ferleman
Signature

Address: Box 166

Date: 2-18-78 City, State: Long Grove Ia 52756

(over)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, there really is no need to describe your observations in writing. But, if you have seen something unusual and want to share this experience with others, a written description is essential. It is true your immediate friends who know and respect your ability probably will accept your report without question, but what about those who do not know you, particularly the bird students 100 years from now who cannot know you? Also, what about the habitual skeptics? And most importantly, what about the compilers of regional bird lists who probably will insist that records be scientifically sound? All these critics will investigate your observation not because they assume you are wrong, but merely because they ordinarily expect verification. Whether the individual demanding verification realizes it or not, in doing so, he is employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

If your observation involves a common species during a season of abundance, verification is achieved simply by returning there again in season. If, however, the observation involves a rare species, or a common species out of season, verification is not obtained easily and special documentation is necessary. The best documentation is a collected specimen, and many bird students insist this is the only acceptable evidence. However, others recognize the importance and reliability of sight records accumulated by the experienced field observer, and maintain that even extraordinary sight records are acceptable if accompanied by an adequate verifying description.

It must be emphasized that a request for documentation is not an affront, but an effort to perpetuate a record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for all to examine. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation irrespective of the observer.

It should also be pointed out that with the great photographic equipment now available, species identification from photographs are possible. Such species documentation are highly desirable and should be sent to the state editors or to large museums.