

Smith's Longspur 1
1 Nov 1990
Rathbun Res., Appanoose Co., IA
M. Heusinkveld
IBL 61:17,24, 62:22

Record Number: 90-37
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Marjorie Heusinkfeld

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 61:17,24
Records Committee: IBL 62:22

VOTE: 3 A-D, 4 NA

NA: While I do not think this bird was not properly identified, I do not think the document rules out enough other species. No size differential from other birds? Where was bird located? In weed patch or out in open field?

NA: Very possibly correct but also possibly an odd looking Lapland Longspur. Many of the features described will fit immature or winter Lapland. The features that suggest Smith's were not described in enough detail to evaluate very well. For example, wingbar was described as "distinctive" but the Smith's doesn't really have a wingbar. It does usually have what is called a white patch on the shoulder (more precisely the lesser and median wing coverts). Note the picture on p.411 of the Natl. Geo. Guide which shows the immature female Lapland also with white in the feathers of the shoulder and as much of a whitish wingbar as the drawing of the Smith's. Again, your identification is very plausible but probably enough room exists to consider some alternatives. Please keep contributing reports.

A-D: Adequately described.

NA: I took into account a number of considerations in evaluating this record. The first is that fall/winter plumage longspurs are extremely difficult to separate. All that might be found in Iowa share white outer tail feathers, eye stripes, ear patch, and streaking along sides, as well as habitat. The observation of buffy, not white, undertail coverts is suggestive of Smith's. However, since you were presumably looking down on the bird and we don't know what part lighting may have played in the observation, this may be a weak factor upon which to base the identification. Also, the buffy undertail could also apply to a Chestnut-collared, although this would be even more unlikely than a fall Smith's.

In view of the fact that this would only be the second fall record of Smith's Longspur in Iowa (although I don't doubt that they probably do occur in Iowa in the fall and have just been overlooked), and that we need extremely solid and unquestionable records to increase Iowa's knowledge of fall movements of this species, the report should probably not be included in the scientific record.

A-D: Good close view with all distinctive features of a winter plumaged Smith's Longspur noted.

NA: This could very well be a Smith's Longspur but documentation does not completely rule out immature or winter

plumaged Lapland. Both species have a light eyeline and buffy breast with light streaking at the edges. The wing bar or wing pattern were not described in detail. An immature Lapland has wing bars also. A more complete description of these wing bars are needed to completely rule out Lapland. The immature and winter plumaged female Lapland do not have a black bib either. Both species flash white outer edges to the tail feathers, though Smith's does have more white. The buffy undertail coverts does lean toward Smith's but not enough to be beyond reasonable doubt given the other described characteristics.

A-D: Details almost fit for an American Pipit. But the details mentioned of "very buffy breast and belly with light streaking at edges" that should exclude a pipit which is more heavily streaked on the breast. And adding the distinctive wingbar and brownish ear patch, the details point to a Smith's Longspur which could very realistically be expected in this area in migration.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

90-37

What species? Smith's Longspur How many? 1

Location? E. Island View, Rathbun Lake; Gravel rd. W. of Corp Hdqrs.

Type of Habitat? Weedy ditch & field

When? date(s): Nov. 1, 1990 time: 9³⁰ AM to 9⁴⁰ AM

Who? your name and address: Marjorie Heusinkveld, 840 So. Park, Centerville

Others with you: no - alone JA, 5234

Others before or after you: no

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.

light eye line - very buffy breast + belly with light streaking at edges. Distinctive wing bars. lone bird - Did see Savannah sp. in same area but only one of this species. White outer edges to ^{entire} tail - Flashed when it flew. brownish ear patch. undertail buffy not white.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Lapland Longspur - no black bib or chestnut collar. ~~No~~ No distinctive wing bar on lapland - this bird had good wing bars.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? _____
If yes, explain:

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

Sunlight - windy - birds up & down in the weeds, posed for good observation. Distance - car to roadside ditch.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

little with Smith's Longspur - have seen Lapland Longspurs numerous times.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? at once this form completed? 1 week

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