

A WOOD THRUSH IN SOUTHERN SASKATCHEWAN

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Late in the afternoon of 21 September 1979, I was hiking to a large shelterbelt about 1 mi. southeast of Colgate, 18 mi. south of Weyburn, Saskatchewan, to learn whether a pair of Great Horned Owls were still present. As I entered the shelterbelt a bird flew up from the ground, about 8 feet from me. Call it the birder's "sixth sense", but something about that bird caught my attention. It had a russet, almost orangish head, in some ways reminiscent of the head of an immature Pine Grosbeak.

I was able to observe it for 10 minutes from distances of 1 to 10 feet. My notes indicated: an almost reddish head; whitish breast with round dark spots; black eye with white ring; pink legs; partial orange/yellow lower bill; it was approximately 6.5"; uniform brown, almost olive in complexion, except head.

The bird was neither afraid of my presence nor inclined to fly. It either stayed on the ground, among the fallen leaves, or on low twigs.

Obviously it was a thrush, obviously unusual and, suspecting it could be a Wood Thrush, I went home to check several bird guides. Returning at 1745, as dusk deepened, I obtained several photographs, unfortunately taken without flash (these photographs did not turn out).

The bird was still present 6 days later when I located it within 30 feet of its original location. In the better light of day, grey cheeks were visible, along with the earlier-noted field marks. Again I was able to approach within 10 feet, making me believe I was dealing with an ill or disorientated bird.

All guides indicated a Wood Thrush. There are previous records for Saskatoon, Regina and Biggar.¹ Finding the bird during a migratory period north and west of its anticipated range should be unexpected. However, it is interesting to note that the 2 previous days, 19 and 20 September, were marked by cool, overcast weather with light rain, the result of a low pressure front in Montana on the 19th which moved northeast into Saskatchewan on the 20th. Possibly this front, catching the thrush in the midst of its migration, may account for its appearance in southern Saskatchewan.

¹BELCHER, M. 1980. Birds of Regina. Special Publ. No. 12, Sask. Nat. Hist. Soc.

99th ANNUAL A.O.U. MEETING

99th Annual Meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union, 24-27 August, University of Alberta, Edmonton. Symposia, a workshop, plenary, paper, poster, and film sessions, and post-conference field trips are planned. For information write D. A. Boag, Dept. of Zoology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada T6G 2E9 (403-432-3633).