

Hermit Thrush

Catharus guttatus

An unassuming bird with a lovely, melancholy song, the Hermit Thrush lurks in the understories of far northern forests in summer and is a frequent winter companion across much of the country. It forages on the forest floor by rummaging through leaf litter or seizing insects with its bill. The Hermit Thrush has a rich brown upper body and smudged spots on the breast, with a reddish tail that sets it apart from similar species in its genus.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Hermit Thrushes have a chunky shape similar to an American Robin, but smaller. They stand upright, often with the slender, straight bill slightly raised. Like other thrushes, the head is round and the tail fairly long.

Color Pattern

The Hermit Thrush is rich brown on the head and back, with a distinctly warm, reddish tail. The underparts are pale with distinct spots on the throat and smudged spots on the breast. With a close look you may see a thin pale eyering (not a bold one).

Behavior

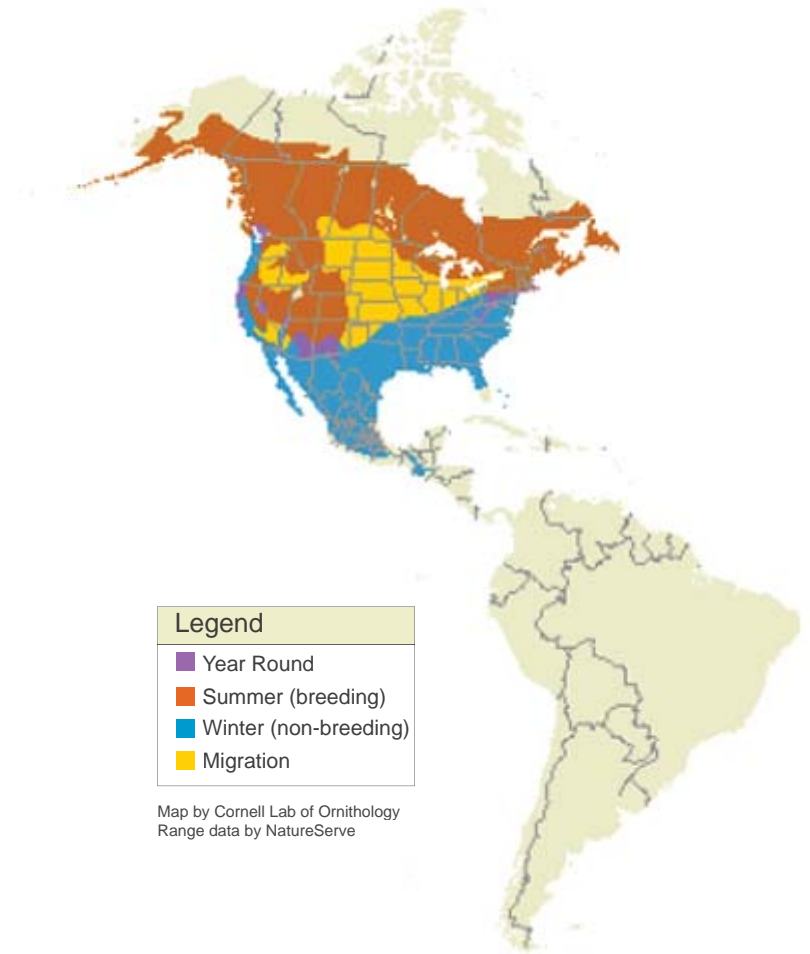
Hermit Thrushes hop and scrape in leaf litter while foraging. They perch low to the ground on fallen logs and shrubs, often wandering into open areas such as forest clearings or trails. Sometimes a Hermit Thrush will cock its tail and bob it slowly, while flicking its wings.

Habitat

Look for Hermit Thrushes in forest understories, especially around edges or openings.

Cool Facts

- Males usually gather food for the nest, while females feed the nestlings. The young birds start by eating bits of larvae, then grasshoppers, moths, and spiders. One Hermit Thrush has been seen trying to give a nestling a salamander more than 1.5 inches long.



Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 5.5 - 7.1 inches
- Wingspan - 9.8 - 11.4 inches
- Weight - 0.8 - 1.3 ounces