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NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

First documented record of *Catharus fuscescens* (Stephens, 1817) (Passeriformes, Turdidae) in Rio de Janeiro state, southeastern Brazil

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Abstract. *Catharus fuscescens* (Stephens, 1817), Veery, is a Nearctic–Tropical migrant that winters mainly in Brazilian Amazonia and Cerrado. In the Atlantic Forest of the southeastern region of Brazil, it is frequently recorded in São Paulo and Minas Gerais states, but remains undocumented from Rio de Janeiro. We report the first confirmed record of *C. fuscescens* in Rio de Janeiro, based on a banded specimen (F7817) captured on Marambaia Island, Mangaratiba. This finding contributes to the understanding of the species' distribution and migratory routes and supports conservation strategies in southeastern Brazil.

Key words. Biogeography, birds, migration, ornithology, range extension, Veery

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INTRODUCTION

Catharus fuscescens (Stephen, 1817), Veery, is a Nearctic–Tropical migrant belonging to the family Turdidae. This species reproduces in North America and migrates during the northern winter to South America, where it finds mild weather conditions and a greater supply of food resources, spending most of its annual cycle there (Heckscher et al. 2011). Between September and April, individuals can be found in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Bolivia, and the Guianas (Sick 1997; BirdLife International 2018b; Souza et al. 2018; Wikiaves 2025). This species has brownish to slightly rusty dorsal plumage from the head to the rectrices. The ventral region is whitish, with streaks on the side of the throat and brownish spots on the neck and chest. It also has a pale, indistinct periocular ring (Sick 1997; Grantsau 2010; Sigrist 2014).

Catharus fuscescens is recognized as a Brazilian total migrant by Somenzari et al. (2018), which corroborates several other authors (Sick 1997; Remsen 2001; Stouffer 2001; Heckscher et al. 2011; 2015), and visits mostly disjunct areas in the Amazon, Cerrado, and Atlantic Forest of the southeast region (Remsen 2001; Heckscher et al. 2011, 2015; Somenzari et al. 2018; Souza et al. 2018; Wikiaves, 2025). The Amazon and Cerrado biomes represent the main wintering areas. Recently, studies have shown that *C. fuscescens* is a migrant that initially settles on the Brazilian Shield and later migrates to a second South American region between January and March (Heckscher et al. 2011, 2015).

In southeastern Brazil, there are many documented records of this species in São Paulo and Minas Gerais states, which mainly constitute its secondary wintering areas (Remsem 2001; Heckscher et al. 2011). In contrast, the states of Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo have few records, with no documented observations to date. Specifically for Rio de Janeiro, there is a paucity of occurrence data of *C. fuscescens* published in the scientific literature (Pacheco and Parrini 2000; Alves 2007; Sigrist 2014), and even citizen-science platforms lack photographic or audio evidence of the species from this state. Consequently, *C. fuscescens* is considered rare in the region (Gagliardi 2011).

The documentation of the occurrence of migratory bird species, especially through the capture and individual marking of specimens, is a crucial tool for advancing knowledge (Alves 2007), improving our understanding of their migratory routes, patterns, distribution, and ecology. In this context, we report the first documented record of *C. fuscescens* from the state of Rio de Janeiro based on a specimen captured at Marambaia Island (Ilha da Marambaia), municipality of Mangaratiba. Notably, to date, this is also the first record of the species on a coastal island in Brazil.

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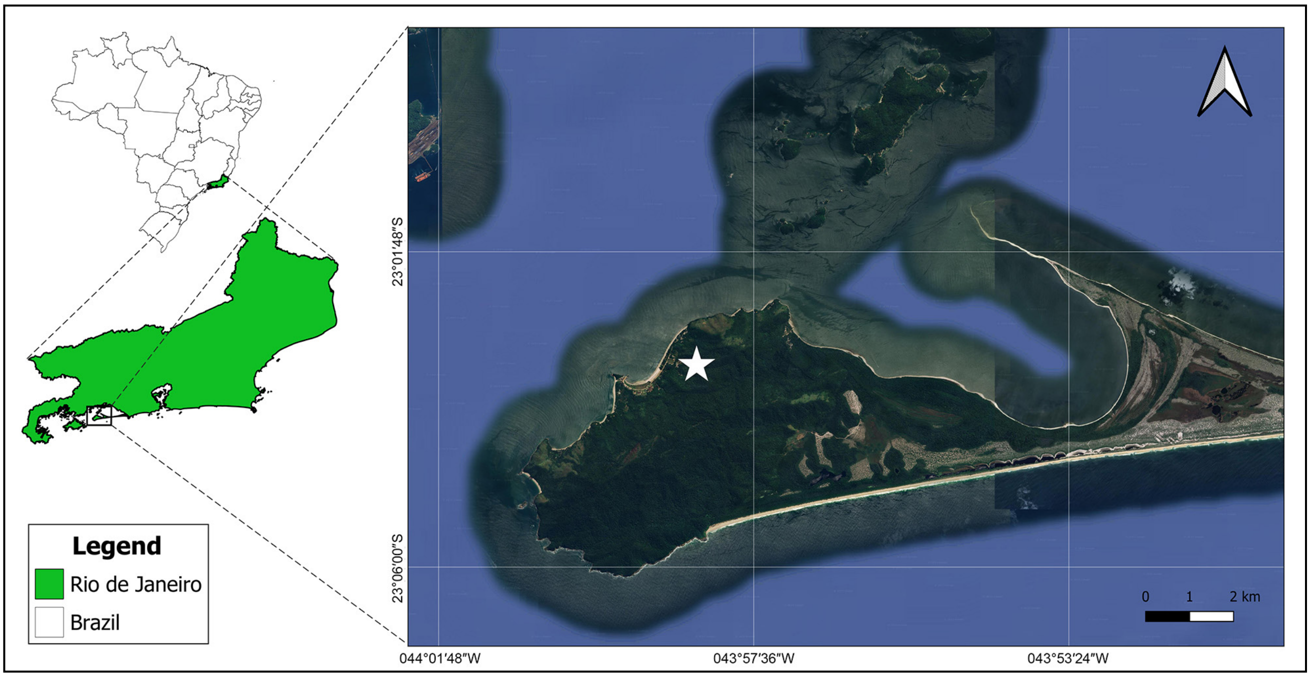

Figure 1. Location of Marambaia Island in Rio de Janeiro state, southeastern Brazil. The star marks the site where the specimen of *Catharus fuscescens* was captured.

STUDY AREA

The sampling was carried out on Marambaia Island, located in the municipality of Mangaratiba, state of Rio de Janeiro, southeastern Brazil (between 23°04′S, 044°00′W and 23°02′S, 044°34′W) (Figure 1). The island is connected to the mainland by a long dune formation known as the Marambaia Coastal Restinga (Restinga da Marambaia), which extends for approximately 40 km. Covering an area of 42 km^2, the island exhibits a mountainous topography, with its highest peak at 641 m above sea level (Pereira et al. 1990). There are three distinct ecosystems: mangrove, restinga (comprising both dune shrublands and forested areas), and Atlantic Forest (Conde et al. 2005). The macroclimate is classified as Tropical, Aw, which is characterized by dry winters and rainy summers according to the Köppen climate classification (Köppen 1948). The region is located within a legally designated environmental protection area, established by State Decree 9,802/87 (Rio de Janeiro 1987). Furthermore, access to the island is restricted and controlled by the Brazilian Navy.

METHODS

Between 14 and 16 February 2020, birds were captured with Ecotone Mist-nets (model 716/12, 12 × 2.5 m, 16 mm mesh) deployed along forest transects near the Grotto Trail (Trilha da Gruta). Each bird specimen was assessed to determine age class (juvenile or adult), sex, and the presence of clinical signs and/or ectoparasites; banded with aluminum rings provided by the Brazilian bird-ringing agency (Centro Nacional de Pesquisa e Conservação de Aves Silvestres; hereafter CEMAVE); and photographed for documentation. Subsequently, each specimen was released at the site of capture.

RESULTS

***Catharus fuscescens* (Stephen, 1817)**
Figure 2

New record. BRAZIL — Rio de Janeiro • Marambaia Island, Grotto Trail; 23°03′38″S, 043°58′47″W; 16 m a.s.l.; 15.III.2020; captured, assessed, and released by Bruno Pereira Berto; healthy adult of indeterminate sex, free of ectoparasites and not undergoing molt; banded with an aluminum ring from CEMAVE (code F7817).

Identification. The following characters were observed: (1) upperparts rufous-brown; (2) throat and belly white; (3) breast yellowish; (4) breast and neck marked with brownish spots; and (5) head brownish, with a faint, pale eye-ring.

Figure 2. Photographs from different angles (**A–D**) of the *Catharus fuscescens* specimen captured on Marambaia Island, Rio de Janeiro state, southeastern Brazil.

Habitat. The capture site is a slope in the Atlantic Forest, characterized by a dense, ombrophilous forest predominantly composed of early- and late-successional secondary species, with a dense understory. The Grotto Trail (Trilha da Gruta) runs alongside the Marambaia River.

DISCUSSION

The ecology of Nearctic–Neotropical migrant songbirds in South America is still poorly understood, and many passerines migrate over wide areas without following a well-defined route (Hecksher et al. 2021; Fialho and Filho 2022). Among them, *Catharus fuscescens* has generated much debate and hypotheses regarding its winter distribution (Remsen 2001; Stouffer 2001; Pagano et al. 2013). Earlier studies suggested that the species wintered mainly in the northern part of South America or even Central America, but Remsen (2001) demonstrated that its range extends further east and south, encompassing broad areas of central and southeastern Brazil. More recent works confirmed that the main wintering regions include the Amazon and the Cerrado, with additional records in the Atlantic Forest of southeastern Brazil (Somenzari et al. 2018).

This species nests between May and July in temperate, humid, deciduous forests of the northern United States and southern Canada, migrates south through the Gulf of Mexico, and winters primarily in south-central South America. In Brazil, it occurs in a gradient of habitats from sparse Cerrado to humid understory and secondary forests (Stouffer 2001; Andersen et al. 2007; Ubaid and Antas 2013; Rengifo et al. 2020), with numerous records in the Amazon, central Brazil, and the Southeast region, especially in the states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais (Remsen 2001). The species is less common farther south, reaching Paraguay, southern Brazil, and northern Argentina, which mark the southern limit of its distribution (Robbins et al. 1999; Pagano et al. 2013), and Peru, its westernmost limit (Rengifo et al. 2020; Andersen et al. 2007).

Heckscher et al. (2011, 2015) demonstrated that, through the use of geolocators, *C. fuscescens* exhibits an intratropical migration in South America. After settling on the Central Brazilian Shield, the species moves to peripheral regions of the Amazonian Basin, likely in response to the seasonal flood cycle of the rivers of the Amazon Basin (Somenzari et al. 2018). Therefore, *C. fuscescens* has already been widely reported in Brazilian territory, both in main wintering areas and in regions where its occurrence is rarer, including occasional records in the South (Kaminski 2011; Straube et al. 2013) and Northeast region of the country (Pereira et al. 2012; Souza et al. 2018; Pereira et al. 2019).

In the state of Rio de Janeiro, *C. fuscescens* has been mentioned only sporadically in the scientific literature. The earliest records are from Itatiaia National Park, cited by Pacheco and Parrini (2000) and Alves (2007), and later included in the park's list of bird species by Santos (2018). The species was also reported for the Tinguá Biological Reserve (Sigrist 2014) and for Praia Seca (Araruama municipality), based on an observation by Douglas F. Stotz in 1992 (Remsen 2001; Kaminsky 2011). At the state level, Gagliardi (2011) listed *C. fuscescens*

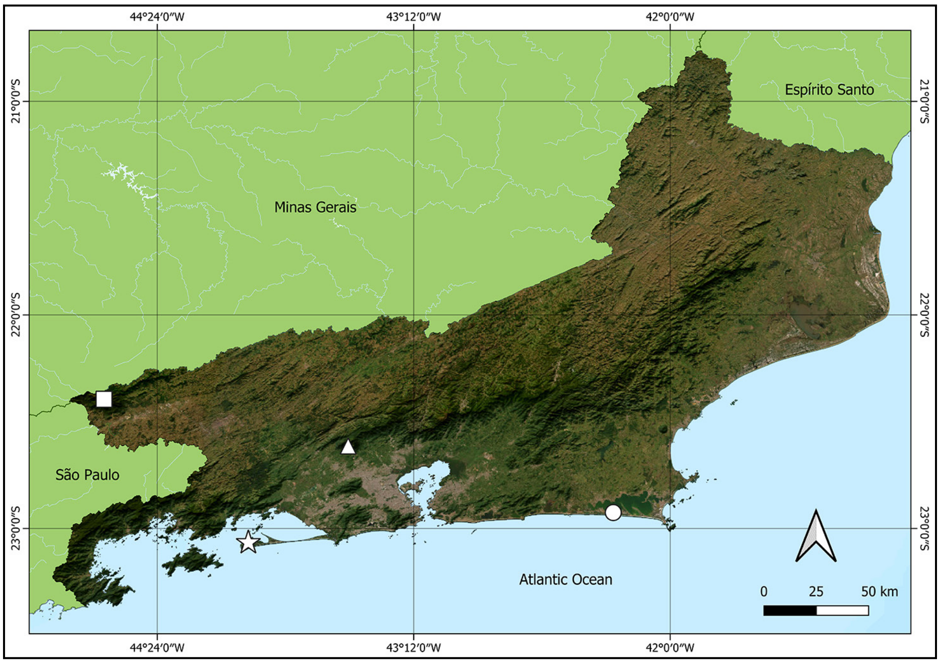

Figure 3. Locations where *Catharus fuscescens* was recorded in the Rio de Janeiro state, southeastern Brazil. Square = records in Itatiaia National Park (Alves 2007; Pacheco and Parrini 2000; Santos 2018). Triangle = record from Reserva Biológia do Tinguá (Sigrist 2014). Circle = record by Douglas F. Stotz (Remsen 2001; Kaminski 2011; Pereira et al. 2012). Star = new record from Marambaia Island (this study).

in a checklist of birds and classified it as rare. Despite these mentions, until the present study, there were still no documented records of this species in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The localities where *C. fuscescens* has been reported in Rio de Janeiro state are shown in Figure 3.

Additionally, we reviewed records of the species' distribution on the main citizen-science platforms used in Brazil (Wikiaves, eBird, and Táxeus), which currently comprise important databases on areas where bird species occur. No records were found in either Wikiaves or eBird, and only a single report from the city of Rio de Janeiro was found on Táxeus, but this was subsequently invalidated by platform moderators due to a reporting error. Therefore, we disregard this record in our survey of historical records of the species in the state and do not include it in Figure 3.

An additional relevant point concerns the conservation of *C. fuscescens*. Although globally classified as Least Concern by the IUCN Red List (Birdlife International 2018a), its populations show evidence of decline. Broader trends reinforce this concern: about 58% of North American bird species have declined in the past five decades (Rosenberg et al. 2019), and roughly 10% of migratory birds worldwide are currently threatened (BirdLife International 2025). Despite being more generalists in terms of habitats, migratory species may require the preservation of key areas separated by thousands of kilometers, as is the case for *C. fuscescens* (Fialho and Filho 2022). In Brazil, this has serious implications, since the main wintering regions, the Amazon and Cerrado, have undergone intense deforestation (Alves 2007).

Remsen (2001) had already warned that, despite the species' wide wintering range, the ongoing conversion of habitats to agriculture and livestock could intensify population declines. Stouffer (2001) emphasized that the knowledge of its distribution limits is crucial for establishing effective conservation strategies. Likewise, Heckscher et al. (2011) highlighted that understanding the connectivity between its disjointed wintering areas is key to clarifying population dynamics, which is essential for conservation actions. In this context, banding data, such as those presented here, provide valuable tools for monitoring distribution, migratory patterns, and supporting conservation actions for *C. fuscescens*.

The ecology of *C. fuscescens* in its wintering sites remains poorly understood, and the paucity of records may be attributed to its inconspicuous behavior, including not singing outside its breeding sites (Heckscher et al. 2011; Souza et al. 2018), as well as its discreet plumage. These characteristics make the record even more important, due to the difficulty of observing the species. Consequently, these types of records can add to the body of knowledge of the species' distribution, migration routes, and environments used, as well as contribute to the development of conservation strategies.

In summary, our new record represents the first documented occurrence of the species in the state of Rio de Janeiro, and the first record on a Brazilian coastal island, and it stands out due to the bird's capture and banding.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that no competing interests exist.

Ethical statement

Field-collecting permits were issued by the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade; ICMBio), through the Biodiversity Authorization and Information System (Sistema de Autorização e Informação em Biodiversidade; SISBIO) under license number 70132; and the Animal Ethics Committee (Comitê de Ética no Uso de Animais; CEUA) of the University of Grande Rio (Universidade do Grande Rio; UNIGRANRIO) under protocol number 021/2019. Banding permits and aluminum rings were issued by CEMAVE/ICMBio (Senior Ringer: BPB, registration 5967850). All applicable institutional, national, and international guidelines for the care and use of animals were followed.

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Author contributions

Conceptualization: CNOF, BPB. Data curation: BPB. Formal analysis: CNOF, GAQ, BPB. Funding acquisition: MSO, BPB. Investigation: MSO, BPB. Methodology: MSO, BPB. Project administration: MSO, BPB. Resources: MSO, BPB. Software: GAQ, BPB. Supervision: MSO, BPB. Validation: CNOF, GAQ, BPB. Visualization: CNOF, GAQ, LDS, BPB. Writing – original draft: CNOF, GAQ, LDS. Writing – review and editing: CNOF, GAQ, LDS, MSO, BPB.

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Data availability

All data that support the findings of this study are available in the main text.

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