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56-77-29

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS-SIGHT RECORD REPORT
 RARE OR UNUSUAL RECORD NEW STATE RECORD

CFO-ORC FILE NO.
ACCEPTED REJECTED

Species: LeConte's Sparrow
(Vernacular Name)

Passerherbulus caudacutus
(Scientific Name)

Date: 7 May 1977
Locality: Dry Creek Reservoir
Nearest Town: Wellington, CO

Time bird seen: 0915 to: 0927

County: Larimer

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Name	Address
John W. Solberg	115 Garfield St., Ft. Collins

Telephone
none

Optical Equipment: Bausch & Lomb Balscope Sr. w/20X, Sears 10x50 binoculars
If photographed, type of equipment used: Canon FTb w/400mm f4.5 and Vivitar 2X teleconverter.
Minolta Super w/200mm f4.5 and Vivitar 2X teleconverter.

Light Conditions: Overcast and bright, photographed at 1/60 and 1/125 second at largest aperture.

Distance from bird (how measured): Photographed from 8m, also observed with optics at 8m. Distances paced and recorded from lens barrels.

Number of birds seen: 1

Sex: unknown

Plumage: adult

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor: Within the first 4½ minutes of observation, the sparrow stayed in the outer strip of sedge, which although longer, ranker, and of last seasons growth, was layed down. Here, the sparrow was quiet and ran little, giving us excellent opportunity to identify and photograph the bird. As we tried to approach more closely it became nervous, and flew about 20m. It's flight was weak, not unlike that of the marsh wrens. From the area which the bird flew (new growth of sedge along the lakes shore) we flushed it again and it flew into an adjoining hay field. We lost the bird for a short time, but when we kicked the bird out, it once again flew to the older sedge growth. At this point the bird evaded most attempts at observation. Running mouse-like through the growth, we constantly lost sight of the bird. It stuck to overhanging vegetation with quick dashes across small openings in the sedge. After it flushed into the new sedge once again, we decided we had enough proof to leave the bird alone.

Describe in great detail the bird's size, overall shape, plumage and color-pattern. Include details on shape of bill, wings, and tail. Give particular emphasis to the marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance in field guide descriptions is not enough:

The sparrow was first noticed as we walked along the west shore of Dry Creek Reservoir. The birds small and short tailed appearance made me think it an unusual species for this area.

The characteristics immediately apparent were the bright orange-yellow coloration especially on the facial lines (~~see sketch~~) and continuing onto the bold back strip.

The single white crown stripe was, too, prominent. Another characteristic which stood out clearly was a gray cheek patch bordered on each edge by the yellowish face color. Dark side streaking was present as was the yellowish wash across the breast. The only field mark mentioned in the guides which we did not observe was the pinkish nape, which is discernable in the photos.

The general shape on wings, and body were characteristically 'sparrow'. As stated before the tail was short (seemingly less significant than a Savannah sparrow) and the body size was comparable to perhaps a Long-billed Marsh wren. The bill was short and stout, also typically sparrow.

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery:

No song or call given.

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird: For the majority of the observation time the bird stayed within a 20m strip of sedge growth along the west shore of Dry Creek Reservoir. The edge along the shore was of new sedge growth, about 15cm high. The other 10m was comprised of long, rank, dead material from the previous growing season. Within this older growth there was a mixture of grass and shrub growth. Bordering the sedge strip was an irrigated alfalfa field which the sparrow used only when hard pressed. Photographs were taken of the observation site, and if helpful, these too will be sent for observation verification.

How were similarly appearing species eliminated? The very obvious white stripe through the crown's center, along with the rich orange-yellow on the face, back stripes, and breast eliminate all but possibly the Grasshopper Sparrow. And the dark side streaking and sharply distinguished gray cheek patch, along with the much richer yellow tone disallows this species (Grasshopper Sparrow).

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species: I have had experience with the Grasshopper, Baird's, and Savannah Sparrows as well as both species of marsh wren, which could possibly be confused with the LeConte's. More importantly, I have never observed a Sharp-tailed Sparrow, but from our observations I have no doubt as to this bird's identity. This has also been our first experience with the LeConte's species.

Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation:

Birds of North America Robbins, Bruun, Zim, Singer
Field Guide to Western Birds Peterson
Birds of Colorado Bailey, Niedrach

The only field guide used during observation was Peterson's. The others were used later after we returned from the field. No influencing effect was made from these guides, as all characteristics were noted before we

consulted these guides. We are both very careful about recording data and species; if there was any doubt as to identification it would never have been recorded without a question mark.

This report was written after observation

Edward J. Hollowed Box 721 Meeker, Colo. 26 May 1977

Edward J. Hollowed

P.S. Photos have been sent to Jack Reddall
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Englewood, CO 80110