



On the 20th January 2011 I received an email asking for assistance in identifying an unknown avian visitor which was present in a garden in Leigh on the 8th December 2010. Nothing new there it seemed, as I receive several such requests each week, including a recent influx of which were leucistic House Sparrows. On initially opening and viewing the images though, this was clearly not in the same category and was instead an undeniably rather magnificent male Dusky Thrush (*Turdus eunomus*)!

I contacted the observer, Ian Reynolds, immediately. Unsurprisingly, Ian (who is not a birdwatcher but is instead a plane spotter) had no idea of the magnitude of his find. In actual fact, he had only taken the images due to being in a heightened sense of alert after the presence of three Waxwings which had visited berry trees in his front garden and which his brother (who is a birdwatcher) was particularly keen to see. On photographing the unusual thrush though, neither he nor his brother could find a suitable equivalent in any of the bird books they possessed and the matter of pursuing its identification became somewhat lost over the festive period. Fortunately, his brother was aware of my Manchester Birding website and eventually pestered Ian to send the images to me.

Whilst the identification of the bird was patently not in question, the location of the photographs required verification and then there was the small matter of whether the bird was still present! After discussing the sighting with Ian I quickly established that it only spent approximately half an hour alone in this single tree and had certainly not been since subsequently. The next day, I visited Ian's garden to see the location in which the photographs were taken, an unfortunately necessary evil, especially since Greater Manchester had recently experienced and exposed its first entirely fraudulent photographic rarity claim. On arrival I quickly verified from the images that both the background and the highly distinctive tree in

which the bird had been perched did indeed perfectly match that on view from Ian's window. Greater Manchester it seemed, had indeed recorded a monumental rarity.

Even though the bird went unseen by anyone other than Ian, he should be commended for capturing the images in the first place and, with the encouragement of his brother Gary, for seeking assistance in it's recognition. Yet again, if proof were needed that rarities of any magnitude can occur absolutely anywhere, this should surely suffice.

The images below, despite being taken through double glazed windows capture this tremendous *turdus* perfectly.

**All images © Ian Reynolds.**

Male Dusky Thrush (*Turdus eunomus*), Leigh, Greater Manchester, 8th December 2010.







The images below were taken by me on the 21st January 2011, from the first-floor window Ian's original shots were taken from. Very distinctive marks on the tree itself, plus the shape and colour of individual branches, proved beyond any doubt that the images were indeed taken in there. The red arrows highlight the position the Dusky Thrush had occupied.



**Ian McKerchar, January 2011**

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