

Bicknell's Thrush

Catharus bicknelli

STATUS

Threatened 

Endangered 

37



© DAN BUSBY

Species Description

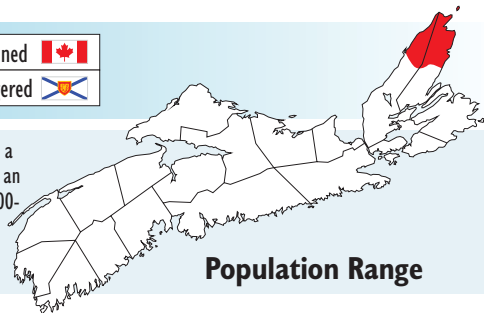
The Bicknell's Thrush is a small sparrow-sized songbird (16-18 cm long). It has a buffy breast with dark spots, a grey to white belly, an olive-brown back, and a reddish tail. Its bill is slender and the lower bill is yellow with black at the tip. Males are slightly larger than females but otherwise similar in appearance.



© DAN BUSBY

Note mostly yellow lower bill

Breeds in Cape Breton and a nearby coastal island with an estimated population of 400-500 pairs. Winters in the Greater Antilles (islands in the Caribbean Sea).



Population Range

Habitat

Found in high elevation spruce-fir forests in the Cape Breton Highlands and on one offshore island (St. Paul Island). They typically occur in areas above 300 meters in stunted, dense forests that are wet, windy and cool.



© DAN BUSBY



© DAN BUSBY

Look and listen for the Bicknell's Thrush in Cape Breton Highlands National Park especially at Paquette Lake, Lake of Islands and French Mountain. Its songs and calls can be heard online at www.bicknellsthrush.org.

Interesting Points

- One of Canada's rarest and least-known songbirds.
- It was considered a subspecies of the Gray-cheeked Thrush until 1995.
- They are very sensitive birds, and will abandon their nests even with low levels of disturbance.
- Females may have up to four mates, all of which provide food for the young.

Similar Species

Swainson's and Hermit Thrush are found in the same breeding habitat as Bicknell's Thrush, whereas Veery and Wood Thrush (page 53) are occasionally observed in the same habitats. These species are often identified by their differing vocalizations.

Swainson's Thrush:

Buffy breast and eye ring, uniform olive-brown upperparts.



© HANS TOOTH



© KELLY COLGAN AZAR

Hermit Thrush:

Buffy breast, olive-brown upperparts with reddish tail.



© JERRY OLDENHETTEL

Wood Thrush:

White breast with bold spots, reddish crown.



© HANS TOOTH

Veery:

Reddish upperparts, faint spots on breast.



© KELLY COLGAN AZAR

Gray-cheeked Thrush:

Very similar, song best way to distinguish. Uncommon.

Threats to Survival

- Habitat loss and fragmentation on breeding grounds from forestry activities, acid rain and atmospheric mercury, ski resort development, recreational use, and transmission tower and wind turbine construction.
- Global warming may alter the abundance of Balsam Fir trees in its current habitat.
- Its wintering ground is threatened by deforestation (from farming, logging, feral pigs and free-ranging cattle).

How You Can Help

Since 2002, Bird Studies Canada (BSC) has monitored the Bicknell's Thrush in Cape Breton through their High Elevation Landbird Program (HELP). Volunteer for this program by contacting BSC at (506) 364-5047. For information on HELP visit: www.bsc-eoc.org/regional/acbithsurvey.html.

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: Environment Canada (506) 364-5044

Info: www.bicknellsthrush.org

Sighting Reports: eBird.org, 1-866-727-3447

Stewardship: BSC: www.bsc-eoc.org



© DAN BUSBY