



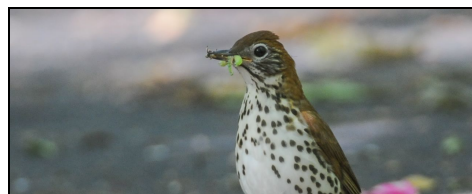
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The Brown Thrasher is a "thrush" you may see foraging under your bushes.

THEY'RE NOT THRUSHES

"Hey, Hart, I just had a couple of Thrushes in the shrubbery outside our condo. Is that possible?" The call came from a fellow snowbird friend who lives the rest of the year in New England. He followed up by saying he was familiar with Wood Thrushes back "home," but while these sure looked like Thrushes, they weren't exactly right either. "Probably not," I told him, "but take a look in your bird book at Brown Thrashers." His quick response came, "That's what they are."





As this call came in early April the choice was easy: Brown Thrashers were just beginning to move through in some numbers; and Wood Thrushes are rare in Florida, even on migration, as their migration route north generally follows the gulf coast of North America rather than through Florida.



Brown Thrashers belong to a bird group known as "mimic thrushes," which includes Northern Mockingbirds and Gray Catbirds, presumably because their songs sound somewhat like thrushes. Wood Thrushes are true thrushes, related to American Robins and Eastern Bluebirds, as well as a number of other true thrushes. Brown Thrashers are lighter brown, have longer bills and tails and are more heavily spotted on the breast than Wood Thrushes. (*above, right*) The Wood Thrush has always seemed to me to be a more delicate appearing bird with finely marked breast spots (*left*) compared to the brash robust Brown Thrasher with its more heavily marked breast spots. (*below, right*)

There is only one brown thrush species (unlike The American Robin and Eastern Bluebird, both thrush species with virtually no brown coloring at all) that occurs with any regularity in Florida. The Hermit Thrush (*below*) appears in Florida in relatively small numbers in the winter and is usually hard to find. It has more finely marked breast spots than the Wood Thrush and is best distinguished from all other brown thrush species by its rusty red tail. (*below, right*)

My friend who made the "Wood Thrush" call is not the only one to make this mistake. I subscribe to a photography forum with the unlikely name of "Ugly Hedgehog," www.uglyhedgehog.com/ where photographers often post photographs with which they are particularly happy. Often misidentified bird photos are posted, and curiously, the day I am writing this column, serendipitously, a photographer posted a series of photos he



titled "Mr. Thrush stopped by...." Yes, you guessed it; the photos depict a Brown Thrasher. www.uglyhedgehog.com/t-528207-1.html.

A couple of columns ago I suggested that I might create a prize for the reader who came up with the best suggestions for new column topics that I might write about. While admittedly I have not yet come up with an appropriate prize, I did receive a number of excellent suggestions for topics of birding interest that I will certainly consider. However, I must point out that the reader who misidentified the Thrushes is the same reader who misidentified the Magnificent Frigatebirds in that earlier column. He is clearly

presently in the lead for the prize, if and when I ever decide what it might be. His mistaken identities of birds also suggest that perhaps you might come up with a topic for me by simply misidentifying a bird.

Certainly any one of us can come up with a topic idea in this manner, for who among us hasn't made a bird ID mistake? I look forward to seeing what new ideas you all come up with. However, if you are looking for a really big prize, you might do better buying a lottery ticket. Power ball, maybe?

