

Wood Thrush

Hylocichla mustelina

General Information:

-In early spring, the peaceful flutelike songs of the males are heard throughout the nesting territory, announcing their arrival. It frequents most forests or large woodlots, but also can be seen in parks, towns, and in country gardens. When this heavy-bodied big-eyed thrush is agitated, it lifts the feathers on its head like a crest. The song, one of the most beautiful thrush songs, is given before daybreak, but is most prolonged at dusk, when the bird is perched high above the ground and delivers it in a leisurely fashion, rising and falling, until darkness silences him.

Song:

-A serene flutelike series of triple phrases, the middle note lower than the first, the last note highest and trilled, *Ee-o-lee, ee-o-lay*.

Behavior:

-Solitary or in pairs, somewhat shy and retiring, but may feed in the open on wooded lawns. Feeds on the ground or in trees close to the ground, gleaning food from ground or from branches and foliage. Eats various insects, spiders, and fruits; feeds largely on fruits and berries in fall migration. In courtship, the male chases the female in a series of fast twisting circling flights with the male's territory.



Breeding:

-Monogamous and solitary.

Nesting:

-Incubation 13-14 days by the female. The 1-2 broods per year of altricial young are brooded by the female, remain in the nest for another 12 days, and are fed by both sexes.

Population:

-Common in moist deciduous or mixed deciduous-conifer woodlands, often near water.

Conservation:

-A neo-tropical migrant whose population is declining in recent decades due to nest parasitism by cowbirds, forest fragmentation on breeding grounds, and habitat loss on wintering grounds in Central America.

Shoreline Restoration Issues:

-To create an environment friendly to the Wood Thrush I suggest planting deciduous trees of differing sizes. For instance, planting some Mountain Ash along with some Hard Maple, Black Cherry, Red Oak, and Swamp White Oaks will give your shoreline trees that grow to differing heights. Furthermore, under story ground cover is important. Try planting some Black Chokeberry, High-bush Cranberry, Staghorn Sumac, Buttonbush, Hawthorn, Wild Rose, and Silky Dogwood for fuel for migration. If you want to plant wildflowers, plant ones that will grow thick, such as Black-eyed Susan, any of the Blazingstars, and Wild Lupine.