

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
613 Howard Road, West Chester, PA 19380

2 March 2003

Mark McConaughy
378K Logans Ferry Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15239-3910

Dear Mark,

Thank you for submitting documentation of the Bicknell's Thrush on 23 October 2001 at Bushy Run Historic Park. After careful review, the Committee has voted not to accept this record.

As you know, the Committee's present policy is not to accept Bicknell's without a recording of the vocalization or in-hand measurements of the primaries. I requested that you send your description because it is quite interesting and should be archived for future reference.

Because of the standard policy, all seven members voted against acceptance. Four placed it in Class IV-B, "a record for which there exists insufficient evidence for evaluation" (the lack of vocalization or primary measurements). Three put it in Class IV-A as "a record for which there exists a majority of evidence in support of the observer's identification; the record is probably correct, but not beyond reasonable doubt."

One member commented, "I think this is very convincing, and that the bird in question was in fact a Bicknell's. The direct comparison of the primary extension vs. Gray-cheek is especially supportive of the ID. However, without a description of the voice I can't be certain that an especially small *minimus* was not involved."

Another member remarked of the primary extension's difference from Gray-cheeked, "I do not know whether this is an unvarying character in the field; i.e., would molt of primaries or tertials affect this or Gray-cheeked appearance? I think this needs a lot more field and photographic study."

Sincerely,



For the Committee:
Paul Hess, Chair

Record No. 654a-01-2001

654-01-2001

BICKNELL'S THRUSH

Nick,

Consider this copy of my post my formal submission to PORC re the Bicknell's Thrush at Bushy Run Historic Park.

It was a very interesting day at Bushy Run Historic Park. I would have thought it was getting late for migrating thrushes, but I was pleasantly surprised by the number and variety of non-robin and non-Wood Thrushes I saw during my lunchtime walk around the park. In fact, it was the best thrush day I've had at the site if you exclude those two species which breed in the park during the spring/summer. One of the thrushes was really intriguing and I believe it was a Bicknell's Thrush (a description of this bird follows the list). In all, there were 7 non-robin and Wood Thrushes seen today, 5 of which stood on branches long enough for me to get good looks at them for identification (see list below). Some other good birds also put in appearances today including at some Pine Siskins that appeared at the thistle feeder throughout the day.

The bird in question was part of a mixed flock of American Robins, 1 Gray-cheeked Thrush that was seen first as it popped up on a branch, then I saw three other non-robin thrushes also pop up on other limbs including the bird in question. I put my binocs on the first of the other three thrushes and it turned out to be this bird. I quickly noticed it was something different from what I was used to seeing and stayed with it as long as it posed for me (estimated about 1.5 minutes). The Gray-cheeked was on a branch about 4 m to the left of the Bicknell's. The other two non-robin thrushes flew off before I ever got a chance to check them out. These birds were seen about 200 meters south of PA 993 on the south side of the park just off the west side of the trail that goes south from the main park gate on PA 993.

*Bicknell's Thrush

I know that Bicknell's are notoriously difficult to identify in the field without it singing. However, I do think this bird was a Bicknell's, although I won't be able to prove it to the satisfaction of PORC. I had no camera with me, etc., to document the bird. All I can offer is the following description. I am putting it down as a Bicknell's since I got a good look at this bird along with a nearby Gray-cheeked Thrush which provided size and plumage comparisons. This bird was definitely smaller than the nearby Gray-cheeked Thrush. It had an olive-gray top of the head and back, but the lower back, primaries and tail had a reddish-brown tinge to them (it was overcast and in the woods, so lighting was not a factor in seeing color). It was a warmer lower back and tail than that of the Gray-cheeked Thrush. Also, the bird did not cock the tail or wag it up and down like a Hermit Thrush does, and it wasn't as fully a ruffous tail or hind end as that of a Hermit Thrush. The eye-ring was incomplete (i.e., broken in the front, definitely no buffy spectacles) and the cheek was a rather plain olive-brown. The black spots were confined to the upper breast, were not as large as those or as distinctive as ones on the Gray-cheeked Thrush (or as large and bold as those on Hermit Thrushes). There was a light buff wash to the throat and upper breast. The flank under the wing was a smudgy gray and contrasted with the primaries of the wing. The belly was basically white with few light gray spots extending beyond the upper breast. The primary wing extension was not as long as that of the Gray-cheeked Thrush that was nearby and provided a good comparison.

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BICKNELL'S THRUSH

Thus, this bird differed from the Gray-cheeked Thrush in terms of general size, primary extension, color of the primaries, lower back and tail, and size and conspicuousness of the spots on the breast. It differed from that of a Hermit Thrush in that it had a less rufous tail and back, lack of tail flicking, and smaller and less conspicuous spots on the breast. It differed from a Swainson's Thrush in that it lack a noticeable buffy eye-ring and spectacles and less pronounced spotting on the breast. It clearly was not a Wood Thrush which has a much more rufous head and back and much more extensive and pronounced spotting on its breast. Similarly, it is not a Veery which also has a more rufous head and back and even more indistinct spots that that of this bird. My conclusion was this bird was a Bicknell's Thrush.

Mark A. McConaughy

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*)

Date of Sighting: 23 October 2001 to 23 October 2001

Location: BUSHY RUN HISTORIC PARK

County: WESTMORELAND

Observer(s): Mark McConaughy

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Mark McConaughy

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

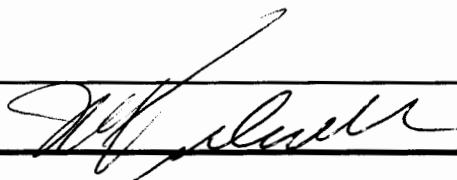
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead					X			
D. Heath D. Couchman					X			
P. Hess					X			
J. Stanley				X				
B. Reid					X			
B. Leberman				X				
M. Sharp				X				
TOTALS				3	4			
DECISION					X			

Comments: 0/7

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 6/30/02