

BOULDER, COLORADO CBC

A

Species: Field Sparrow

Spizella pusilla

(Vernacular Name)

(Scientific Name-use binomial)

Date(s): 19 December 1982

Time Bird Seen: 1045

to 1100

Locality: nr 76th and Skylark Rd. (Bob Jickling's shelter belt)

Nearest Town: Boulder

County: Boulder

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

Optical Equipment: Bushnell Spacemaster II scope, 20x wide angle eyepiece, Swift Audubon 8.5

If photographed, type of equipment used: 44 binoculars

Light Conditions: excellent, several angles, usually sun was from behind observer

Distance from bird (how measured): 3 meters

Number of Birds Seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: Basic (=winter)

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor: Bird was in a mixed species flock consisting of juncoes, black-capped and mountain chickadees, house finches, and a downy woodpecker. I called the flock to me by imitating the sound of a screech-owl. The field sparrow sat in a Russian olive tree and shifted around between that and several other trees, hackberries. Obviously agitated, it afforded me numerous views from several angles. No foraging, interspecific interactions, or songs were noted. However, its chip note was heard several times.

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. Describe what you actually saw in the field:

Size: relative to other members of the genus Spizella it showed the following differences. The bill was larger (more conical), the tail seemed about as long as that of a Chipping Sparrow, longer than that of a Clay-colored. All this information will be repeated on the next page.

See next page for distinguishing characteristics

(OVER)

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc:

Chip notes are difficult to describe. In my in-depth experiences during the past 6 months with field sparrows in the field, I began to be able to distinguish its chip note from those of Clay-colored and Chipping Sparrows. It was by hearing the chip note that I first found the bird within the flock.

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird:  
Planted shelter belt adjacent to a field.

Planted shelter belt adjacent to two fields of medium length grass. Tree species in the shelter belt consisted of Russian olive, Hackberry, *Ponocera* pine, and Juniperus sp., as well as some others with which I am not familiar.

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

From Chipping Sparrow: more conical (=deeper at base) bill; pinker bill (less dark brown than in Chipping); crown with only a single pale median buffy stripe and reddish laterally; wings appeared shorter (i.e., they extended only slightly beyond the rump, whereas they extend even farther onto the tail in the Chipping Sparrow); legs pinker, more translucent; rump brownish (rather than gray); breast and flanks more heavily washed with lavender.

From all other *Spizellas*: bold white eyering, deep conical bill with pinkish cast to it and the legs; reddish, rusty edgings of the wing-coverts.

From Clay-colored: lack of a brownish malar stripe; lack of a distinct cheek triangle well delineated from paler face; lack of a dark line through eye; wing coverts not blackish.

From Brewer's Sparrow: lack of an evenly streaked crown and nape; much duller brownish malar stripe; lack of a distinct cheek triangle well delineated from paler face; lack of a streaked crown; lack of a gray nape.

From Tree Sparrow: lack of a distinctly bicolored crown; lack of a gray nape; especially on the covert and secondary edges. presence of a ruddy post-ocular line and smudges on the breast and flanks more heavily washed with buffy-gold.

From Tree Sparrow: lack of a distinctly bi-colored bill; lack of a central breast spot.

From Black-chinned Sparrow: lack of gryish cast to head, breast, and rump.

lack of grayish cast to head, breast, and rump.

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

Extensive field experience with all Spizellas. My Master's degree study deals with geographic variation within and the taxonomy of the genus. Special emphasis is on the field sparrow.

Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation?  
Many study skins of all species in the genus.

This report was written from notes made during \_\_\_\_\_ after x observation; from memory

PRINT NAME: Mark Holmgren SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: 2 January 1983  
Street Address: Museum of Natural History, KU Town and State: Lawrence, Kansas ZIP: 66045

COLLECTED 12/21/82. In DMNH COLLECTION 37538.