

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*



Folk Name: Small-billed Water-thrush, Grinnell's Waterthrush

Status: Migrant

Abundance: Uncommon to Fairly Common

Habitat: Deciduous woods (usually moist)

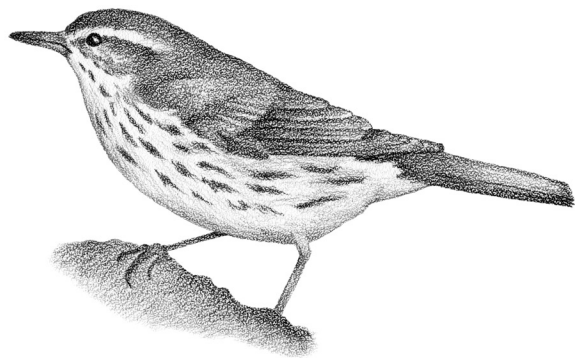
The Northern Waterthrush can be confused with the Louisiana Waterthrush as the two warblers look and act very much alike, and they are both found in wet habitats. The Northern Waterthrush walks on the ground and bobs its tail just like the Louisiana Waterthrush, but it bobs its tail noticeably more quickly. It prefers slow-moving water habitat, while the Louisiana Waterthrush is usually found beside fast-moving streams. The eyebrow of the Northern Waterthrush is buffy white and of even width, while that of the Louisiana is white and thicker behind the eye. The bill of the Northern Waterthrush is conspicuously smaller, and this bird lacks the light-rose buff on the flanks that the Louisiana displays.

The Northern Waterthrush is a migrant in the Carolinas. It breeds in the far northern United States, into Canada, and in the Northwest. It winters in the Bahamas, West Indies, Mexico, and Central and South America. It moves through the Carolina Piedmont in April and May and again from late August through October. Our earliest spring date is 2 April, and most have moved through by 21 May. We have one banding record from the Pee Dee MAPS station on the odd date of June 23, 2001. This bird was certainly not where it needed to be.

Our earliest fall arrival date is 17 August, and our latest departure date is 19 October. The latter was a bird Ricky Davis found foraging beside a Lincoln's Sparrow



Northern Waterthrush, stunned after window impact.
(Steve Thomas)



J F M A M J J A S O N D

at Charlotte's McAlpine Park in 2008. It was in the brush along the edge of the beaver-created pond, near the park's fishing pond. We have no records of this species in the region from November through March. Our peak count is 12 birds seen on the Charlotte Spring Bird Count in 1983.

From the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century, taxonomists classified two races of the Northern Waterthrush. The western form was commonly called "Grinnell's Waterthrush." Today, taxonomists no longer recognize these subspecies. Leverett Loomis collected what was described as a specimen of "Grinnell's Waterthrush" near the Chester Court House on April 28, 1888. He collected another specimen on May 16, 1889, which is still housed in the collection at Harvard University's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

William McIlwaine recorded two Northern Waterthrush during migration in Charlotte on September 2, 1929. John Trott reported finding this warbler in Stanly County on May 20, 1954, and again on April 30, 1955. Joe and Becky Norwood collected a dead Northern Waterthrush on October 2, 1959, after it struck a television tower in Charlotte. David Wright found the only Northern Waterthrush seen on the Charlotte Spring Bird Count held on May 1, 1971.

The Northern Waterthrush has been reported annually in the region since the 1980s.

Stephen Thomas photographed an injured Northern Waterthrush hiding on a sidewalk in downtown Charlotte on August 28, 2006. The bird had apparently struck one of the buildings during its nocturnal migration. It remained out of reach. Mecklenburg Audubon Lights Out survey volunteers collected a specimen of a Northern Waterthrush after it hit a lighted building in downtown Charlotte on the night of September 22, 2012.