



Documentation for the PORC

Species: Varied Thrush

Name: Cameron Rutt

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Phone Number: 215-767-0298 (cell)

Date Submitted: 18 January 2010

Other Observers: At the time of discovery, August Mirabella, Barb McGlaughlin and her husband, Bob Friederman, and one other. In the aftermath of the initial sighting, this bird proved very difficult to refind and was seen by only a select few during its documented stay.

Location: Peace Valley Park, Bucks County. If parked at the nature center (along N Chapman Road), off New Galena Road, head SE down Chapman Road towards the bridge. After passing the cable that is slung across the road, Habitat Trail cuts off to the left, through a small grove of cedars. Essentially, all known sightings of this bird were along the first stretch of the Habitat Trail. At no point was this bird seen coming into a feeder.

Date and Length of time observed: 22 December 2009 at approximately 10:05 AM. Total time of observation was for only a couple minutes. Later that day, it was refound (and photographed; see attached) by Devich Farbotnik at 12:25 PM, and seen again by August Mirabella and company at 2:15 PM. The only other observations of this elusive bird, at least that I'm aware of, were on the morning of 23 December and, I believe, lastly on 25 December. The end date, however, should be verified.

Optics: Seen both through my Swarovski 8.5 by 42 EL binoculars and two scopes that were available, including a Leica APO-Televid 77. Unfortunately, the bird was not particularly close, approximately 40 meters at best, but the aid of scopes allowed for some plumage details to become evident, which otherwise would have remained obscured.

Habitat and Behavior: When found, the bird was observed in a series of deciduous trees along the lake's edge, where the north branch of the Neshaminy Creek empties into the lake. Following the major snowstorm that dumped heavy volumes of precipitation in the region, there was little open ground available, so a patch of exposed, wet forest floor in the leaf litter seemed to be attracting some attention. I first noted the Varied Thrush in an adjacent oak, possibly after foraging in the aforementioned microhabitat. (Later, the bird would be seen immediately in the proximity of a small, trickling stream, which had not completely frozen over). Although numbers of American Robins were in the area, the bird appeared to be somewhat of a loner on the 22nd, not obviously taking part in any sort of flock. Between the wild grapes, winterberry, blackhaw viburnum, and plentiful cedars, there was a fair amount of fruit in the vicinity.

Weather: Catalogued weather data from Doylestown, PA, at approximately 10:00 AM: 33° F, great visibility, and clear, with winds out of the WNW at 10 mph.

Description (see attached field notes recorded two hours after discovery, 22 December):

Just below eye-level in a distant oak, I was able to get on a thrush-like bird the size and shape of an American Robin. The most salient features were the color and patterning of the face. A dark gray/black mask extended from the bill back through the eye, widening thereafter, this against an orange supercilium that flared posteriorly and a pale orange throat. Unfortunately, I was never able to obtain satisfactory views of the bird's underparts, aside from the throat, thus I not able to assess the presence/strength of the bird's breastband.

Second to the contrasty orange facial features, the intricate wing markings were quite distinctive. While the bird was primarily facing away (or once, nearly concealed completely) during scope views, I was able to make out some of these intricacies, excepting the lesser and median coverts (see simple sketch for clarification, if necessary). These included: orange-tipped (same tones as face/throat) tertials, a fairly solid patch of orange at the base of the secondaries, a diagonal orange bar across the bases of the primaries, and orange tips to the greater coverts, creating a lower wing-bar. When the bird flew from its original perch, a pale wing stripe (bases of the flight feathers, probably the primaries chiefly) was evident.

Overall, the upperparts were a dingy gray (back, rump, and uppertail coverts) with a darker base coloration to the wing and tail feathers, minus the regions of orange. To my eye, the bill appeared long and dagger-like, with a thicker base. Finally, at one point I was able to note bright, colorful orangey legs and/or feet, as I scoped the bird when it took off from a perch, a distinctive color among North American thrushes, I believe.

Though I initially described this bird as female-type, it could be a HY male. Basically, my views (and Devich's photo) can only eliminate adult males, due to the eye patch (which did not look solidly black) and upperparts coloration (not deep bluish gray). In fact, the fairly extensive pale belly coloration visible in Devich's photo could be indicative of a HY bird (?). But if Peter Pyle couldn't make heads or tails of its age/sex from the photograph, than I won't even bother.

Similar Species:

American Robin – Only paler, more orangey female-type birds could provide problems, if just for a moment. The distinctive face pattern (especially the dark mask), intricate wing patterns (particularly the orange coloration in the primaries, secondaries, and tertials), and orange legs and/or feet eliminate this species from contention.

Redwing – While Sibley mentions that Varied Thrush “can be confused only with American Robin,” I think Redwing is worth mentioning due to its dark cheek and light supercilium. The similarities stop there, however, as Redwings have no orange

coloration (especially in the eyebrow, throat, and the wing), only a rusty smudge on the upper flanks.

Attached:

Photograph – taken 22 December 2009 by Devich Farbotnik

Field Notes – taken 22 December 2009 by Cameron Rutt

PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

This form is presented as a convenience and guide. It can be used if desired, but is not necessary for submitting a report. Species requiring documentation are those on the Review List or not on the Official List of Birds of Pennsylvania.

Send documentation to:

Nick Pulcinella, Secretary

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

613 Howard Ave.

West Chester, PA 19380

nickpulcinella@verizon.net

SPECIES (common and scientific name): Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius*

Subspecies (if known) _____

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS One **SEX(ES)**: Probably a female

AGE(S) AND PLUMAGE(S) (e.g. immature; adult in breeding plumage; year for gulls; basic or alternate if you prefer those terms; state of molt if applicable): Probably a first year bird

DATE OF OBSERVATION: 12/22/2009 **TIME:** Approx. 10 AM (poor views for less than 5 minutes), and 2PM (great views at close range for over 5 minutes).

LOCATION (city, borough, township) New Britain Twp.

EXACT SITE (e.g. name of park, lake, road): Peace Valley Park Nature Center

Name: August Mirabella

Address: 1443 Wheaton Lane

City: North Wales **State** PA **ZIP** 19454

e-mail (optional): augustmirabella@aol.com **phone (optional)** 215-368-0594

OTHER OBSERVERS (only those who saw and identified the bird with you): First spotted and ID'd by Cameron Rutt. Others with us never got a good look. At 2 PM, Richard & Vicky Smith were with me and saw it well.

HABITAT (e.g. mowed field, woodland edge, any other details): Edge of thicket with small/medium sized trees at edge of beginning of lake at Peace Valley.

DISTANCE TO BIRD: At 10 AM about 100 feet. At 2 PM, about 25 to 50 feet as it moved to three different tree tops nearby.

VIEWING CONDITIONS (sky, weather, position of sun relative to you): Clear with sun at right and later behind

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED: Zeiss 7 X 42

DESCRIPTION (Include as much detail as you observed – size relative to other species present; "jizz"= e.g. posture, body shape, and proportions; colors and patterns of plumage; bill, eye, and leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual): The bird was basically American Robin shape and size. The pattern and colors were subdued compared to an adult male Varied Thrush. The fact that the belly and lower flanks lacked orange may indicate a first year bird based on description I read on BNA Online. The supercilium was orange as was the throat and upper breast below the well defined dark gray band separating the throat from the breast. The dark gray/black stripe through the face separated the supercilium from the throat. The cap and dark areas of the upper parts were a dull gray or brownish gray. There were two orange wing bars on the upper wing coverts but also other orange patches on the lower wing.

NOTE: The photo submitted with this shows much brighter bolder colors than what it appeared to be in reality.

BEHAVIOR (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing): I only saw the bird sitting in trees. It flew to three different trees at the 2 PM sighting and sat for a minute or two at each perch.

VOCALIZATIONS: I heard a single whistle note at least three times when it was close by in the trees.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE IF ANY:

Photograph: Yes **Video recording** _____ **Audio recording** _____ **Drawing** _____

Photographer/recorder/illustrator:

Name: Devich Farbotnik

Address: Box 135

City: Revere **State:** PA

ZIP: 18953

e-mail (optional) _____ **phone (optional)** _____

Please include a copy of the photograph or recording with your report, and accompany it with a complete written documentation if the identification is obvious to you. If you made a drawing, please include it.

IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD:

General condition _____

If collected (by permit), location and number of specimen if known _____

SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES (how you eliminated others): Can't think of anything else that shows these distinctive features.

August Mirabella 2/5/10 10:27 PM

Deleted:

August Mirabella 2/5/10 10:31 PM

Deleted:

DISCUSSION – Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it

(Please use an additional page if necessary)

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES: Have seen before.

ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION ? (why or why not): Yes, got excellent views at close range over several minutes and no features that would suggest any other vagrant were noted.

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

During observation: None

After observation: Sibley Guide, BNA Online, and VIREO

DATE OF THIS REPORT: 2/5/2010

SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER: August Mirabella

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Varied Thrush Ixoreus naevius

Date of Sighting: 22 December 2009 to 25 December 2009

County : BUCKS

Location : PEACE VALLEY PARK

Observer(s): Cameron Rutt et al.

Date of Submission: 2009

Submitted by: Cameron Rutt, Devich Farbotnik

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
R. Wiltraut	X							
A. Guarente	X							
T. Johnson	X							
B. Coulter	X							
C. Rutt	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary) Nick Pulcinella

Date: 7/10/10