



666-03-1994

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) in Lebanon County

by Jonathan Heller

On the afternoon of 8 January 1994, I received a phone call from a very excited Randy Miller. He informed me that at 11:52 A.M. he had discovered a male Varied Thrush while hiking in SGL 145 just west of Mount Gretna. Needless to say, his excitement was contagious and before long I was standing where a Varied Thrush had been only a few hours earlier. I noticed that the area was surrounded by a patch of very heavy undergrowth. Crab apple trees were also sprinkled throughout the area, and this combination provided an excellent source of food and shelter. That evening, we found a few robins and the seasons' first redpolls; but no thrush.

The next day dawned very cold and sunny, and I arrived at the state game lands around 9:00 A.M. I was pleasantly surprised as well as a little bit envious to discover that many people had already obtained excellent views of the thrush in the crab apple orchard. Fortunately, I did not need to expend much patience. Less than a minute after I arrived, I heard soft *chook* from some nearby bushes. Although the call seemed louder than the call of the Hermit Thrush, I probably would have been passed off as that species unless a Varied Thrush had not rocketed from those same bushes. In flight, the double orange wing bars were the most diagnostic field marks. However, the orange underparts and the orange eyebrow were all readily apparent.

About an hour after my first sighting, the thrush made a more prolonged appearance; and almost everyone present obtained excellent views of the bird, both perched and in flight. After studying the thrush from approximately 50 Meters, I concluding that it was a female. I based my decision on three factors. First, the bird exhibited a near total absence of any breast band. Not only did the bird lack a noticeable breast band, but its orange underparts were washed out and quite faded, especially on the lower breast and belly. Finally, the back was brown rather than gray. Although, this mark was not as obvious as the others, it was still readily apparent. All of these marks are indicative of a female. This leads to the obvious question, "Were two birds present?"

Based on Randy's description the day before, I think that ample evidence is available to support the presence of both a male and a female. The previous day, Randy had described the Varied Thrush to me. He listed the heavy black breast band, bright orange underparts, orange wing bars, eyebrow stripe, and gray back as the distinguishing field marks. Both times as I searched for the thrush I noticed flocks of robins passing in and out of the area. If two different birds were present, it is conceivable that they each associated with a different flock of robins. That would explain the sighting of a male on 8 January, and the sighting of a female on 9 January. Although we may never know for certain, I feel that the evidence lends strong support to this conclusion.

## RARE SPECIES REPORT

666-03-1994

SPECIES: Varied Thrush (female)		NUMBER SEEN: 1
SIGHTING DATE: 9 Jan 1994		SIGHTING TIME: 8:25/9:04/9:25/10:15 and 11:15
LOCATION:	COUNTY & STATE: Leb. Ca DISTANCE & DIRECTION FROM NEAREST TOWN: From Pinch Rd & Rt. 117 in Mt. Gretna go 1.3 miles north on 117 to S.G.L. 145. Parking lot on left. Go 75 yards up Hicks Rd to small orchard. DIRECTIONS, IF APPLICABLE:	
HABITAT: small apple orchard surrounded by apx 5 acres of Russian Olive and multiflora rose. Apx. 5" of snow on the ground.		
SIGHTING CONDITIONS:	LIGHTING: Cloudy DISTANCE: 30 ft to 75 yards EQUIP. USED: 10x50 swifts LENGTH OF SIGHTING: total apx 15 min.	
DESCRIPTION:	VOICE: Loud "chuck" was heard, similar to Hermit Thrush SIZE: apx 9-10" PLUMAGE: Orange Supercilium, throat, breast, and two wing bars. Dull brown across entire back and tail. Light incomplete breast band ANATOMY (bill length, leg color, etc.): Bill appeared all dark BEHAVIOR: This bird was mostly with apx 20 Am. Robins. This bird was a little wary and not easy to approach.	
FAMILIARITY WITH THIS & SIMILAR SPECIES: I have seen Varied Thrush in Glacier N.P. in Montana and also in Alaska.		
COMPARISON TO SIMILAR SPECIES: Am. Robin lacks orange supercilium and wing bars. They also lack a breast band.		
HAS A PHOTOGRAPH BEEN TAKEN? Yes IF SO, BY WHO? Randy C. Miller		
Have any additional observers filled out a rare species report? If so, who?		
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS (Use back of form for more space): apx 17 observers This bird (or the male) stayed in the area until 11 Jan. 1994.		
SIGHTING & REPORT BY: Randy C. Miller		
ADDRESS: 607 Woodland Dr. Manheim Pa 17545		PHONE # (717) 664-3778
SIGNATURE Randy C. Miller		DATE: 9 Jan. 1994

# Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

## Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*)

Date of Sighting: 9 January 1994 to 9 January 1994

Location: SGL 145

County: LEBANON

Observer(s): Randy Miller; Jonathan Heller

Date of Submission: 1994

Submitted by: Randy Miller; Jonathan Heller

Written Description: YES Photo: YES Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas		X						
N. Pulcinella		X						
E. Kwater		X						
R. Ickes		X						
G. McWilliams		X						
P. Schwalbe		<del>X</del>	X					
J. Skinner		X						
TOTALS		6	1					
DECISION		X						

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*F. C. Haas*

Date:

*9-25-94*