

Hermit Thrush Practices Foot-patting Feeding Behavior

ELOISE F. POTTER and RICKY DAVIS
P.O. Box 277, Zebulon, N.C. 27597

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About 09:00 the morning of 18 April 1974, we watched a Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) walking on leaf litter covering the mud at the edge of a swamp near Zebulon, Wake County, N.C. The bird repeatedly patted the leaves with rapid foot motions, patting several times at one place before moving a few steps to another spot. The bird seemed to use the right foot or the left indiscriminately. As the foot was raised, the unfanned tail was lowered; and as the foot touched the leaves, the tail was raised. At first glance the bird appeared to be scratching its breast, but close study revealed that the toes touched only the leaves. Some of the foot-patting episodes were followed immediately by short runs that apparently ended in the capture of prey. During the approximately 5 minutes that the bird was in sight, we did not see it forage by scratching in the leaves with its feet, by flipping leaves with its beak, or by probing in the mud. While tending her yard in early April, Potter noted an unusually large number of torpid wasps, moths, and beetles beneath oak leaves used as mulch. The Hermit Thrush's foot-patting foraging technique seems well adapted to disturbing such creatures so they could be captured easily during short, sluggish flights. Foot-trembling or foot-patting feeding behavior has been reported in various shorebirds including the Piping Plover (*Chat.*, 28:30), but to the best of our knowledge it has not been noted previously in the Hermit Thrush. Indeed, never before have we seen any passerine foraging in this manner.

Dickcissel Colony in Anderson County, S.C., in Summer

HARRY E. LeGRAND JR.
Department of Zoology, Clemson University
Clemson, S.C. 29631

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During July 1974 a colony of Dickcissels (*Spiza americana*) was present in a large field about 2 miles S of Townville, Anderson County, S.C. On 11 July I found six singing males and one female in the field, which had mixed grass-forb vegetation averaging approximately 3 feet in height. The males were obviously on territory and apparently had arrived only recently, as I did not detect the species in this field in May and June. I found four singing birds on 15 July and two on 20 July. On 28 July I found only one female, and she seemed disturbed when I approached her, acting as if there were a nest in the area. I did not see or hear any Dickcissels on a visit to the field on 10 August. I found no evidence of nesting by the colony, and I doubt that the birds actually did nest during their brief stay near Townville.

White-winged Crossbills at Durham, N.C.

ROBIN M. CARTER
1605 Sedgfield Street, Apt. H
Durham N.C. 27705

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At about 10:00 on 28 February 1974, I was looking for crossbills in a stand of mature pines on the north edge of the Hillandale Golf Course, along Indian Trail Drive in Durham, N.C. In the top of a pine perhaps 20 yards above me, I saw quite clearly in excellent light, through 7 x 50 binoculars, a male White-winged Crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*). The bird had two wingbars, and some of the wing feathers were tipped with white. Its body color was pinker than that of the Red Crossbills (*L. curvirostra*) I have seen. The bird made no call. I did not find the bird on subsequent searches.

[This appears to be the first record of the White-winged Crossbill in the North Carolina piedmont since the winter of 1963-1964 when the species was found at Greensboro and near Statesville (*Chat.*, 28:21 and 74).—DEPT. ED.]