

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

14 Mar 1987

West Branch, Cedar Co., IA

*Veal, *Bendorf, *Sandrock, *Kent, *Fuller, *

*Moore; IBL 57:86, 58:75, Veal 1987

Record Number: 87-12

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Sally Veal, 14 Mar

Carl J. Bendorf, 16 Mar

James P. Sandrock, 16 Mar

Thomas H. Kent, 16 Mar

Jim Fuller, 17 Mar

Peter C. Petersen, 17, 19, 21 Mar

Thomas J. Staudt, 20 Mar

Francis L. Moore, 21 Mar

PHOTOGRAPH

P. Petersen, 21 March, P-0219 (IBL 57:95)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:86

Veal, S. 1957. Eurasian Tree Sparrow at West Branch. IBL 57:95.

Photograph: IBL 57:95 (P-0219)

Records Committee: IBL 58:75

VOTE: 5-I-P, 2-II

I-P. Photo is clearly diagnostic.

I-P. Diagnostic descriptions and photos. An expected vagrant and unknown (recent) as an escape.

I-P. Pete and I took photos. Good descriptions of diagnostic field marks for Eurasian Tree Sparrow. I have no doubts on this one. It was good to see so many documentations on a species, the many different observations from so many people makes it a lot easier to judge a record.

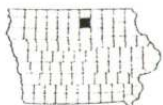
I-P. How did Keokuk get left out when this species decided to make its Iowa debut.

I-P. Unless someone wants to try to make case for direct transport by man from Illinois area 60-70 miles away.

II (I-P, I suppose!). Interesting sighting. Perhaps the absence of clothesline posts is the factor preventing the expansion of this bird's range.

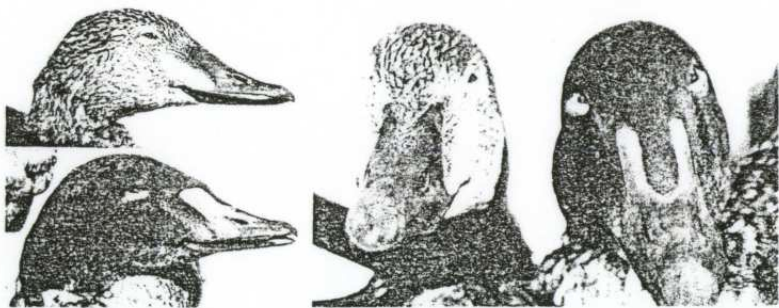
KING EIDERS AT CLEAR LAKE

JAMES L. HANSEN



On 17 November 1986, I was duck hunting on the west end of Clear Lake, Cerro Gordo County, with Rick Poole and Ron Glanville. A very strong, early cold front had hit northern Iowa on 8 November, and for the next week temperatures were as much as 30 degrees below normal. Area marshes were frozen on 10 November, and Clear Lake froze over on 13 November, except for the small hole at the end of the sandbar where we had our decoys and the two small holes at the other end of the lake. The ice was already two to three inches thick on the day of our hunt. Late in the morning we saw a flock of four ducks flying a few feet over the ice toward us. As they got closer, I knew that they were not ducks that I was accustomed to seeing. I thought of scoters or eiders. We killed 2 of the 4 ducks, and the two survivors must have left Clear Lake due to lack of open water. We identified the ducks as eiders, and they were later found to be King Eiders, based on reference books and consultation with Jim Dinsmore at Iowa State University. In contrast to Common Eider, the feathering on top of the bill of King Eider extends nearly to the nostril, while feathers on the sides of the bill do not come as close to the nostril as on the Common Eider. One of the birds was a second-year male and is preserved at Iowa State University. The other bird had the appearance of a female. The head was preserved.

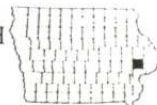
103 South 17th St., Clear Lake, IA 50428



Immature King Eider specimens taken at Clear Lake, 8 November 1986. Note feather extension on culmen, distance of nostril from facial feathers, and head profile. Photos by J. J. Dinsmore.

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW AT WEST BRANCH

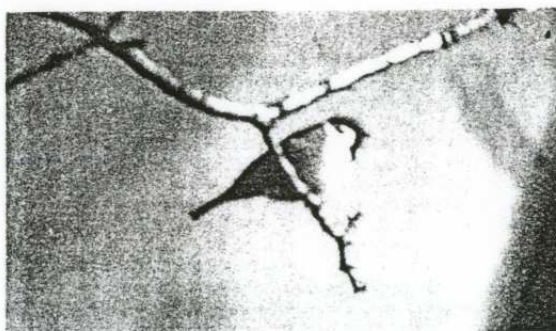
SALLY VEAL



I first observed two Eurasian Tree Sparrows in my back yard in West Branch about 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 14, 1987. As I was filling my bird feeders I noticed two birds in the silver maple behind the house that at first glance appeared to be House Sparrows. They had a neat appearance, were more active than House Sparrows, and were not associating with the flock of House Sparrows near the bird feeders. Even without binoculars I was able to see the black spots on the birds' faces. I did not see them again until about noon. At that time I was able to observe the birds through binoculars and identify them as Eurasian Tree Sparrows. I could clearly see the black spots on the cheeks, the brown caps and small black bibs of each bird.

The birds spent most of the afternoon close to the house. They investigated the hollow crossbar on my clothesline post. Eventually one bird was able to squeeze inside the post. (The slightly larger House Sparrows have attempted this but were never successful.) This bird spent much of the time inside the post. The other bird looked inside but did not try to move in. It fed in a weedy patch nearby and also picked up seeds that had fallen from my thistle feeder. Occasionally it would peek inside the post at the first bird. At one point in the afternoon both birds flew upward from the clothesline post. They faced each other either touching or nearly touching as they fluttered up about ten feet above the post. They then separated and chased each other for about thirty feet while flying very close to the ground. After this activity one bird returned to the inside of the post and remained there for most of the afternoon while the other bird fed nearby. The bird in the post was harassed by three female House Sparrows that tried to squeeze inside. It pecked at the House Sparrows but did not give up its position, and the House Sparrows eventually left it alone.

512 East Orange St., West Branch, IA 52358



Eurasian Tree Sparrow, West Branch, 21 March 1987. Photo by P. C. Petersen.

87-12

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: *Eurasian Tree Sparrow*DATE SEEN: *3-14-87*SITE OF OBSERVATION: *West Branch - Cedar Co.*OBSERVERS: *Veal, Bendorf, Sandrock, Kent, Fuller, Petersen, Stadt*DATE OF REVIEW: *9-26-87*METHOD OF REVIEW: *Vote - via mail*CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: *I-P*COMMENTS: *The photos and descriptions were clearly diagnostic.*

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW

I first observed two Eurasian tree sparrows in my backyard in West Branch about 10:00 AM Saturday, March 14. As I was filling my bird feeders I noticed two birds in the silver maple behind the house that at first glance appeared to be house sparrows. I was struck by the neat appearance and greater activity of these particular birds and by the fact that they were not associating with the flock of house sparrows near the bird feeders. Even without binoculars I was able to see the black spots on the birds' faces. I didn't see them again until about noon. At that time I was able to observe the birds through binoculars and identify them as Eurasian tree sparrows. I could clearly see the black spots on the cheeks, the brown caps and small black bibs of each bird.

The birds spent most of the afternoon close to the house. They investigated the hollow crossbar on my clothesline post. Eventually one bird was able to squeeze inside the post (the slightly larger house sparrows have attempted this but were never successful). This bird spent much of its time inside the post. The other bird looked inside but did not try to move in. It fed in a weedy patch nearby and also picked up seeds that had fallen from my thistle feeder. Occasionally it would peek inside the post at the first bird. At one point in the afternoon both birds flew upward from the clothesline post. They faced each other either touching or nearly touching as they fluttered up about ten feet above the post. They then separated and chased each other for about thirty feet while flying very close to the ground. After this activity one bird returned to the inside of the post and remained there for most of the afternoon while the other bird fed nearby. The bird in the post was harassed by three female house sparrows that tried to squeeze inside. It pecked at the sparrows but did not give up its position and the sparrows eventually left it alone.

Sally Veal
512 East Orange St.
West Branch, IA 52358

797

Bex

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

87-12

What species? Eurasian Tree Sparrow (Passer montanus) How many? 1

Location? 512 Orange Street, West Branch, Iowa (backyard)

Type of Habitat? lawn, decorative hedges, some shrubbery, several trees

When? date(s): 16 March 1987 time: 1310 to 1312

Who? your name and address: James P. Sandrock

Others with you: T. Kent; C. Bendorf

Others before or after you: I know of no one before; I assume there were quite a few after.

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Small, "streamlined," gold-finch sized bird; dark, finch-like, small bill; reddish brown cap which descended nape to back; white cheek with small, black, "tear"-shaped patch close to auricular area. White from the face/cheek area extended back and up at shoulder, giving appearance of a "collar"; dark eye surrounded by black; small, black throat patch which did not descend down to breast; unstreaked, light gray breast; brownish "House-sparrow"-like back, but with more delicate markings; narrow, delicate tail of medium length; the bird had a more streamlined, more delicate, "cleaner" Gestalt than House Sparrow. Bird was low in tree, sitting on bare branch for approx. 1-2 minutes.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Gestalt, markings, esp. white cheek and auricular patch, etc., differentiated this bird from House Sparrow--a similar species.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No.

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

Party cloudy, but good light; approx. 20-25 yds. (est.); 7 x 35 Leitz binox.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

None with this species; I've seen a few House Sparrows previously.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? 1 hour this form completed? 31 May 1987

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW

1 on 16 March 1987

512 E. Orange St, West Branch, IA Cedar County

1:15 PM - observed for approximately 30 seconds

On 16 March, I received a message on the Iowa Birdline from Sally Veal at the address above. She reported seeing what might have been 2 Eurasian Tree Sparrows on 14 March, two days earlier. They had been in her yard much of the day, either at the feeder or investigating a hole in her clothes line post. She said they seemed to be doing some sort of displaying and courting. She did not see them at all on 15 March.

Tom Kent, Jim Sandrock, and I arrived about 1 PM and took up station in the back yard. We started looking at every sparrow that moved. At 1:15 PM, we noticed a slim looking sparrow sized bird come out of a bush. It landed about 75 feet away in a bare tree and perched for about 30 seconds before darting away and out of sight. Despite 90 minutes of waiting or walking/driving around the immediate area, we never saw the bird again. Below is a direct transcription of notes I recorded just moments after viewing the bird:

"Saw a small sparrow about 75 feet away. Initially it looked like a House Sparrow, but was smaller and slimmer. It had a distinct chestnut colored cap and a clear white cheek with a very distinct oval black spot on the cheek; also a restricted black throat and a black bill. The black throat was much smaller than that of a House Sparrow."

I dropped my binoculars and readied my camera to try for a photo, but the bird took off.

Here are some further recollections from 3 hours later:

The wings were brownish, not unlike a House Sparrow. Gray underparts. The black spot on the cheek was horizontally oval. By restricted black throat, I meant it was much smaller than that of the House Sparrows we also studied.

Lighting: Partly cloudy. As we viewed bird, sun was to our left. Light was good.

Equipment: Zeiss 10X40

Previous Experience: All too familiar with House Sparrow. Have seen this species in 1983 in St Louis.

Other observers agreed with identification.

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW - PAGE 2

Discussion: We had a brief but good view of this bird. As I viewed it, I concentrated my attention on the head; I barely noticed the wings, tail, or underparts. The combination of features I saw seem to be totally diagnostic. This bird had a distinct chestnut cap; male House Sparrow has a chestnut nape, but the cap is gray. House Sparrow has a dirty white cheek area without any black spot. This bird had a bright white cheek that really stood out, and had a distinct oval black spot in the center of the cheek. The smaller black throat is not by itself diagnostic of Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Younger House Sparrows can have varying amounts of black on the throat.

Male and female Eurasian Tree Sparrows apparently are similar in appearance, so I don't know which this bird was.

Apparently this species has been spreading northward from its traditional St Louis area. Recent sightings from Hampton, IL, and across the Miss. R. from Keokuk have foreboded a first record from Iowa. I would have expected them to be seen first in one of the river towns, but West Branch is not terribly surprising.

Field notes recorded within two minutes after observation. Transcribed into permanent notebook three hours later. This form written next day.

CARL J. BENDORF
825 7TH AVE.
IOWA CITY, IA 52240

87-12

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Euraisan Tree Sparrow, 16 March 1987, West Branch, Cedar Co., IA

Observer: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St.; Iowa City, IA 52240

Other observers: Sally Veal (found bird) on 14 March; Carl Bendorf and Jim Sandrock with me.

Time: 1:10 p.m. for about 2 min.

Habitat: residential area with large yard/garden areas and widely spaced trees and shrubs.

Description: Carl called about 9 a.m. to give report from the birdline. I called Mrs. Veal at work and got the details and directions. I first noticed the bird a bush in the yard behind the Veal property. I picked it out because it was slimmer than the many House Sparrows present. It flew from a dense bush into a tall open tree where we could view it. My dictated notes were as follows: "Slimmer than House Sparrow. Very clean-cut bird with black chin extending around bill and face. Light colored face with distinct round face mark and brown cap. The white of the front extended up around the neck, almost a collar. The back was brown streaked much like a House Sparrow." I went back to the car for my camera, but the bird was gone when I returned. Over the next 1 1/2 hours, we could not relocate the bird.

Song: not heard

Behavior: flew from bush, sat in tree.

Conditions: overcast, 30 yards (est), 10 x binoculars.

Similar species: House Sparrow. The very prominent black face mark, discrete black under chin, white collar, and brown cap extending to forehead are distinctive. The bird was distinctly slimmer than the House Sparrows.

Agreement: all agreed.

Previous experience: Have seen in St. Louis area on two occasions.

References/time used: We looked at field guide after returning to car an hour later.

Time of notes/typed: dictated as quoted at 1:15 p.m. Typed 5 1/2 hours later.

What species? EURASIAN TREE SPARROW How many? 2Location? YARD - 512 ORANGE - WEST BRANCH, IOWAType of habitat? CITY YARD - OPEN AREAWhen? date(s): 17 MARCH, 1987 time: 7:05 to 7:10 AMWho? your name and address: JIM FULLER, 6 LONGVIEW KNOLL, RR#6, IOWA CITYothers with you: CAL & BERNIE KNIGHTothers before or after you: SANDROCK + KENT

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

TWO BIRDS WERE SEEN OFF AND ON FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES. THEY WERE GENERALLY THE SIZE OF ENGLISH SPARROWS, BUT SEEMED A LITTLE SLIMMER. THEIR MOVEMENTS AND FLIGHT WERE MORE ACTIVE AND QUICKER THAN ENGLISH SPARROWS. THE BIRDS HAD A RICH BROWN HEAD AND NAPE WHICH WAS WELL DEMARCATED FROM THE WHITE SIDE OF THE FACE. THERE WAS A ROUND BLACK "EAR PATCH" IN THE WHITE AREA. THE THROAT PATCH WAS BLACK AND MUCH BETTER DEMARCATED FROM THE BREAST THAN IN THE ENGLISH SPARROW. IT WAS ALSO LESS EXTENSIVE. BILL WAS BLACK-GRAY. BREAST + BELLY WAS TAN, AND CLEAN LOOKING BACK + WINGS WERE BROWN, AND NO OBUVIOUS WHITE WING PATCH WAS NOTED.

Similar species and how eliminated: ENGLISH SPARROW - SEE ABOVEDid any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
OVERCAST - EARLY MORNING. 9X36 BINOCULARS AT 50-75 FEET.Previous experience with species and similar ones: SEEN SEVERAL TIMES NEAR ST. CHARLES, MO. SEEN 1/14/87 AT WARSAW, ILL, ACROSS RIVER FROM KEOKUK

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? IMMEDIATE this form completed? 12 HOURS

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

87-12

What species? Eurasian Tree Sparrow How many? 2

Location? vic. of 512 Orange St, West Branch, Iowa.

Type of Habitat? city

When? date(s): 17, 19 + 21 March, 1987

17th 8:10-8:15 + 8:25-8:30
19th 8:05 to 8:15
21st 8:30 to 9:00 off from

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd, Davenport, IA

Others with you: 17 Mar - Walter Zuurbeeg, 19 Mar Ann Barker, 21 Mar, Marylou Petersen, Francis Moore, Gerry White

Others before or after you: Carl Bender, F. T. H. Kent, Mr + Mrs Veal + others.

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Two ploids, slightly smaller than nearby House Sparrows.
Cap medium brown, cheek white with black spot behind eye.
Black bib on throat, upper breast, remainder of underside buffy-tan.
Tail brown, rump tan, back brown with dark centers to feathers.
Bill black, legs brownish grey. Wings brown with faint wing bar.
Bib edge very even.

Similar species; how eliminated:

House Sparrow - These birds had brown caps, black spot on white cheek and very small bib. Call also unlike House Sparrow "cheep". Wing bar fainter than in House.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
Seen from many (right angles, both over clear skies
Distance varied from 20-50 m.
10x40 Zeiss binocs.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen frequently in Illinois

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? 10 min. this form completed? 2 days

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

87-12

What species? Eurasian Tree Sparrow How many? 2

Location? 512 Orange st West Branch Ia

Type of Habitat? typical city yard w. shrubs etc

When? date(s): March 20 time: 7:55 am to 8:00 am

Who? your name and address: Thomas J. Staudt

Others with you: _____

Others before or after you: Carl Bendorf, Tom Kent, Pete Petersen many

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

House sparrow size and proportions. ~~Black~~ Black bill, brown cap extending to nape. Black chin and throat, black extending from the bill back through the eye but not over it.

White cheeks with white continuing around the neck and almost meeting on nape. Black ear patch - underparts slightly buff.

Similar species; how eliminated:

House sparrow has gray cap, black bib is much more extensive. Smaller light gray cheek with no ear patch. Underparts light gray like cheek.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? _____

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

Sunny / clear 25-30 yds est. 8X

Previous experience with species and similar ones: none w/ this species

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? ~~after~~ ^{after} this form completed? 12 hrs
observation

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

What species? Eurasian Tree Sparrow How many? 2Location? 512 E. Orange St., West Branch, Cedar Co., IAType of habitat? Open back yard of home in small town w/ Walnut and Spruce Trees + assorted shrubs.When? date(s): 21 March 1987 time: 7:55 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.Who? your name and address: Francis L. Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703others with you: Pete and Mary Lou Petersen, Davenportothers before or after you: m.o.b.

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Overall behavior was much like House Sparrow. They were easily located when they called, the call being enough different from House Sparrow to readily pick them out by their call. They were in the vicinity of many House Sparrows but did not associate with them. One of the birds while within about three feet of a male House Sparrow was slightly smaller, slimmer and did not seem as active as the House Sparrows. As direct comparison was made the following were noted: Essentially the same body color as House Sparrow, a slightly smaller wing bar than House Sparrow, the top of the head (crown) was a deep brown color some shade as the back of the neck. The birds had a bright white cheek patch with a black ear spot or ear patch behind the eye and surrounded by the white of the cheek patch. The bill was black and not extremely heavy. They had a black chin and throat that ended sharply just past the neck area. The sides, belly and undertail coverts were a mousy gray color. The back, wings and tail were a medium to dark brown color but not as dark as the top of the head and back of the neck, nor as saturated a brown either. The feet were a dark ~~straw~~ to brown color.

Similar species and how eliminated: House Sparrow has gray crown, more extensively black on throat down onto belly, not clean cut as on Eurasian Tree Sparrow. House Sparrow lacks black ear spot or patch.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Excellent viewing conditions, sunny. Seen from 60 feet at closest from scale on camera lens. Used 20x60 and 33x90 telescopes, 10x40 binoculars and through 600 mm camera lens.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Saw one other Eurasian Tree Sparrow on 1/4/87 in Warsaw, IL. Extremely familiar with House Sparrow.

References and persons consulted before writing description: None

How long before field notes made? 15 minutes this form completed? 24 hours

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240