



THE HERMIT THRUSH: VERMONT'S STATE BIRD

According to Indian legend, the hermit thrush was put on earth without a voice. While the other birds and animals argued among themselves, the hermit thrush went about its business. It searched the forest

for insects to eat, and soon not a bug or beetle could be seen. To reward the hermit for its hard work and gentleness, the Great Spirit gave the hermit thrush a beautiful song to sing.

The hermit thrush was not always the State Bird of Vermont. Not until 1941 did the idea come to a vote in the Vermont legislature. Although other birds were suggested for the role of Vermont's State Bird, the hermit thrush was chosen because it is both a native Vermonter and a summer visitor. The hermit thrush spends every winter in the South, yet it is born and raised in Vermont. Every April the thrush returns home.

The hermit thrush has special coloring that makes it easy to see in the woods. It is brown with a white and brown speckled breast and a rust-colored tail which it lifts quickly and then drops slowly. Sometimes its tail points nearly straight down.

The nest of the hermit thrush is bowl-shaped and made of twigs and moss. The thrush lays three to five blue eggs. It lives in all of Vermont's fourteen counties in the evergreen and hardwood forestland. It hops along the ground like a robin. It lives on the ground and in the low branches of trees and shrubs where it eats insects.

The song of the hermit thrush starts with a long note followed by four or five different tunes. In between are short spaces of silence. The thrush sings its song even in the rain and after night comes. It is the song of the hermit thrush that reminds us of its famous relative the nightingale. And it is the summertime song of the hermit thrush that we enjoy hearing in the woods and fields of Vermont.

Sources:

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