

1983 Cornwall: Coombe Valley, Bude male 13th November

1987 Pembrokeshire: Skomer 3rd-5th December

Discussion: Despite the paucity of British records there are a sizeable number of European sightings, the majority in central Europe and Italy. As with other rare thrushes this species is rare in Scandinavia where there are six from Finland (23rd October 1980, 17th May 1983, 15th-17th November 2004, 27th December 2005-15th January 2006, 30th December 2006-7th January 2007, 5th-11th January 2008), seven from Norway (20th October 1889, 2nd November 1889, 26th October 1895, 20th November 1908, 17th March 1959, 15th April 1992, 17th October 2001) and two from Denmark (14th October 1888, 9th September 1968). There is a single record from the Faeroes (8th December 1947) to an unspecified taxa.

In Germany there are about 10 records (only two in the 20th century: 22nd-23rd April 1987, 29th-31st December 1996), two from Poland (one specimen from 19th century, 21st October 1966), two from the Netherlands (20th November 1899, 20th February 1955) and five from Belgium (15th October 1853, 5th November 1905, November 1906, 11th November 1956, 3rd-24th January 2009). There are three records from Austria (two from the 19th century, 6th January 2005). The species was formerly on the Hungarian list due to a male c1820 from the northern Carpathian mountains, but the location no longer lies within the boundaries of Hungary (Tamás Zalai *pers comm*).

In France there has been a total of 15 Dusky/Naumann's Thrush, 13 of them in the 20th century. There are four records of Dusky Thrush (December 1856, November 1971, 23rd November 1983, 31st January 1994), four Naumann's plus three intermediate individuals (18th or 19th November 1978, 16th November 1997, 27th October 1999) and four records where attribution to one of the two species was not assessed (5th December 1910, 21st November 1957, 24th October 1964, 20th-26th January 1979).

Elsewhere in the Mediterranean there are c29 birds from Italy, 20 of which have been since 1950 (all in the period November-February including an exceptional 12 in 1981), three from Cyprus (10th-11th November, 25th April 1958, 1993 and 28th December 1994) and another three from Croatia (two in the 19th century and a male in December 1906). Farther east there is one from Kuwait (16th January-13th February 1987) and two from the UAE (12th-24th March 1998, 27th February-3rd March 2005). One from Israel (November 1982) was not allocated to taxa. One from the Azores (16th January 2008) has not yet been assessed by the PRC.

Being the more northerly breeding of the pair, Dusky has a longer migration than Naumann's and is consequently the more frequent of the two in Europe. Its rarity in Britain is difficult to explain in light of the comparatively generous number of European records. Could it be that it slips through undetected amongst the masses of Redwings that pour into our lands during the autumn? Although less prone to substantial movements than many Siberian vagrants, it is clearly capable of reaching western Europe with some regularity. Despite the fact there are eight records, the next Dusky Thrush is highly desired.

Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni*

Temminck, 1820. Breeds farther south than Dusky Thrush, from central Siberia east to Amurland and Sakhalin and south to northern China. Winters from extreme eastern Russia through north-east China south to Korea and Taiwan.

Monotypic. For a discussion of taxonomy see Dusky Thrush.

Very rare vagrant from Siberia.

Status: Two records, both in January from Greater London.

1990 London: Woodford Green male 19th January-9th March

1997 London: South Woodford 1st-winter 6th-11th January

Discussion: This species occurs in the forest zone of central and eastern Siberia. It breeds in the extreme east of the Urals/western Siberia region on the Yenisey. The range limits are poorly known and it is reported to have bred in the southern Yamal Peninsula in July 1975 (Ryabitssev 2008).

Naumann's undertakes shorter movements than Dusky and is not surprisingly the rarer of the two in Europe. In Scandinavia there are four from Finland (27th April 1988, 19th-26th November 1994, 17th-18th April 1999, 6th-19th December 2005) and five from Norway (25th November 1996, 15th June 1997, 10th October 1997, 5th April 1998, 29th November-11th December 2008). Seven have been recorded from Poland (two in the 19th century, one in 1908, 16th January 1955, 22nd January 1965, 10th April 1967, 14th January 1970), four from Germany (the last around 1906), two from Austria (one 19th century, 8th April 1984) and singles from Hungary (winter 1820) and the Czech Republic (7th February 1999).

There is one record from Belgium (26th October 1951) and four from France that have been attributed to Naumann's (September 1845, September 1901, 13th-17th February 1985, 7th January 1996), but see Dusky Thrush for indeterminate birds. There are five records from Italy (2nd November 1901, 21st March 1904, 10th November 1977, 5th February 1978, 13th December 2005). One trapped and photographed in Spain (Ebro Delta, 23rd-24th November 2005) no longer forms part of the Spanish List as the record has been withdrawn by one of the observers.

The fact that both British Naumann's occurred within a short distance is perhaps unnerving, for they form two of only a small number of European records since the 1980s, but they could simply be one of those curious quirks of fate that birding seems to accumulate over time.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*

Jarocki, 1819. Breeds in central and northern Urals east across southwest Siberia and east Kazakhstan to northwest China. Winters from Iraq to northern India, east through Himalayan foothills to Bhutan.

Monotypic. The decision to treat Black and Red-throated Thrushes as separate species by the BOU is a recent one (Knox *et al* 2008), though formerly Stepanyan (1978, 1990) and Collar (2005) treated them as distinct species. The two are morphologically distinct regarding plumage, though birds showing characters of both forms occur where the ranges overlap (from the upper Lena River to the Russian Altai and Sayan mountain ranges), but it has not been proven that such individuals are true hybrids (Clement and Hathway 2000). The two taxa have quite different songs (Arkhipov *et al* 2003), albeit based only on small samples from parts of the range. Treatment as separate species is based on their markedly different appearance, vocalisations and habitat preferences.

Voelker *et al* (2007) felt that a formal split was premature. They examined two male *ruficollis*, one from well within the Russian range of *atrogularis* and the other from just west of the westernmost edge of the range defined for *ruficollis*. The males exhibited zero differentiation for the genes sequenced and both Voelker *et al* (2007) and Collar (2005) suggest that further study is warranted. Red-throated Thrush is a bird of sparse mountain forest and scrub; Black-throated favours lowland forest and dry woodlands in subalpine steppes.

Rare, but increasingly regular vagrant from Siberia with a preponderance of autumn records on Northern Isles and east coast and regular inland wintering records.

Status: There have been 64 British records to the end of 2007; none in Ireland.

Historical review: The first was a male shot near Lewes, East Sussex, on 23rd December 1868. The next was an immature male from Perth and Kinross in 1879. The wait for the third took until a male took up residence on Fair Isle from 8th December 1957 to 22nd January 1958.

Another lengthy gap ensued before the next, an adult female at Toab, Mainland Shetland, from 5th-7th October 1974. It was followed swiftly by the first modern birds on the mainland, both from Norfolk: a 1st-winter female at Holkham from 21st-24th October 1975 and a very well watched male at Coltishall, from 21st February-3rd April 1976. These two birds readily installed this attractive thrush into the consciousness of observers and began what was to become an almost annual rate of detection. After just three previous records, twice as many were found between 1974 and 1979, including two one-day birds in 1978.

This rate continued during the 1980s, with 10 accepted in five years. These included a record four in 1987. One well inland in urban Sheffield, South Yorkshire, early in the year was

followed by three late autumn records at different ends of the country (one on Scilly and two in Shetland).

Arrivals increased significantly during the 1990s, a decade during which only 1991 failed to produce any birds. A new record five were found in 1993, including a spring bird in Kent and four October birds comprising two in Shetland and singles from Scilly and Norfolk. In 1994 a 1st-winter male on Fair Isle on 16th October was joined by a second bird on the following day, the first and only multiple sighting in Britain.

Four in 1996 was unusual in that they were found away from the offshore islands and all occurred in the first part of the year. Males found in January in both Worcestershire and Cambridgeshire put in extended and well appreciated stays through to mid-February and mid-March; the first long-staying mainland birds for 20 years. In the same year one was present for two days in Bristol, Avon, in February and another, a 1st-winter female, stayed in Norfolk from mid-March to early April. After a long absence of obliging mainland records no fewer than three could have been collected at leisure within a matter of weeks.

Five between 1997 and 1998 included two more inland males, in Derbyshire in January and February 1997 and Berkshire from late December 1998 through to early March 1999. The decade had amassed a whopping 26 birds, including a number of crowd-pullers that frequented suburban housing estates.

Between 2000 and 2007 there were a further 19 birds. These included a record six in 2005, which comprised three typical October records from Shetland and inland birds located in December from Northumberland, Somerset and Glamorgan that remained in 2006. The accessible and obliging bird in Swansea was present to mid-March and represented the first for Wales.

The annual average in the 1970s was 0.7 per annum. In the 1980s it increased slightly to 1.0 per annum. From 1990-2007, this statistic has increased markedly to 2.5 per annum. Whether this reflects increased observer awareness or a real change in status is unclear, but the enhanced number of opportunities to see this delightful thrush is to be welcomed.

Where: Shetland is the place to connect with this attractive thrush, accounting for 27 birds (44 per cent), 11 of them from Fair Isle. The only other areas to yield more than singletons are Scilly, Norfolk and Yorkshire, each with five birds; there have been three in Orkney and two in Northumberland. Additional singles have occurred in 13 more English counties and three areas of Scotland. The sole Welsh record was from Glamorgan.

The 62 birds since 1957 show a clear pattern of occurrence. Arrivals are found on the Northern Isles and other offshore islands during the autumn period. More sedentary birds, often associating with Redwings *T. iliacus*, are found at inland sites during the winter months. These birds presumably made landfall in Western Europe during the previous autumn. There is a small spring presence along the east coast of birds exiting Britain or western Europe.

When: The two earliest autumn records have both been in September on the Northern Isles (1st-winter female on Foula, Shetland, on 23rd September 2000 and a 1st-winter on North Ronaldsay from 26th-28th September 1990). October is the peak month for occurrence, accounting for 47 per cent (29 birds) of all arrivals, peaking between 15th and 21st (12 birds). All records

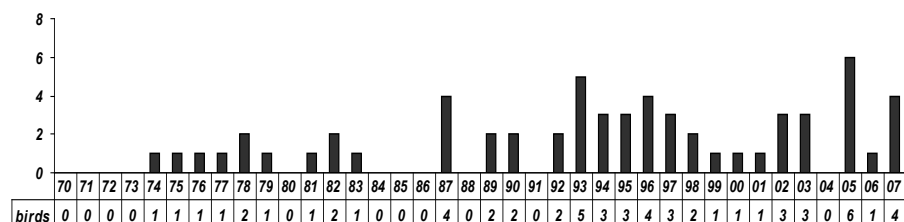


Figure 46: Annual numbers of Black-throated Thrush, 1970-2007.

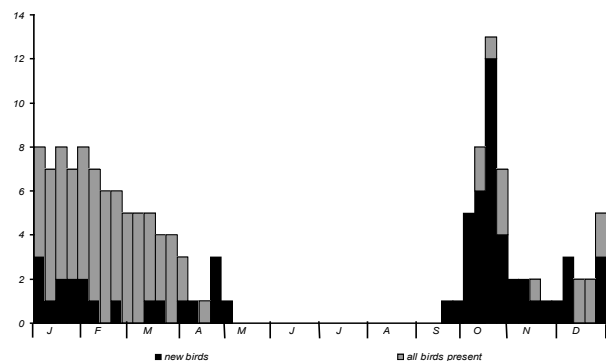


Figure 47: Timing of British Black-throated Thrush records, 1957-2007.

have been from islands and coastal hot-spots: 20 on Shetland; five from Scilly; two in Norfolk; and one each from Orkney and Cornwall.

Just five have been found in November. Two of these are from Shetland early in the month, after which the emphasis shifts to inland sites. The earliest inland sighting was one grounded for a short period with other thrushes at the famous visible migration watch point of Redmires Reservoir, South Yorkshire, on 13th November 1995. The remaining November records are one-day sightings late in the month from Greater Manchester and Staffordshire.

Fourteen mid-winter records span the period 24th December to 8th February, with one additional bird in late February the last find of the winter period (the male at Coltishall, which remained to early April). These birds are well distributed and the vast majority of them inland. Birds at this time of year have been found in suburban/urban settings and often put in protracted stays, to the delight of visiting birders.

A smattering of spring records presumably reflects the withdrawal of birds from Britain or Western Europe, and all but one of the eight have been along the east coast. Two have been in March (Norfolk and East Yorkshire) and five in April (two on Shetland, singles on Orkney and Norfolk and one in Shropshire). The latest spring bird was a female at Lydd, Kent on 2nd May 1993. All spring records have been since 1993, perhaps reflecting increased numbers of birds reaching and presumably wintering in Britain and Western Europe.

Discussion: Elsewhere in Europe there are large numbers of records, presumably reflecting the closer proximity of the western part of the range where some 50,000-55,000 pairs breed in the Ural foothills and in the Komi Republic (Hagemeijer and Blair 1997). Unlike Eyebrowed, Dusky/Naumann's and the *Zoothera* thrushes, there is clearly a push into northwest Europe. There are 30 records from Sweden (over half of which have been since 1994 and around a third of them in spring), 35 from Finland (a quarter of them in spring) and 27 from Norway. There have been nine from Denmark (one October, others November- February including four in December; these include a returning female which was first present from 3rd February-4th April 2007 then again from 8th November 2007-18th April 2008 and yet again from 15th November 2008). Two have reached Iceland (13th-22nd November 2005, 12th October 2008).

In Germany there have been more than 40 birds, including a number of small groups such as 14 at the end of October 1806, 12-14 on 1st February 1902 and three males in mixed flock of thrushes on 27th March 1958. There are nine records from Austria (singles April and September, rest October to January). In the Netherlands there were six records between 1981-2002 (mostly winter and spring) and four from Belgium (three October and one March). Elsewhere there are three records from Latvia, 13 records from Poland (eight in the 19th century, four between 1966-1982 and one in 2003; all recent records between October and February) and singles from Estonia (February) and the Czech Republic (19th century).

France has 12 records (four in 19th century and eight between 1982-1999, six from October-February, plus one on 29th March 1982 and a singing male in southern France on 16th May 1996). The 1999 record involved a female found dead in Ardèche (southern France), on 20th February 1999 that had been trapped and ringed in Italy on 14th November 1998 as a Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus*. An intermediate *atrogularis/ruficollis* was also present on Ouessant on 1st November 1989.

To the southwest birds have strayed to Spain (13th October 2002). Twenty-eight have occurred in Italy (14 since 1950 and all between 29th September-30th January, with singles in September and October, four in November, two each in December and January and three undated). There are also singles from Romania, Bulgaria (January 1964), Greece (4th March 1956) and Turkey (15th February 2006). It is a frequent enough visitor to the Middle East. There are 11 accepted records for Israel in the decade to 1988 (mainly November-December). It is a rare winter visitor to Kuwait, where the highest daily count was 24 on 18th January 1985. There were at least 15 records from UAE between 2004-early 2008, including a presumed hybrid *atrogularis x ruficollis* in January 2003. Farther south there are two records from Egypt (male collected in autumn 1833, male on 3rd January 1982).

The spread of records across Europe is impressive, indicating a sizeable dispersal northwest and southwest of the breeding range. It has been proposed that Black-throated Thrushes in Europe result from random dispersals from their breeding areas (Gilroy and Lees 2003). Inexperienced birds consort with Fieldfare *T. pilaris* and Redwing flocks heading westwards from central Siberia. Ringing recoveries indicate that Fieldfare and Redwings from Russia and Siberia winter in the same western European areas as Fennoscandian birds. These Fieldfares, along with Siberian Redwings, are among the greatest east-west migrants on earth, with round-trip migrations often exceeding 12,000 km (Milright 1994). Birds from these regions could be responsible for carrying Black-throated Thrushes into Western Europe. However, those heading southwest and into the Middle East clearly do so without these carriers to take them there. This species appears to have the greatest vagrancy potential of any of the eastern thrushes.

The increase in British records is presumably a function of the increased numbers of observers routinely working the Northern Isles in autumn. It also seems likely that increased numbers of birds are wintering in Western Europe, a hypothesis supported by the increase in spring records. The inland records may also be associated with this increase, but could also reflect increased awareness by observers during the winter months. The periodic inland occurrences of the past decade have no doubt stimulated observers to get out and scrutinise local thrush flocks that bit more closely.