



ARTÍCULO ORIGINAL

Segundo registro documentado del Tordo de Cola Colorada (*Catharus guttatus*) en Cuba

Second documented record of the Hermit Thrush (Catharus guttatus) in Cuba

Daniela Ventura del Puerto ¹ , Jean Michel De Jongh ² , Laura Arañaburo Acosta ¹ , Ana Laura Hidalgo Gato ¹ 

1 Department of Animal and Human Biology, University of Havana, Cuba; 25 N° 455, e/J e I, Vedado, Plaza de la Revolución, La Habana, Cuba C.P. 10400

2 Jardín Botánico Nacional de Cuba, Universidad de La Habana, Carretera "El Rocío" km 3½, Calabazar, Boyeros, La Habana, Cuba C.P. 19230

*Autor para correspondencia:
dvpuerto19@gmail.com

RESUMEN

Documentamos el segundo registro de *Catharus guttatus* en Cuba, un ave joven capturada y anillada en La Habana en noviembre de 2023. La especie es una de las migratorias más extendidas en Norteamérica y la única de este género que no pasa el invierno en Sudamérica. Existen pocos registros para el Caribe y fuera del continente americano.

Palabras clave: anillamiento de aves, ecología urbana, especies accidentales, migrantes neotropicales, Turdidae

ABSTRACT

We document the second recorded instance of the Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) in Cuba. This record pertains to a young bird captured and banded in Havana in November 2023. The Hermit Thrush is one of the most widespread migratory birds in North America and is the only species in its genus that does not overwinter in South America. There are few records of this species in the Caribbean and outside the Americas.

Keywords: bird banding, neotropical migrants, Turdidae, urban ecology, vagrant species

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INTRODUCTION

The Hermit Thrush (Passeriformes: Turdidae) is one of the most widely distributed migratory forest birds in North America. It has an extensive breeding range that includes the northern and western United States, southern Canada, and Alaska. It also inhabits higher elevations in the Rocky Mountains and Appalachians, as well as most of the boreal and mountainous coniferous forest areas of northern Mexico, including an isolated area of central Baja California Norte. During migration, it moves to lower elevations, occupying wintering territories over much of the southern United States and Mexico (Dellinger *et al.*, 2020). It is the only *Catharus* species that winters primarily in North America, with a few individuals reaching as far as southwestern Guatemala (Bent, 1949) and northwestern El Salvador (Howell and Webb, 1995). In the Caribbean, it is considered a very rare transient or vagrant in Bermuda (Amos, 1991), Jamaica (Rappole *et al.*, 1983), and the Bahamas (Akresh and King, 2015, Kirwan *et al.*, 2019).

In Cuba, Kirkconnell *et al.* (2020) and Navarro (2024) consider the Hermit Thrush a vagrant species, with only one documented record so far. This report consisted of an immature individual banded and photographed on 25 December 1995, in Cayo Coco, Jardines del Rey Archipelago, Ciego de Avila province (Wallace *et al.*, 1999). There is also a second undocumented sighting that was made by Arturo Kirkconnell in late April 2001 in Cayo Coco, the same location as the previous record (Mazar-Barnett and Kirwan, 2002). Here we present the second documented record for *Catharus guttatus* in Cuba.

OBSERVATION

Since January 2023, the Bird Ecology Group of the Faculty of Biology of the University of Havana, in collaboration with Environment and Climate Change Canada and BirdsCaribbean, has been conducting a constant-effort mist netting monitoring program in two urban parks in Havana. As part of these activities, on November 1st 2023, at 09:45 hours, an individual identified as *Catharus guttatus* was captured at the banding station located at Quinta de Los Molinos (location coordinates: 23.1317,82.3801) (Ventura, 2023). It was distinguished from other *Catharus* species reported in Cuba by its small size, olive-brown back contrasting sharply with its reddish tail and rump,

narrow but distinguishable white eye ring, and the upper part of the chest densely marked with dark brown spots. Other identifying characteristics include the tenth primary feather being larger than the primary coverts, the ninth primary being smaller than the sixth primary, and the sixth primary conspicuously emarginate (Pyle *et al.*, 1997). The bird was marked with band number 295108117 (master bander permit 10613) and identified as an immature bird (hatching year) in formative plumage by the presence of a molt limit within the greater secondary coverts.

Morphometric measurements were as follows: wing chord 95 mm (± 0.5 mm), tail 69 mm, tarsus 29.9 mm, culmen 11 mm, exposed culmen 14 mm, weight 27 g (± 0.1 g), and a fat score of 3. One week later, on November 6th at 08:05 hours, the bird was recaptured at the same location, this time weighing 32.8 grams (Núñez, 2023).

DISCUSSION

This is the third record of the Hermit Thrush in Cuba, and the second with photographic evidence figure 1. It is also one of the few reports for the Caribbean. Although it is the only species in its genus that spends the winter in North and Central America, avoiding crossing the Gulf of Mexico to the Caribbean or South America, there are reports outside the American continent in Iceland (8 in September-December), England (1 in spring and 2 in autumn), Germany (4 records), Sweden (1 in April), and one each in Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Italy (American Ornithologists' Union, 1957; Bradshaw and Dowdall, 1993).

Its dispersal ability and low detectability suggest that its range is larger than currently known. Its cryptic coloration, similar to that of the other *Catharus* species, its secretive behavior, and its habit of foraging in the understory of dense forests may contribute to it going unnoticed in its wintering areas or being confused with other species in its genus. Due to the proximity of Cuba to its wintering grounds in the southern United States, it may be a more frequent transient than previously thought (Wallace *et al.*, 1999). Additional evidence for this assertion is the recent third record documented in the country in March 2024 (Rodríguez-Castañeda, *in prep.*) while this article was undergoing the editorial process. This

second record of the species detected by bird banding techniques supports the importance of expanding this type of monitoring for studying avifauna in Cuba and the Caribbean, both in natural and urban ecosystems, due to the effectiveness of this method in detecting rare and/or cryptic species (Dunn and Ralph, 2004).

Quinta de Los Molinos is a small urban park of 4.7 hectares located in the heart of Havana, in one of the most populated municipalities, Plaza de la Revolución. Ongoing monitoring at the site suggests that it constitutes an important area in a migratory corridor and serves as a stopover site for *Catharus* and *Hylocichla* species during autumn and spring migration (D. Ventura, pers. obs.). In Cuba, studies of biodiversity in urban ecosystems are still scarce, making it difficult to evaluate the significance of small green areas for conservation. This record highlights the importance of paying more attention to these small sites, which could play a crucial role as stopover and refueling sites in the migration of many Neotropical migrants every year. The increase in long-term monitoring programs, such as the one we are developing, could be a key tool in evaluating the status and population trends of resident and migratory species in Cuba.

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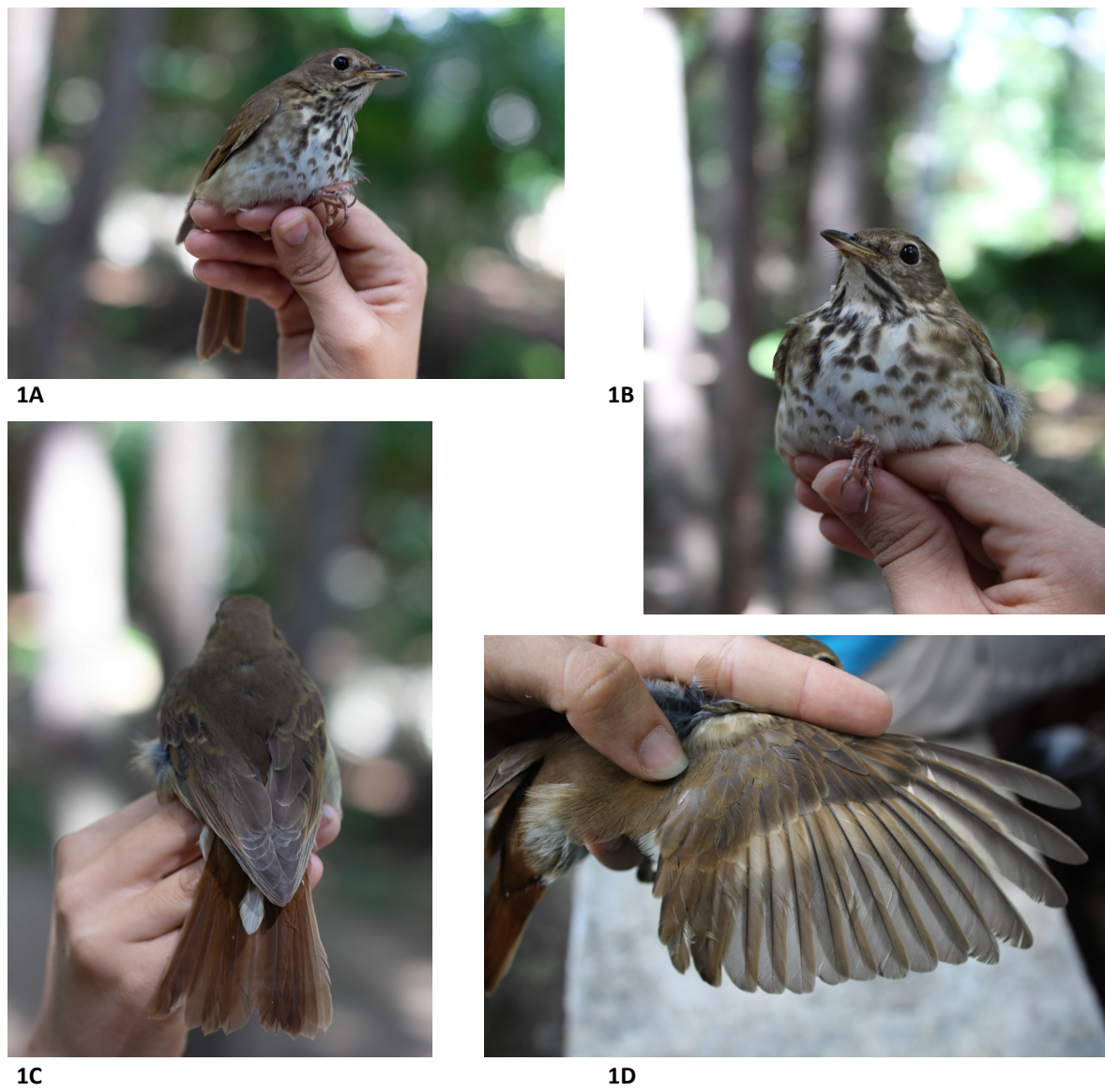


Figure 1. Individual of Hermit Thrush banded at Quinta de Los Molinos banding station in Havana, Cuba, 1 November 2023 (**1A** Profile photo, **1B** Front photo, **1C** Back photo, **1D** Wing photo) Photo credits: Emilio Daniel Pérez García (**1A-C**) and Daniela Ventura del Puerto **1D**