

Smith's Longspur
17 Dec 1983

Record Number: 83-35
Classification: A-P

Pocahontas, Pocahontas Co., IA
*W. Jardine (photo), *R. Harms, *DeWall
IBL 54:40

DOCUMENTATIONS

W. E. Jardine
Rita DeWall
Ronald Harms

PHOTOGRAPHS

Wallace Jardine, P-0136

LETTERS

Tom Kent to Bruce [Peterjohn], 7 May 1984
Bruce Peterjohn to Tom [Kent], 31 May 1984
Pete Petersen to Tom Kent, 19 May 1984

REFERENCE

Records Committee: IBL 54:40, 64:70

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Tom Kent to Records Committee, 13 Sep 1993

VOTE: 3-II, 3-III, 1-IV

III, Are photos available?

II, Good description by Jardine.

IV, Not separated from Lapland Longspur or other sparrow species entirely.

III, Observers were able to study the bird at close range for some time. Description satisfactory--eliminates other possibilities.

II, Is the photo available? Behavior very odd! Since the feeder is very close to an open field, this observation is possible, anyway.

REVOTE by mail including black and white photo: 3-I-P, 1-II, 1-IV, 1-V, 1-VI

VI, Although Smith's may have a slight eye ring, the strong eye ring fits Vesper Sparrow better. Strong breast markings, white chin mark, lack of collar, and wing bars rather than shoulder patch also fit Vesper Sparrow. Crown stripe and pale buff underparts consistent with either. Feeder location also better for Vesper Sparrow.

I-P, Light malar stripe, eye-ring, streaking on breast and buff underparts are like female Smith's Longspurs I have seen. I do not believe the bird is a Vesper Sparrow.

IV, The photo doesn't look right to me -- the eye ring and face pattern, along with breast streaking and wing bars don't quite resemble Smith's Longspur--perhaps a clearer photo would help. I could be persuaded however, and I don't know just what the bird in the photo is.

III vote after I've seen the photos.

NOTE: The vote was V after seeing the photo--thought to be a Vesper Sparrow. After discussion at the meeting the photo was sent to Bruce Peterjohn and Petersen planned to show it to Vern Kleen.

REVOTE (1993): 7 A-P

A-P, Color on chest is not Vesper. As for coming to feeder, I have had Snow Buntings come on severe winters.

A-P, There are a few points that trouble me about this photograph. The eye ring seems unusually prominent for Smith's Longspur, and there is no sign of the white wing coverts. Neither of these features completely precludes Smith's Longspur, however. I've never been this close to Smith's Longspur to see the eye ring and, in addition, the angle at which the photograph was taken may have highlighted this mark. The wing coverts could easily be hidden, and as Tom says, are variable in size anyway. The bill looks quite pink although documentations describe it as gray/brown. Field guides are little help as all appear to depend primarily on the buffy underparts for identification. I'm convinced that this is not a Vesper Sparrow, and I do believe the photograph provides support for the identification by observers of Smith's Longspur.

A-P, First, I don't think this is a Vesper Sparrow, which has a white throat, is not nearly this buffy underneath, and has no dark, broad central crown stripe as shown in this photo. With regard to Smith's Longspur, the only thing added by the color photo was the buff colored underparts, which we already knew from the written documentations. My main concerns with this being a Smith's are the conspicuous eyering and light malar streak shown in the photo, and what appears to be a broad dark crown stripe. This latter feature is mentioned in two documentations, and does not look or sound like a thin central line in a streaked crown as would be expected from a winter Longspur. I made a call about this bird, and was assured that I could be shown a photograph of a Smith's showing obvious eyering. The other two features (dark crown stripe and white malar) both occur on breeding plumage Smith's and appear to correspond exactly with what is shown in the photo. I believe what we have here is a Smith's at an intermediate stage of molt, either entering or leaving breeding plumage. From my brief experience with spring Smith's, I have seen them in a bewildering array of molting on a given day, so this would not surprise me.

A-P, Breast color and triangular face patch eliminate Vesper.

A-P, I compared this photo with my photos from 27 March 1982 (IBL 52:62, 63) and the match is very good, including eye ring and white malar stripe.

83-35

13 September 1993

To: IOU Records Committee
From: Tom Kent
Re: Request for reconsideration of record

Record: 83-35 Smith's Longspur

Reason for request: lingering doubts

Comment: I originally voted not to accept this record because I thought it was a Vesper Sparrow. I have looked at the photograph many times, because it seems to me the picture should be interpretable. I am now more inclined to think that it is a Smith's Longspur. Peterjohn and Kleen only saw black and white copies of the photo. The color photo shows yellowish underparts, which would exclude Vesper Sparrow. The facial triangle has a central light spot like a Smith's Longspur and unlike a Vesper Sparrow. All of the other marks fit Smith's Longspur, including the wing bars, which are quite variable in this species. Some years later the location was pointed out to me, and it was definitely rural. I had been skeptical about a Smith's Longspur coming to a feeder.



Smith's Longspur P-0136
Pocahontas, Pocahontas Co.
17 Dec 1983 Wallace Jardine

PRESIDENT
DR. W. ROSS SILCOCK
Route 2
Malvern, Iowa 51551

VICE-PRESIDENT
DR. MICHAEL C. NEWLON
408 Wales Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

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235 McClellan Blvd.
Davenport, Iowa 52803

TREASURER
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LIBRARIAN
MRS. BERYL LAYTON
1580 Linmar Dr. NE
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402

Iowa Ornithologists' Union



STATE BIRD OF IOWA: THE GOLDFINCH

EDITOR
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235 McClellan Blvd.
Davenport, Iowa 52803

83-35
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
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Route 1
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R.E. (GENE) BURNS
P.O. Box 32
Jamaica, Iowa 50128

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204 N.W. 12th
Pocahontas, Iowa 50574

DARWIN KOENIG
Box 389
Montezuma, Iowa 50171

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A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

FIELD REPORTS EDITOR
DR. THOMAS KENT
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

May 7, 1984

Dear Bruce,

The IOU Records Committee would appreciate your evaluation of the enclosed photo.

Can you identify the bird by the photo alone. If yes, what is it and why. If no, why not. (I am purposely withholding any additional information).

Current plans for the Field Reports for Iowa are as follows:

Spring - T. Kent

Summer - Jim Anshure

Fall - Mike Newlon

Winter - Ross Silcock (also LBC)

Starting on the 1st I am planning to do long days in eastern Iowa (12+14), SW Iowa (16) and Nebraska (18). Then Ross Silcock, Tom Standt and I are going to explore NW Iowa for a week.

I will compile the field reports on June 3 and write them up on the 9+10th. They should be in your hands by the 15th.

By July I should be able to start to recover!

✓

105-K E. Ticonderoga Dr.
Westerville, OH 43081
31 May 1984

Dear Tom,

Many, many apologies for not responding sooner. I have been terribly overburdened during the past month which resulted in a severe case of "burn out" from which I am just beginning to recover. I hope my delay has not caused you a great inconvenience.

I am unable to identify the bird from the enclosed photos due to the absence of color, the lack of visible tail characteristics, the very indistinct bill features (I can't clearly determine shape and color from the photos), indistinct head characteristics (presence of a stripe through the crown, lore and malar features are not as clear as I would like) and no knowledge of the season when the photo was taken. If the bird is a North American species, then several species of sparrow and possibly female longspur are conceivable but I don't feel the photos conclusively establish the birds identity without accompanying details. Wish I could be of more help.

Hope your May birding expedition turned up some unusual observations. I will be interested in reading about them in your spring report. May was rather disappointing in Ohio. Only shorebirds appeared in good numbers including our first Curlew Sandpiper while the passerine movement was late with few defined waves.

By the way, send me the addresses I should use for Dinsmore, Newlon and Silcock with your spring report. Please try to get the report to me by June 15 if at all possible as I am leaving for Colorado on June 29 (for a very badly needed vacation) and would like to have the American Birds article written before I leave.

Sincerely,



Bruce Peterjohn

Iowa Ornithologists' Union

83-35

PRESIDENT

DR. MICHAEL C. NEWLON
408 Wales Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

VICE-PRESIDENT

CARL BENDORF
825 7th Ave.
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

SECRETARY

FRANCIS MOORE
336 Fairfield St.
Waterloo, Iowa 50703

TREASURER

HANK ZALETEL
715 West
Colo, Iowa 50056

LIBRARIAN

MRS. BERYL LAYTON
1580 Linmar Dr. NE
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402



STATE BIRD OF IOWA: THE GOLDFINCH

IOWA BIRD LINE
319-622-3353

EDITOR

PETER C. PETERSEN
235 McClellan Blvd.
Davenport, Iowa 52803

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

DR. W. ROSS SILCOCK
Route 2
Malvern, Iowa 51551

RAYMOND CUMMINS
814 S. Drake
Centerville, Iowa 52544

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Liscomb, Iowa 50148

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310 S. 18th Ave.
Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

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FIELD REPORTS EDITOR

DR. THOMAS KENT
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Dear Tom;

May 19, 1984

I went over the Longspur Sparrow observation at length with Vern Allen last weekend. He read all documentation & studied the photo.

His conclusions:

1. Definitely not Smith's Longspur - wing bar wrong for Smith's, eye ring wrong for Smith's, malar stripe wrong for Smith's.

2. Probably a vesper sparrow - didn't feel positive based on only one photo (& b + w). I mentioned the buffy color of underparts and Vern felt this indicated an immature sparrow.

Stand on the above & the discussion in Indiana & I will change my vote to 5.

We had a rather poor, hot & windy day over to Lu. (17th) for our big day - got 140 sp. Yachting particularly rare. Blaine family had a Horn-eating at Wildcat last Sun, but we couldn't get a response - same place as a couple of years ago - by J bridge. So long, Pete

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

WALLACE E. JARDINE
RT. 2 BOX 9
POCAHONTAS, IOWA
50574



83-35

1. Species SMITH'S LONGSPUR 2. Number 1
 3. Location POCAHONTAS, IA.
 4. Date: 12-17-83 5. Time Bird Seen: 8:00AM to 12:00 NOON
 6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): THIS BIRD IS COMPLETELY BUFF IN COLOR ON THE UNDERSIDE FROM THROAT TO REAR. THE WHITE MUSTACHE IS QUITE DISTINCT AS IS THE WHITE EYE RING, THE CROWN HAS A MEDIAN LINE & A BUFF EYE STRIPE IS PROMINENT. THE WING HAS WHITE IN THE FORM OF A WINGBAR RATHER THAN AS A PATCH, THE TAIL IS NOTCHED WITH WHITE OUTER FEATHERS. CHEEK AREA HAS A TRIANGLE OF DARKER FEATHERS. BEAK IS CONICAL & GRAY/BROWN IN COLOR. FEET COULD NOT BE SEEN DUE TO THE SNOW. BIRD WAS PHOTOGRAPHED FROM ABOUT 40' WITH 800MM LENS.
 7. Description of voice, if heard: NOT HEARD EARLY IN THE AM BUT AT NOON THE BIRD WAS SINGING WHILE FEEDING WITH A RATTLE SIMILAR TO WOODEN POWELS BEING STRUCK.
 8. Description of behavior: FEEDING AT THE FOOT OF A TRAY FEEDER.
 9. Habitat - general: BACK YARD OPENING TO A 100 ACRE FARM FIELD. EVERGREENS, BUSHES, TREES.
specific: FOOT OF TRAY FEEDER BESIDE TREE.
 10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7, & 8.
Explain: LAPLAND LONGSPUR
 11. Distance (how measured)? ESTIMATED.
 12. Optical equipment:
10 X BINOC.
20 X SCOPE
 13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
BRIGHT OVERCAST
 14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
FIRST SIGHTING OF SMITH'S, LAPLANDS SEEN EVERY YEAR.
 15. Other observers: RON HARMS - LAURENS, IA. ←
RITA DEWALL - POCAHONTAS, IA.
 16. Did the others agree with your identification? YES
 17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
 18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: PETERSON'S & GOLDEN BOOK CONFIRMED WHAT WAS SEEN.
 19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?
1 HOUR
- Signature: W. E. Jardine Address: RR 2 BOX 9
Date: 12-17-83 City, State: POCAHONTAS, IA.
50574

What species? Smith's Longspur How many? OneLocation? Wallace Jardine's back yard Pocahontas, Pocahontas Co.Type of habitat? Edge of Town + Country sideWhen? date(s): 17 Dec 1983 time: 10:00 to 10:20Who? your name and address: Ronald Harms, Laurens 50554others with you: Wallace Jardineothers before or after you: Rita DeWall and I'm sure many othersDescribe 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. Long spur sizeWhite eye ringBlack crown stripeWhite on wing suggesting wingbarBarfs on complete undersideDark cheek patch Δ (forward angle at eye)Outer tail feathers flushed white in flightRonald Harms

Similar species and how eliminated:

Didn't look like other longspurs.Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Good light, estimate 30 yd.Field glasses + spotting scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Lifetime on Lepland longspurs

References and persons consulted before writing description:

None necessaryHow long before field notes made? _____ this form completed? 3 hrs.The points were covered + noted at leisure

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

83-35

Dec 17, 1983
9:00 a.m.

Observed smith's longspur at Wally Jardine's near Pocahontas

I only observed it couple minutes since I was on way to an appointment, but bird was not at all flighty feeding on ground under feeder with weaver finches so could have been observed longer

Was 40-45 feet away using 7 x 35 binoculars and spotting scope (just used scope for closer view, was totally identifiable with binoculars)

Could identify as smith's longspur using Golden & Peterson's guides - definite buffy color on all underparts, could see line of white wingbar (did not see it fly), white or lighter markings near ear patch, same size as weaver finches

Rita DeWall
R. 1 Box 15
Pocahontas, Iowa 50574