

SPECIES: LE CONTE'S SPARROW

(Vernacular Name)

Ammodramus leconteii 58-93-15

(Scientific Name)

DATE(S): MAY 12 & 13, 1993

TIME OF OBSERVATION:

11:30 12:15 (5-12) 14:00
15:40 TO 15:42 (5-13) 14:00

(5-12-93): Hale Ponds, South Republican SWA

EXACT LOCATION: (5-13-93): Bonny Reservoir SWA

NEAREST TOWN: Idalia

COUNTY: Yuma

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THIS BIRD:

Seen by all six observers on 5-12 who were participating in a Denver Museum of Natural History field trip, none of whom were experienced bird-watchers. Seen only by me on 5-13.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: 9.5 x 44 Celestron Binoculars

WEATHER CONDITIONS: (5-12): Clear; Wind, SW 5 MPH; 70°

(5-13): Mostly cloudy; Wind, NW 10-15 MPH; 68°

BIRD/SUN ORIENTATION: (5-12): Bright sun directly upon birds. (5-13): Sun not a factor.

DISTANCE FROM BIRD AND HOW MEASURED: (5-12): 15'-20'; (5-13): 20'

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: (5-12): 2 (5-13): 2 SEX: Unknown PLUMAGE: Adult.

BEHAVIOR AND DEMEANOR: (5-12): Observed at very close range feeding on catkins in a small willow tree at the edge of one of the Hale Ponds. During the lengthy period of observation (45 minutes), both birds carefully and methodically worked over the willow, at times hidden among the leaves, at other times visible in plain view. The appeared unconcerned by our close presence. (5-13): Flew up from a grassy field at the edge of a dirt road and into a Russian Olive where I watched them perched for about 2 minutes. (Same birds as 5-12?)

HEAD & NECK (forehead, crown, auricular & malar regions, median line, etc.): Crown blackish, lightly streaked with buff and rufous, divided by a crisp median stripe which was buffy in front, grayish-white behind; ear coverts pale gray, sides of throat bright orange-buffy. A "flat-headed" appearing sparrow.

EYES & LORES (supercilium, eye-ring, eye-stripe, color, etc.): Dark eye; lores pale gray; broad, bright, orange-buffy supercilium; small black stripe behind eye.

LOWER & UPPER MANDIBLES (color & shape): Small, conical bill, grayish in color.

LEGS & FEET: pale, dusky.

UPPERPARTS (nape, back, rump, uppertail coverts, etc.): pinkish streaks were readily noted on hind-neck when birds occasionally hung upside-down on a branch. feathers on back and scapulars with broad, black centers, mixed with chestnut and broadly edged with white; rump and uppertail coverts brownish marked with black.

UNDERPARTS (chin, throat, belly, sides, flanks, crissum, etc.): pale chin and throat; bright orange-buffy breast and sides; flanks more buffy and marked with dark stripes; belly and under tail coverts grayish-white.

RETRICES (inner, middle & outer tail feathers; color, pattern, shape, etc.): Relatively short tail; individually short, pointed, narrow retrices; brownish with black centers, small notch at end of tail.

WINGS (color, length, shape, bars, coverts, etc.): Brownish feathers edged with pale; tertiaries rufous with prominent, broad blackish ends, indistinct wingbars.

VOCALIZATION (call/song, method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight): None heard.

HABITAT: Small, man-made, fresh-water ponds bordered with small, scattered willows with large grassy areas in the surrounding areas, including cattail & grass marshes.

ELIMINATION OF SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

SHARP-TAILED SPARROW (*Ammodramus caudacutus*): Closely resembles *A. leconteii* in many ways but has gray median line through crown and the inland race (*A. e. nelsoni*) has prominent white stripes on back.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW (*Ammodramus savannarum*): Buffy sides lack dark stripes, Darkish crown with white median line through crown. lacks the broad orange supercillium and grayish auriculars of *A. leconteii*. Also, has yellow lores.

ALL OTHER *Ammodramus* SPARROWS: Have some degree of streaking on chest or breast.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

LE CONTE'S SPARROW: First seen at the "Felton Plain", Clay County, Minnesota on June 20, 1977. Seen again on May 23, 1982 along the "Grassland Trail", J. Clark Salyer NWR, Bottineau Co., North Dakota. Also seen on wintering grounds at the Anahuac NWR, Chambers Co., Texas on February 25, 1978. Seen once before in Colorado at "John Martin Marsh", Bent Co. on January 6 & 13, 1991.

SHARP-TAILED SPARROW: Seen regularly every year in salt marshes on eastern Long Island, New York (*A. e. caudacutus*) in the 1940's & 1950's and during numerous visits thereafter. Also in South Carolina; Saw *A. e. nelsoni* at Cherry Creek S.P. on October 31, 1982.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW: Seen many times over the years at Nebraska, Colorado, New York

BOOKS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND ADVICE CONSULTED THAT INFLUENCED THIS REPORT:

Field Guide to the Birds of North America (National Geographic Society).

The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding - Volume 3

Examined a number of specimens at the Denver Museum of Natural History.

THIS REPORT WRITTEN FROM NOTES MADE DURING X AFTER OBSERVATION; FROM MEMORY

NAME: JACK REDDALL SIGNATURE: Jack Reddall DATE: May 31, 1993