

Townsend's Solitaire Winters Near Waukegan

On 25 Nov. 1995, I ventured into Lyons Woods Forest Preserve at the edge of Waukegan in Lake County. This woodlot was formerly an evergreen nursery; grown spruces and pines offered prime habitat for winter finches. Where the main path first splits, I found myself surrounded by evergreens and decided to play a tape of a scolding wren to elicit a crossbill response.

Within moments, a thrush-like bird flew up to the top of a tall spruce facing me. Since I had seen a Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) in Rockford days before (see Meadowlark 5:62), I knew immediately what I was looking at. The upright posture, slim build, dark long tail with white outer tail feathers, conspicuous eye ring, and overall gray color verified the identification.

A westward movement of solitaires may have occurred in November 1995 as additional records were reported from Rockford and the Indiana Dunes State Park. The

three records were separated by only about 100 miles. Westerly winds prevailed in the weeks prior to my find.

The Lyons Woods bird fed on the plentiful berries of the arbor vitae and fruit bushes. Interestingly, the bird sang several times. It survived numerous severe cold snaps. The bird was last seen 21 Jan. 1996.

Since the first Illinois occurrence of Townsend's Solitaire 120 years ago (Ford 1956), there have been 16 state records: 12 from the northern sector, 9 from the northeast, 4 from the Morton Arboretum, and 2 from Lake County.

The two fall/winter 1995/1996 records are the first in Illinois since 1986. Mlodinow (1984) lists six records for northeastern Illinois. Corrections and additions to this list are 26 Dec. 1959 through February 1960 at Morton Arboretum (Illinois Audubon Bulletin 113:15), 19-22 Nov. 1977 at Chicago's Olive Park near Navy Pier (American Birds 32:214), 22 Oct. 1985 at Chicago's North Avenue Beach (American Birds 40:122) and 5 Jan. 1985 at Morton Arboretum (Morton Arboretum 1985 bird list).

Literature Cited

Ford, E. 1956. Birds of the Chicago region. Chicago Academy of Sciences special publication.

Mlodinow, S. 1984. Chicago area birds. Chicago Review Press. Chicago, IL.

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Varied Thrush Visits McHenry County

The weekend before Thanksgiving 1995, Sandra and Tom Hall discovered a beautiful robin-like bird they later identified as a Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) visiting their feeder in Crystal Lake, McHenry County. A good friend of theirs, Nancy Williamson called Gill Moreland of The Nature Conservancy who confirmed it was a Varied Thrush. Moreland, along with Williamson, Kevin Butler, and Peggy Duffy also recorded the bird on 16 Dec. 1995 during the McHenry County Christmas Bird Count. They arrived at about 2 p.m., and an hour later, saw the Varied Thrush. The Halls told them the bird was typically seen about 3 p.m. each day.



Townsend's Solitaire, 25 Nov. 1995. Lyons Woods, Lake Co.
Photo by David B. Johnson.