

OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. 16 – THE NEVIS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY (THE NOS),  
JUNE 2015

FIRST RECORD OF SPECTACLED THRUSH (*TURDUS NUDIGENIS*) IN  
NEVIS, WEST INDIES

MICHAEL BIRO<sup>1</sup> & MARK MICHAEL LUDLOW<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>BSc & BA, 1986, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario; B.Ed., 1987, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario; Regional Director for Ontario (2008-2014), Nature Conservancy of Canada, Toronto, Ontario; Founder & Director (1980), Michael's Bird Tours & (1988), Michael Biro's Spacebound 2015; email michaelbiro@roger.com, Twitter @PeleeMichael. Vice-President, George Biro Real Estate Ltd, Toronto, Ontario; address 21 Palace Court, Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4B 4C3, Canada.

<sup>2</sup>PhD Candidate, Ornitho-Archaeology, University of Wales – Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, United Kingdom; e-mail MMLBird@aol.com; <sup>2</sup>Current address: 501 Slaters Lane #1022, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, USA; & Blue Roofed House (Blue Monkey), Oualie Lane South, Oualie Bay, St. James Windward Parish, Nevis, West Indies.

*Abstract.* --- Michael Biro observed a single Spectacled Thrush on the trail to Nevis Peak above the Nevis correctional facilities (third waterfall), in St. Thomas Lowland Parish, Nevis, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis, West Indies, on 15 February of 2015.

*Key words.* --- *Spectacled Thrush*, *Turdus nudigenis*, *Caribbean*, *Nevis*.

SPECTACLED THRUSH (*TURDUS NUDIGENIS*)

Spectacled Thrush was formerly known by a number of common names to include Bare-eyed Robin, and Bare-eyed Thrush. Its proper common name was officially changed to Spectacled Thrush by the American Ornithologists' Union in 2011 (Chesser *et al* 2011). As per Raffaele *et al* 1998 (378), 'It is widespread in South America' [and] 'It is slowly expanding its range northward through the Lesser Antilles'. In Raffaele *et al* 2003 (42), this species was reported to be 'Uncommon in Guadeloupe'. This represented further expansion northward in the Lesser Antilles. Levesque (1997, 1998) reported this species nesting on Guadeloupe. Ebird.org reported sightings of Spectacled Thrush on Guadeloupe from 1999 to 2015 and those ebird reports (submissions by the general birding enthusiastic public) appeared in almost every month of the year.

None of the following publications suggested the presence of Spectacled Thrush north of the island of Martinique: AOU (1998: 510), Clements (2000: 241), and Dickinson (2003: 666). They all joined AOU (1998: 510) and expressed similar opinions regarding the species distribution: Those reports of the species distribution did *not* indicate that Spectacled Thrush occurs on the island of Nevis, West Indies. The list of avian species reported on St. Kitts and Nevis, contained within the website [www.birdsofstkittsnevis.com](http://www.birdsofstkittsnevis.com), maintained by Michael H. Ryan, also does not report sightings of Spectacled Thrush on either the island of St. Kitts (St. Christopher) or the island of Nevis.

This species may be in taxon radiation: An example of a portion of an avian 'taxon cycle' in the Caribbean (Ricklefs and Bermingham 2002; Ricklefs and Cox 1972, 1978; Ricklefs and Miller 2000). The sighting on Nevis may also represent a further radiation effort by this species. This hypothesis is currently a matter of speculation and awaits future data. A fuller significance of this sighting remains undetermined. Combined with past and future records, fuller patterns may become clearer. As in this case, and in the future, increasing numbers of bird watchers and

ornithological researchers in the field, on comparatively remote and under frequented islands, for sustained periods of time, may account for increasing numbers of documented reports.

## NEVIS

Nevis is a compact oceanic island of volcanic origin with an area of circa 93 km<sup>2</sup> (circa 36 square miles), situated in the northern Lesser Antilles (Ordnance Survey – Nevis 1984). Politically it is a portion of the two island country, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis. The island rises gradually from the shore of the Caribbean Sea (IHO 1953) to a central volcanic peak of circa 985 meters (circa 3,232 feet) and exhibits a range of natural and secondary habitats which include: elfin woodland, montane forest, palm brake, grassland, coastal scrub, dry woodland, and farmland (Robinson and Lowery 2000). The island was almost entirely denuded in its early colonial period (Sloane 1707) for the production of tobacco, indigo, cotton, and sugarcane and culminated in mono-crop sugarcane grown under the agra-industrial plantation system which was dependent upon the labor of enslaved persons, first from Ireland and ultimately from Africa in great numbers. The island is generally in a state of arrested natural biological succession. The arrested state is caused by human introduced non-native alien mammalian animal species together with anthropogenic causes such as repetitive land clearance.

## THE RECORDED SIGHTING

Michael Biro of Toronto, Canada (the observer) while visiting Nevis, saw a single Spectacled Thrush on the Nevis Peak Trail. That trail begins on the grounds of the Nevis correctional facilities (the Nevis Prison Farm) and proceeds upwards through five waterfall levels. The single Spectacled Thrush was seen at circa 12:00 noon on 15 February 2015 at the third waterfall level (circa 17°09'35.75"N/62°34'41.96"W at circa 600 meters above sea level – c. 1969 ft.). The bird was not photographed. Michael Biro is an experienced field ornithologist and birding tour leader. Michael Biro was familiar with the species having previously seen it on the islands of St. Lucia and Martinique, to the south, within the islands of the Lesser Antilles. This sighting represents a First Record of this species on the island of Nevis, West Indies.

This observation is part of the efforts of the Nevis Ornithological Society (the NOS) to document all of the species of birds found solely on the island of Nevis (and proximal Booby Island). Historically bird species listings have artificially conjoined the two geologically and ecologically separate and distinct islands: the island of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and the island of Nevis: An example would be the 'Locality Checklist' within Raffaele *et al* (1998: 453-495). The Nevis Ornithological Society is also attempting to: 1) systematically review and evaluate reported bird sightings on the island of Nevis, as well as Booby Island, with a high degree of academic rigor; and 2) provide a central repository for those accepted reports that are solely for the island of Nevis and Booby Island (Ludlow 2011).

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