

In the Time of the Wood Thrush

By Stacey Remick-Simkins

I was heartbroken in the summer of 2017.

God is the grand composer and birdsong creator. There are such delights found in birdsong that often people listen for a particular song at particular times to mark new beginnings, new lives and new seasons. Such was the song of the Wood Thrush for me. I had come to anticipate their fluty and enchanting song as a way to usher in the joy and beginnings of life that comes with a verdant Virginia summer.

This summer, though, I would be heartbroken by the absence of their song. I had failed to hear them at all that spring anywhere that I hiked. So, one June morning, I ventured out to Manassas National Battlefield Park to conduct a summer bird survey with a long-time birding partner. We covered a standard range of forests and open grasslands as we had done in previous years only to discover that there were no Wood Thrush songs to hear. They were heart-rendingly absent.

I would soon learn that their habitats were being destroyed systematically around the world leaving them bereft and endangered. I feared that I would have to learn to accept that I may never hear them again.

Hope arrives in 2020.

This summer the Wood Thrush has appeared everywhere including our St. Peter's in the Woods forest. When I conducted a survey about a month ago, I was overwhelmed to hear a Wood Thrush singing within feet of me. It was hidden well foraging and likely gathering food for a nest and/or young. This thrush had found the SPW forest to be a safe and good place to set down roots for raising a family. Our forest provides the sustenance and safety that a Wood Thrush can count on.

Keeping our forest a place of sanctuary for those such as the Wood Thrush is practicing creation care in an immediate, reverent way. That one Wood Thrush in our forest could tip the balance in saving the lives of those that migrate here. Next year, we may have another couple of them settling in for the summer to create new life that once again may be able to survive because there was that small safe place in our forest for them to shelter in.

They remain endangered and threatened by continued assaults on the forests all around them. Their migrations are threatened as are the forests that they return to in South America. SPW's forest will remain a place for hope where we can thank God for giving us the chance to steward the gifts of our forest.

For more on the Wood Thrush

<https://www.birdnote.org/show/wood-thrush-and-eastern-forests>

<https://www.birdnote.org/show/henry-david-thoreau-and-wood-thrush>

