

Bicknell's Thrush

Catharus bicknelli

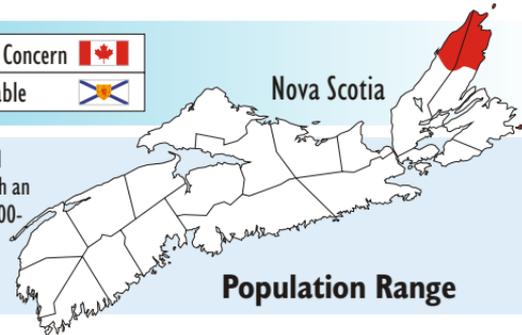
STATUS

Special Concern 

Vulnerable 

21

Nova Scotia



Population Range

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

Habitat

Found in high elevation spruce-fir forests in the Cape Breton Highlands and a few offshore islands. Typically in areas above 300 meters in stunted, dense forests that are wet, windy and cool.



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Species Description

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



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Note mostly yellow lower bill



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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.atl.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/bicknells_thrush/

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

The Swainson's and Hermit Thrush are found in the same breeding habitat as the Bicknell's Thrush, and the Veery also breeds in Cape Breton. These species are often identified by their differing vocalizations.

Swainson's Thrush:

Buff coloured eye ring, brown tail.



Hermit Thrush:

Stronger chestnut-coloured tail, darker black spots on the chest.



Veery:

Reddish back and tail, faint spots on the chest.



Gray-cheeked Thrush:

Very similar, larger with less yellow on the lower bill. Uncommon.



Threats to Survival

- Habitat loss and fragmentation on breeding grounds from forestry activities, spruce budworm outbreaks, acid rain, ski resort development, recreational use, and transmission tower and wind turbine construction.
- Global warming may alter its cool, high altitude habitat.
- Its wintering ground is threatened by deforestation, charcoal production and sugarcane operations.

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.speciesatrisk.gc.ca, www.hww.ca

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447

Stewardship: www.bsc-eoc.org

