



## An unusual nest of the Hermit Thrush

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Figure 1: Potted plant containing the nest of a Hermit Thrush at Gold Lake, Peterborough Co., 25 July 2007. Photo: C.M. Lemieux.

The Hermit Thrush is a widespread and common breeding species in Ontario, nesting in a wide variety of dry to wet habitats, primarily in coniferous and mixed forest. The species often nests in or near clearings or along forest edges (Peck and James 1987). Nests are typically located on the ground or occasionally low in shrubs or saplings. Records indicate that the Hermit Thrush sel-

dom nests on or around human habitations or other anthropogenic structures (Peck and James 1987, 1998; Jones and Donovan 1996).

On 24 July 2007, the nest of a Hermit Thrush was discovered by the primary author and Paul E. Clifford in a potted plant on the elevated deck of a cottage on Gold Lake, Galway and Cavendish Township Municipality,



Figure 2: Detail of Hermit Thrush nest amongst stems of Coral Bells, Golden Moneywort and Zebra Grass in potted plant, 28 July 2004. *Photo: C.M. Lemieux.*

Peterborough County, 44° 43' N, 78° 16' W (Figures 1, 2). The potted plant was located on a picnic table directly outside a door providing access to the deck, which was elevated approximately 3.6 m above the surrounding grade. The standard 25 cm plastic flower pot was planted with a mixture of Coral Bells (*Heuchera* hybrid), Golden Moneywort (*Lysimachia nummularia* 'aurea'), and Chinese Silver Grass or Zebra Grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'zebrinus').

The nest and surrounding habitat were otherwise characteristic of the species. The surrounding habitat was generally typical of the Kawartha Highlands area and can be described as

mature to moderately mature White Pine-Red Oak-maple forest on rocky, gently to steeply undulating relief with numerous small lakes and other wetlands. The Hermit Thrush is a widespread and relatively common breeding species in the Kawartha Highlands. The nest, which contained one egg at the time of its discovery, consisted of a slight depression in the potting soil amongst the plant stems, and was constructed of dead leaves (Sugar Maple, *Acer saccharum* ssp. *saccharum*, and Red Oak, *Quercus rubra*) and pine needles (primarily White Pine, *Pinus strobus*) and lined with fine grass stems, rootlets and pine needles. The clutch of four eggs was

completed and incubation initiated on 28 July. On 10 August, it was discovered that the nest had failed, following the drying and wilting of the untended plants in the pot. Records of anomalous nest locations for Hermit Thrush are summarized by Peck and James (1987, 1998), Jones and Donovan (1996) and Tozer (1997). Other nest locations around human habitations include sites in rain gutters, in old Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*) nests on drip caps, head jambs and nesting trays above windows, on rafters under roofs and in other locations under the eaves of buildings. Other unusual nest locations have included an abandoned mine shaft, in short grass under a cemetery grave marker, in the rough of a golf course fairway, in a cavity in a deciduous tree, on roadside rock cuts, on low (<2 m) ledges on vertical rock faces and on the side of a boulder, in the previously used nest of a Northern Waterthrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis*) and on the outer limb of an Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), 4.3 m above the ground (Armstrong and Euler 1983; Peck and James 1987, 1998; Jones and Donovan 1996; Tozer 1997).

## Literature Cited

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