

land Bent, in his classic series on the life histories of North American birds, notes (p. 143) that neither Alexander Wilson nor John James Audubon—the two most venerated founders of American ornithology—was familiar with this bird's song. Bent himself grew up in central Illinois but never knew the song until he moved to Maine. However, Bent also includes (p. 159) accounts of Hermit Thrushes singing in winter, especially on arrival at, and just before departure from, their wintering grounds in the pine forests of central Alabama and on the "peninsula of Missouri." He continues,

"Many other observers have had similar experiences, of hearing the full song of the hermit in their winter haunts..." and he bluntly adds, "...this bird does not sing during its migration journey."

The Jones and Donovan fascicle on this species in the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences series on North American birds notes (p. 9), "Generally does not sing on wintering grounds, though exceptions exist (Bent 1949, Stupka 1963, Potter et al. 1980, W. Gram pers. comm.)," and "...rarely sings during migration (Todd 1940, Bent 1949)." The datedness of the references is striking in this recent, comprehensive overview of the species. A Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology Web page on Hermit Thrush remarks that the song is "...heard rarely in winter and not at all during migration..."

Within Illinois, there are few published records of Hermit Thrushes singing at any time of year. Ridgway's founding monograph on Illinois birds back in 1889 includes a second-hand description of the song (from Dr. Thomas M. Brewer of Boston), and I don't suppose Ridgway—who was, as he put it (p. 3) "autoptically familiar only with the bird-fauna of the southeastern portion of the State"—knew the



*Hermit Thrush, Severson Dells Forest Preserve, Rockford, Winnebago County. 15 October 2005. Photo by Mary Kay Rubey.*

song in life. A century later, Bohlen's monograph notes only that the Hermit Thrush "rarely sings its beautiful flutelike song in Illinois." Robinson's (1996) study of southern Illinois birds remarks, under spring data, that "Sometimes, on cool, clear mornings, Hermit Thrushes will sing, but it is uncommon."

In their thorough monograph on the thrushes of Illinois, Graber, Graber and Kirk remark (p. 18), "We have never heard a hermit thrush sing in Illinois, though they do sing occasionally in the northern region of the state (Farwell 1919, and Craigmile 1945)." Farwell's encounter was in Lake Forest (Lake County) on 17 Apr 1912, when he was awakened at 5 a.m. by a song that "could not have been anything but the Hermit at so early a date." He adds, "I have not heard of its singing during migration in this locality before, neither had Mr. B. T. Gault, of Glen Ellyn, to whom I wrote." The Craigmile reference is to an Illinois Audubon Bulletin mention of a Hermit Thrush singing at Thatcher Woods in Cook County on 15 Apr 1944: "The rarest treat of the morning was the flute-like song of the hermit thrush on Edgewood lawns. He gave two encores. It seldom sings in migration..." These two citations are, in fact, the only

previously published concrete records, including date and site, of singing Hermit Thrushes that I've found for anywhere in the state.

In Jackson Park, Chicago, where I've done most of my birding, and where Hermit Thrushes attain some of their highest published numbers for anywhere in Illinois during migration, I have only one previous record of a singing Hermit Thrush. This was an individual that I saw issuing complete songs at full volume on Wooded Island on 11 Apr 1995.

On 15 Dec 2005, I posted a solicitation for further information on this topic to the ILbirds Web site, and in March of 2006 I sent direct inquiries to several key, long-term Illinois birders. The feedback I received increased the number of concrete records from four to 25, along with several undated records, but only increased the number of birders with datable records from three to eight. Fifteen of the 25 concrete records are from a single observer in a single county; viz., H. David Bohlen in Sangamon County. Two additional modern observers provided undated recollections of hearing Hermit Thrushes sing in Illinois, and I assume that Robinson's remarks above reflect, at least in part, personal experience.

The six available fall dates are all somewhat to very late (11 Nov - 14 Dec) in the season for apparent migrants and are consistent with the claim that Hermit Thrushes are prone to sing on arrival at their wintering grounds. In addition, Dale E. Birkenholz (pers. comm.) noted hearing Hermit Thrushes on several occasions over the years while deer-hunting in southern Pope County in mid-November; the songs were issued in early evening under warm, clear weather.

The nineteen spring dates (15 Mar - 22 Apr, averaging 9 Apr) are clustered prior to peak passages of spring migrants. In most cases it is