



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

**Louisiana Waterthrush
*Parkesia motacilla***

State Status: **None**
Federal Status: **None**

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: The Louisiana Waterthrush is a medium-sized (about 6 inches) migratory wood-warbler known more for its impressive vocal abilities and tail-wagging habit than for its drab coloration (Robinson 1995). Male and female plumages are similar and include a brown back, wings, and tail. The underparts are white with brown streaks. The head is brown with a white eye stripe and throat. Juvenile plumage is similar, but with rusty tips on tertials and distinct buff-colored wing-bars.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE: The Louisiana Waterthrush is an uncommon breeder in central and western Massachusetts, but is rare east of Worcester County and absent from Cape Cod and the Islands (Petersen and Meservey 2003). The species' range is expanding north and east in northeastern North America, perhaps as a result of reforestation in the Northeast (Robinson 1995).

HABITAT DESCRIPTION: Louisiana Waterthrushes establish long (200-1200 meters), linear territories along flowing streams in continuous hardwood or mixed hardwood/conifer forests (Robinson 1995). They forage at fast rates in shallow water (< 2 cm deep), using quick, jab-like strokes to capture aquatic insects and invertebrates (Robinson 1995). Nests are usually placed in cavities in vertical stream banks. A shallow cup is

occasionally excavated in the cavity, and then lined with leaves. The inside of the nest cup is constructed from fine plant materials including grasses, rootlets, fern material, and mosses. The nest is often located low on the bank, even within 6 inches of running water (Petersen and Meservey 2003).

THREATS: Little is known regarding threats to the Louisiana Waterthrush. Habitat fragmentation is a potential threat as Louisiana Waterthrushes are thought to be area-sensitive (DeGraaf and Yamasaki 2001).

REFERENCES:

- DeGraaf, R.M., and M. Yamasaki. 2001. *New England Wildlife*. University Press of New England, Hanover, New Hampshire.
- Petersen, W.R., and W.R. Meservey. 2003. *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas*. Massachusetts Audubon Society and University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, Massachusetts.
- Robinson, W.D. 1995. Louisiana Waterthrush (*Seiurus motacilla*). In: *The Birds of North America*, No. 151 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

Updated 2015

A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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