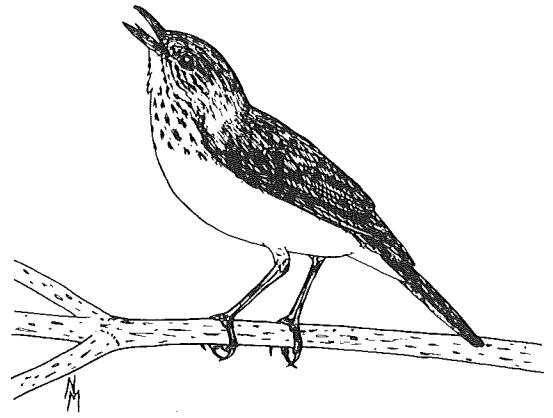


## Veery

*Catharus fuscescens*

The Veery, like most woodland thrushes, is more frequently heard than seen. Most birders are familiar with its *veer* alarm call. Its melodious song, a series of downward-spiraling notes, rivals that of the Hermit Thrush. Veeries breed throughout Vermont; their range of accepted habitats overlaps that of all other thrushes except the Gray-cheeked. Although accepting a nearly ubiquitous array of breeding areas, in Connecticut Veeries preferred moist sites (Berlin 1977) and, indeed, few swamps or moist woodlands in the Northeast are unoccupied by Veeries. However, Vermont's greatest recorded breeding densities for the Veery—64 to 91 pairs per 100 ha (26 to 37 pairs per 100 a)—have been found in habitat composed of mixed forest and old fields in central Vermont (Nicholson 1973, 1975, 1978). Dilger (1956a) found that Veeries preferred disturbed (cutover) forests, presumably because of dense undergrowth there. The Veery's acceptance of varied habitat is not surprising in light of its geographic distribution: it breeds nearly coast to coast across the northern U.S. and southern Canada.

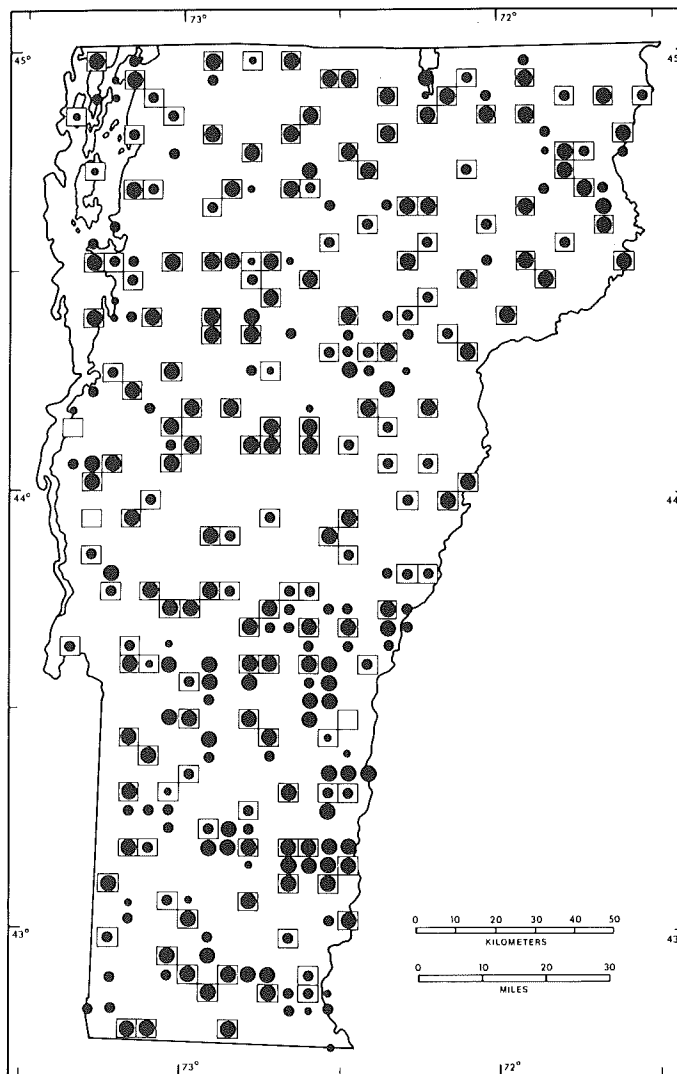
The male Veery, like the Wood Thrush, usually arrives in Vermont's woodlands during the first week of May. Advertising songs attract the female, but full pair bonding is only achieved following several days of pursuit by the male. Song bouts are particularly concentrated at dawn and dusk, with singing during the latter period most intense. As might be expected of a rather drab dweller of dimly lit forest thickets, plumage characteristics account for little in species recognition, and vocalizations are important (Dilger 1956a). Interspecific competition occurs between similarly plumaged members of the genus. Various aggressive displays (gaping, spreading of the breast plumage, crest raising) are shown by all members of the genus that occur in Vermont, and presumably result in some spatial separation in nesting areas; still, it is not uncommon to find the Veery and Wood, Hermit, or Swain-



son's thrushes in overlapping territories (D. P. Kibbe, pers. observ.).

The Veery's bulky nest is built on a thick foundation of dead leaves, usually among saplings or in shrubbery on or near the ground. Three to 5 pale blue eggs are laid; they are incubated for 11 to 12 days. Twenty-three Vermont egg dates range from May 26 to July 23, with a peak in early June. Nestlings grow rapidly, and they may leave the nest in as few as 10 days. Nestlings have been found as early as June 10 and as late as July 6. The fledglings' period of dependence is unknown, although it is likely to be equally as long as the nestling period. Fledglings sport buff-tipped wing coverts until the postjuvenile molt in September, and can be readily recognized. Fledglings have been recorded from July 7 to August 8, which would seem to indicate that two broods may be raised per year. Late nestings may, however, be a consequence of earlier nest failures. Postbreeding birds molt and become rather secretive until their flight feathers are fully regrown.

Confirmations of breeding by Veeries were relatively easy to achieve during the Atlas Project because adults with food for young are conspicuous as they defend their nestlings. Sixty-four percent of all priority block sightings were confirmations. The species was missing from only three priority blocks statewide; two of these blocks were in the Champlain Lowlands, where extensive agriculture has eliminated much of this species' breeding habitat.



**No. of priority blocks in which recorded**

TOTAL 176 (98%)

Possible breeding: 8 (4% of total)  
 Probable breeding: 56 (32% of total)  
 Confirmed breeding: 112 (64% of total)

**Physiographic regions in which recorded**

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	29	94	16
Green Mountains	54	100	31
North Central	19	100	11
Northeast Highlands	16	100	9
East Central	19	100	11
Taconic Mountains	16	100	9
Eastern Foothills	23	96	13

During the breeding season, the Veery's diet is principally insect material. Veeries forage extensively on or near the ground, searching under leaves and on low vegetation for invertebrates. Migrant and molting birds can be usually found in dense berry patches since Veeries, like all thrushes, are fond of fruits.

Veeries depart from Vermont by the third week in September for their wintering grounds, which extend from Central America to Brazil. There is, however, an exceptional Vermont record for December (RVB, Winter 1981-82).

Although the Veery has always been considered common in the state (Allen 1909;

Forbush 1925), recent reforestation has probably benefited the species. Vermont data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Breeding Bird survey since 1966 indicate an average annual increase in the Veery population of more than 3% (BBS 1966-79).

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