

The Wood Thrush is a common, but declining breeder in lower-elevation forested areas of the Hudson River Valley. It can also be seen in spring and fall migration.

Conservation Status

The Wood Thrush is considered a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in New York. It is also listed as a “Yellow” WatchList species by National Audubon Society and a Species of Continental Concern and of Regional Concern in Bird Conservation Regions 13, 14, 28, and 30, and of Continental Stewardship and Regional Stewardship in BCR 28 by Partners in Flight. Breeding Bird Survey data indicate a significant decline in populations statewide in the past four decades. NYS Breeding Bird Atlas data show a slight reduction in distribution in the Hudson River Valley during the past two decades.



Identification

This thrush is slightly smaller than an America Robin, with brown upperparts, a rusty-brown crown and nape, white underparts with large black spots on the throat, breast and sides, and a white eye ring. The song is a series of flute-like phrases consisting of three to five notes, each on a different pitch; the phrases are separated by trills.

Habitat

This species breeds in the interior and edges of mature deciduous or mixed forests with a dense understory of saplings and shrubs, shade, a fairly open forest floor, moist soil, and leaf litter. It is most often found in forests larger than 200 acres, but may nest in fragments as small as 2.5 acres as well as wooded residential areas and parks, although nesting success in smaller fragments is problematic. Common tree species in occupied forests include oaks, American beech, sweetgum, red maple, blackgum, eastern hemlock, flowering dogwood, American hornbeam, and pines. Common shrub species include viburnums, spicebush, rhododendron, and blueberry.

Nesting

The nest is placed low in a tree or shrub about 10 feet above the ground. It is a compact cup placed on a horizontal limb in the fork of a sapling or tree or well hidden in dense shrubbery. It is made of dead grass, stems or leaves with mud and rootlets.

Food

Wood Thrushes forage primarily on nearly bare ground or in leaf litter under the forest canopy by probing or tossing leaves aside, eating a wide variety of invertebrates including caterpillars, moths, beetles, ants, millipedes, and sowbugs. In the late summer and fall, they also eat fruits and berries such as elderberry, blueberry, holly, Virginia creeper, dogwood, and black cherry.

Threats

- Forest destruction and fragmentation due to suburban and commercial development.
- Nest predation by Brown-headed Cowbirds in fragmented forests that result in lower reproductive success.
- Destruction of understory due to overbrowsing by white-tailed deer.

Management Recommendations

- Maintain forest blocks greater than 250 acres with a dense understory of saplings and shrubs.
- Minimize edges and create corridors between smaller forest patches to increase habitat quality.
- Create gaps in the forest canopy so that young saplings and shrubs can grow to provide cover.
- Limit overbrowsing by deer.

This species summary is adapted from Rosenberg et al. 2003 and Roth et al. 1996.

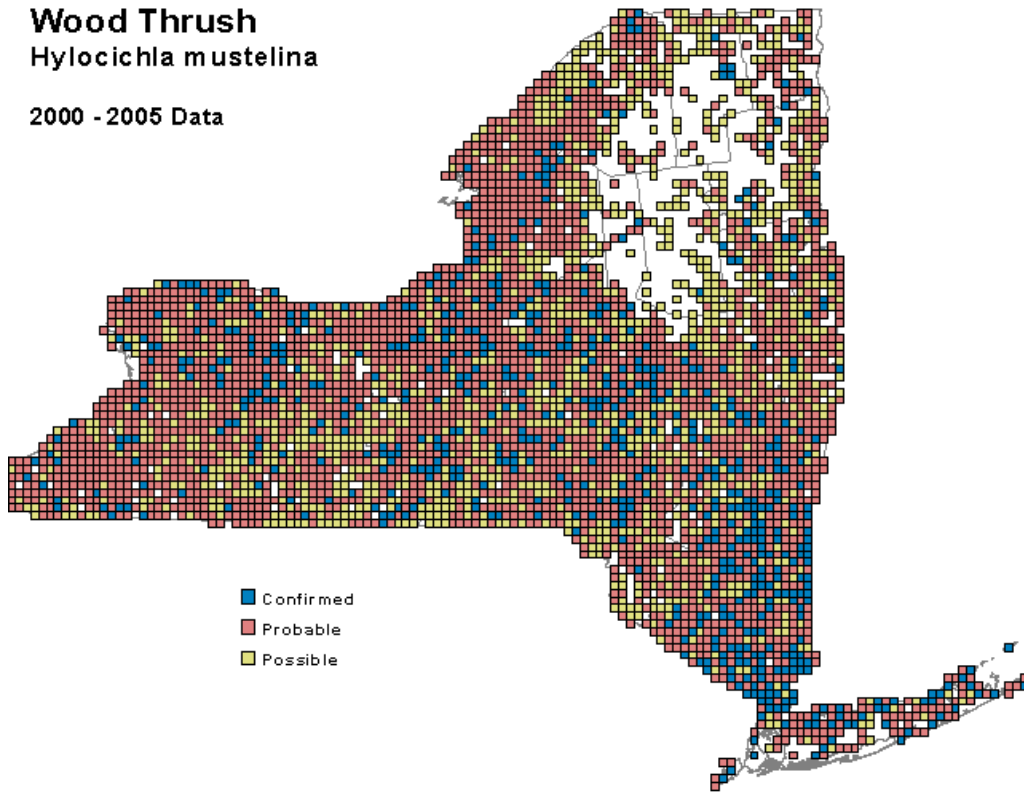
For additional information, see the following references:

- Dilger, W. C. 1956. Adaptive modifications and ecological isolating mechanisms in the thrush genera *Catharus* and *Hylocichla*. *Wilson Bulletin* 68:171-199.
<http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Wilson/v068n03/p0171-p0199.pdf>
- Driscoll, M. L. 2004. Landscape context moderates edge effects: nesting success of Wood Thrush in central New York. *Conservation Biology* 13:1330-1338. [Available full-text online through Blackwell Synergy].
- Driscoll, M. L., T. Donovan, R. Mickey, A. Howard, and K. K. Fleming. 2005. Determinants of Wood Thrush nest success: a multi-scale, model selection approach. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 69:699–709 [available full-text online through BioOne].
- Hoover, J. P., M. C. Brittingham, and L. J. Goodrich. 1995. Effects of forest patch size on nesting success of Wood Thrushes. *Auk* 112:146-155.
<http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Auk/v112n01/p0146-p0155.pdf>
- NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer: an Online Encyclopedia of Life [web application]. Version 7.0. NatureServe, Arlington, VA. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.
- Phillips, J., N. E., Burke, D., Dunford, W. 2005. Impacts of housing developments on Wood Thrush nesting success in hardwood forest fragments. *Condor* 107: 97–106. [Available full-text online through BioOne].
- Robbins, C. S., D. K. Dawson, and B. A. Dowell. 1989. Habitat Area Requirements of Breeding Birds of the Middle Atlantic States. *Wildlife Monographs* no. 103:3-34. [Available full text online through JSTOR]
- Rosenberg, K. V., R. S. Hames, R.W. Rohrbaugh, Jr., S. Barker Swarthout, J.D. Lowe, and A.A. Dhont. 2003. A Land-Manager's Guide to Improving Habitat for Forest Thrushes. Ithaca, NY. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/conservation/thrush/thrushguide.pdf>
- Roth, R. R., M. S. Johnson and T. J. Underwood. 1996. Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the *Birds of North America Online*:
<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bnaproxy.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/246>
- Weinberg, J. J. and R. R. Roth. 1998. Forest area and habitat quality for nesting Wood Thrushes. *Auk* 115:879-889.
<http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Auk/v115n04/p0879-p0889.pdf>

NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*

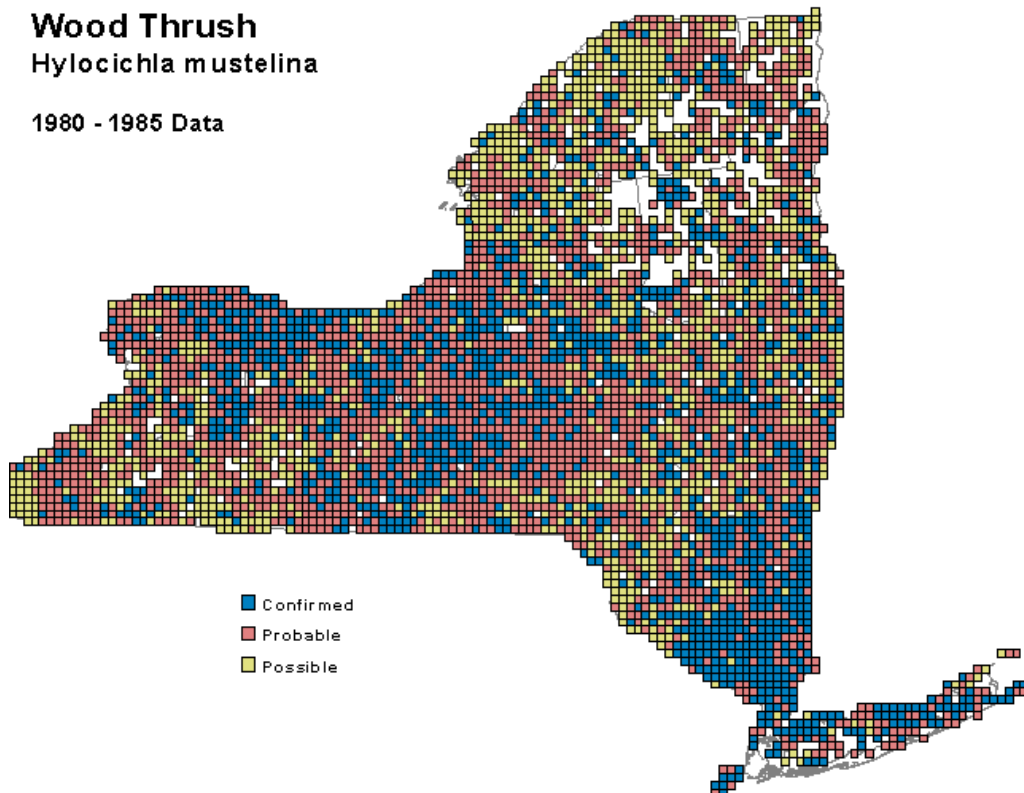
2000 - 2005 Data



- Confirmed
- Probable
- Possible

Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*

1980 - 1985 Data



- Confirmed
- Probable
- Possible