

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

1. Species Hermit Thrush 2. Number 1*
3. Location 1/4 mile south of US Rte 6, 1 mi. west of Tiffen, Johnson Co., Iowa.
4. Date: 16 December 1978 5. Time Bird Seen: 0830 to 0835

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): The bird was seen at close range and was obviously a small, brown thrush, with whitish underparts interrupted by brown spotting on the upper breast. An inconspicuous whitish eye ring was seen. The tail was reddish-brown and contrasted with the olive-brown rump and back of the bird. No reddish-brown color could be discerned in the crown. The tail was pumped many times during the 5 minutes we watched the bird and its upper surface was covered with many small white spots, presumably a dusting of snow. The folded wing was brown and showed reddish-brown coloration in the primaries. Beak and feet coloration were not specifically noted.

*Another Hermit Thrush was seen in Hickory Hill Park in Iowa City, Johnson Co., on 17 December by the same observer.

7. Description of voice, if heard: No sounds were heard.
The bird hid motionless at base of dense bush
8. Description of behavior: for several minutes. Tail pumping was finally observed as the bird became active and moved from the cover.
9. Habitat - general: Small forested area on hilly terrain with some under-bush. Woods cut by county road and interspersed with a few houses.
specific: Bushes growing at bottom of ditch alongside county road. Several of bushes contained berries that the bird was eating.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:
Other small brown thrushes do not have reddish-brown tail contrasting with brown back. Tail-pumping and white eye ring also unique to Hermit Thrush.
11. Distance (how measured)? 10 yards(guess-estimate)
12. Optical equipment: 8 x 30 binoculars
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
Bright overcast sky at time of observation. Had the sun been out it would have been to the observer's back.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes commonly observed in 3 years of birding ~~in~~ California. These plus Gray-checked, Wood and Veery commonly observed in migration through Iowa for 3 years.
15. Other observers:
James Huntington, an experienced birder from Boulder, Colo., although new to Iowa City. Mike and Arline Lewis-Beck, beginning birders.
16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes.
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: James Huntington.
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
Nothing was consulted as these thrushes are commonly seen as they pass through the Iowa City area.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? Notes taken as bird was observed. Sentences written on 17 December.

Signature: Richard DeCoster Address: 3166 N. Hudson, Apt. 2

Date: 26 Dec. 1978 City, State: Chicago, Ill. 60657