

SHORT NOTE

First record of the austral thrush (*Turdus falcklandii*) from the South Shetland Islands, Antarctica

M. MERCEDES SANTOS

Departamento Biología, Aves, Instituto Antártico Argentino, Cerrito 1248, C1010AAZ-Buenos Aires, Argentina
CONICET Rivadavia 1917, C1033-Buenos Aires, Argentina
mechasantos@yahoo.com.ar

DIEGO MONTALTI

Departamento Biología, Aves, Instituto Antártico Argentino, Cerrito 1248, C1010AAZ-Buenos Aires, Argentina
División Zoología Vertebrados, Museo de La Plata, Paseo del Bosque, B1900FWA- La Plata, Argentina

MARIANA JUÁRES

División Zoología Vertebrados, Museo de La Plata, Paseo del Bosque, B1900FWA- La Plata, Argentina

NÉSTOR R. CORIA

Departamento Biología, Aves, Instituto Antártico Argentino, Cerrito 1248, C1010AAZ-Buenos Aires, Argentina

DIEGO ARCHUBY

Departamento Biología, Aves, Instituto Antártico Argentino, Cerrito 1248, C1010AAZ-Buenos Aires, Argentina
CONICET Rivadavia 1917, C1033-Buenos Aires, Argentina

The austral thrush (*Turdus falcklandii*) (Aves: Turdidae) is the southernmost of the c.300 species of turdids distributed in all parts of the world except Antarctica (Woods 1988). *T. falcklandii* is resident from 27°S in Chile and 37°S in Argentina to Tierra del Fuego, Staten Island, Malvinas Islands, and islands south of the Beagle Channel (Ridgely & Tudor 1989; Woods & Woods 1997). Over this large range, the species occupies a variety of habitats, including tussock islands, settlements with bushes, trees, and out-buildings. The nesting season is late Aug to Dec.

A single *T. falcklandii* was sighted on Potter Peninsula, 25 de Mayo/King George I, South Sandwich Is, on 18 Sep 2002. The bird was perched on a box under the building of the Argentinean Jubany Station (62°14'S 58°40'W); it disappeared that afternoon. The bird was photographed and a full description was taken: the species has not been reported in the Antarctic before.

The bird was an adult male of the subspecies *T. f. magellanicus* whose range includes Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. This race is characterised by a black head and nape, olive-brown on the back, sides of the neck, and the wing coverts, and dark brown primaries and secondaries.

The longest movement recorded previously for *T. falcklandii* was 3.6 km in 6.5 months (Woods 1988). Before our report, the southernmost record of passerine birds was that of 2 barn swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) that were transported from Buenos Aires to Potter Cove, 25 de Mayo/King George I, South Shetland Is by the Argentinian naval icebreaker *Almirante Irizar*, in Nov 1993 (Hahn *et al.* 1998).

The presence of migratory neotropical birds in Antarctica is usually associated with storms or droughts (Orgeira 1991; Favero & Silva 1998; Hahn *et al.* 1998; Hahn & Quillfeldt 1998; Montalti *et al.* 1999) that force birds to move out of their normal distributions. This seems not to be the reason for the austral thrush's presence because no storms were recorded at the island in the days preceding the observation. It is difficult, therefore, to account for the presence of a non-migratory species, whose recorded movements are <5 km, so far south.

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