

654A-02-2001

UNUSUAL SIGHTING DOCUMENTATION

Person Submitting: August & Judy Mirabella
1443 Wheaton Lane
North Wales, PA 19454
215-368-0594
augustmirabella@aol.com

Species: Bicknell's Thrush

Observers: Found by A. Mirabella, J. Mirabella, Devich Farbotnik, seen later by Gerard DeWaghe, Arlene Koch, Dave DeReamus, etc.

Date Seen: 5/13/01

Where Observed: Core Creek County Park, Bucks Co.

Conditions: Clear, Sunny. Bird was in woods with filtered light
Seen with Zeiss 7X42 Bins & Leica APO77 Scope at close range.
10 to 40 feet

Description: At approximately 6:00 pm, while waiting for DF to return from looking at a Red-necked Phalarope nearby, we heard a call near by that we knew was interesting. When DF returned, we all approached the call and found a Gray-cheeked type thrush. As we watched we noticed the tail was obviously reddish brown compared to the olive gray brown back, but not as red as Hermit Thrush. Having seen a Gray-cheeked the day before at very close range, I also felt the bird looked smaller. The face appeared to blend in more with the head and back rather than being darker gray. There was no eye-ring but, depending on the light, the area around the eye looked paler gray. The lower bill was one-half to two thirds yellow; the upper was dark. It had whitish throat with dark lateral throat stripes. The breast had the dark spots and the belly and undertail coverts were whitish. During an hour or more of observation, there was no frequent tail wagging as in Hermit Thrush.

We knew that the reddish tail indicated possible Bicknell's so we retreated to the car to study and listen to calls. Upon returning we played the call notes and song of Bicknell's and repeatedly got agitated responses to both. The response to the song was often started only maybe one-fifth into the tape song so the songs were on top of each other. A couple of times they were basically in sink. The tape and bird sounded identical to all three of us. The call notes also sounded identical to the tape.

Other Documentation: Video by D. Farbotnik to be sent directly to N. Pulcinella

Feb. 12, 2003

Nick Pulcinella
Secretary
Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee
613 Howard Road
West Chester, PA 19380

Dear Nick,

I have reviewed the May 13, 2001 report of Bicknell's Thrush from Core Creek Co. Park, Bucks Co., PA. I concur with the identification as Bicknell's Thrush. Visually, the bird looks good for Bicknell's, particularly the bird's structure and overall color. However, from the visual clues evident in the video, I found it difficult to rule out Gray-cheeked Thrush with certainty. Fortunately, several flight calls audible on the video tape are diagnostic of Bicknell's. The pertinent ID points are as follows:

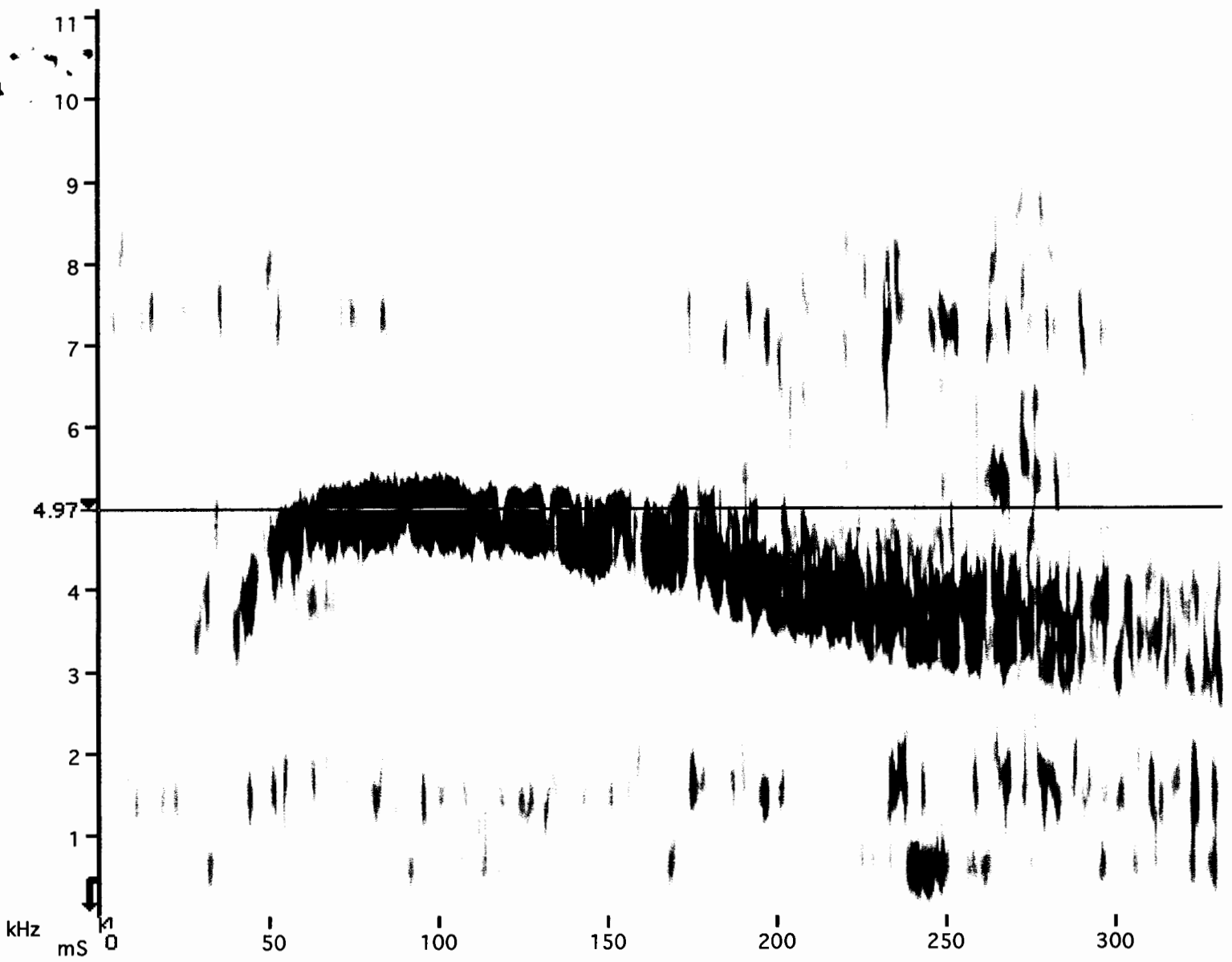
- 1) Structure: Generally chunky appearance with round-headed, pot-bellied look recalling Hermit Thrush. This is somewhat equivocal but a strong point in favor of Bicknell's.
- 2) Primary projection: The primary projection looks to me to be about equal in length to the tertials. This is on the long end for Bicknell's and in the overlap zone with Gray-cheeked so no conclusions can be drawn from that.
- 3) Overall color: Generally brown (rather than grayish) appearance though I cannot make out the more reddish tail described by the observers. Color is much harder to judge with confidence from video than in the field so this point is only marginally in favor of Bicknell's.
- 4) Face pattern: Equivocal. No obvious gray streaking is apparent on the cheeks though there are clearly some fine pale (brownish?) streaks. Again, the color of these streaks would have been easier to judge in the field.
- 5) Bill color: Some frames (especially those when the bird is sunlit) show an obvious, bright yellow base to the bill. This is typical of Bicknell's but does not rule out Gray-cheeked.
- 6) Voice: A variety of call types are audible on the video tape including two nice series of flight calls (6:43:29-35 and 6:44:14-39). During the first set of flight calls, the the bird is not visible at all so I was not able to determine whether it was the real bird or a tape recording I was hearing. During the second set of flight calls, the bird is visibly calling during the last call, thus confirming that it was not a tape. I made spectrograms of the latter calls and they showed diagnostic characters of Bicknell's. Specifically, the highest-frequency component of the main band is at about 5 kHz. Furthermore, the high point in the call occurs near the beginning of the call, giving the call a descending quality. This pattern is typical for Bicknell's Thrush. In contrast, on Gray-cheeked Thrush flight calls, the highest-frequency part of the band occurs at about 4 kHz with a peak usually near the middle of the call (giving it an "arched" sound). Attached below is a spectrogram of one of the flight calls from the Core Creek bird.

I hope my comments were helpful.

Sincerely,



Michael O'Brien
152 Stevens Street
West Cape May, NJ 08204



Flight call from Bicknell's Thrush

Core Creek Co. Park, PA

May 13, 2001

6:44 PM

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Bicknell's Thrush (Catharus bicknelli)

Date of Sighting: 13 May 2001 to 13 May 2001

Location: CORE CREEK COUNTY PARK

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): August Mirabella, Devich Farbotnik, Dave DeReamus

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: August Mirabella, Devich Farbotnik

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: Video

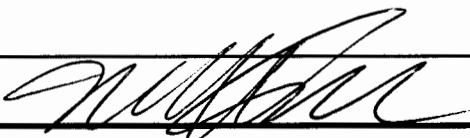
Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead					X			
D. Gouchman <i>Heathcoat</i>				X				
P. Hess	X							
J. Stanley			X					
B. Reid				X				
R. Leberman				X				
M. Sharp								X
TOTALS	1		1	3	1			1
DECISION								

Comments:

*outside of range
2/4/11*

Accepted for record

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

5/10/02

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round Two

Species: Bicknell's Thrush (Catharus bicknelli)

Date of Sighting: 13 May 2001 to 13 May 2001

Location: CORE CREEK COUNTY PARK

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): August Mirabella, Devich Farbotnik, Dave DeReamus

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: August Mirabella, Devich Farbotnik

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

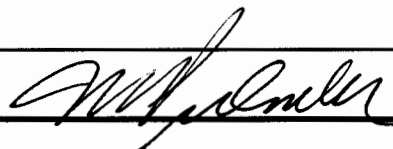
Recording: Video

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead	X							
D. Heathcote	X							
P. Hess	X							
J. Stanley	X							
E. Witmer	X							
R. Leberman	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments:

7/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 1/9/04