

Golden-crowned Sparrow  
3 May 1977  
Jamaica, Guthrie Co., IA  
\*Gene Burns  
to 7 May; Burns 1977

Record Number: 81-FB  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Gene Burns

REFERENCE

Burns, G. 1977. Golden-crowned Sparrow (first Iowa sighting).  
IBL 47:63.

VOTE (1981): 4-II, 3-III

III, adequate description.

III, Can we get photos? Possibly II, based on # of obs.

III, sight record -- many experienced observers. Description  
in form of documentation.

II, Documented well; seen by many observers.

Burns, G. 1977. Golden-crowned Sparrow (first Iowa sighting).  
Iowa Bird Life 47:63

Golden-crowned Sparrow (First Iowa Sighting) - Gene and Marilyn Burns of Jamaica, Iowa (Guthrie County) had a Golden-crowned Sparrow visiting their yard from May 3 to May 7, 1977. It stayed in the vicinity for 5 days with the last observation being made late Saturday evening, May 7. It visited the yard area several times each day and would feed on the ground where wild bird seed had been spread for other birds. It was a very beautiful, but also a very nervous bird as it would take flight at the same time the House Sparrows. On several occasions Harris', White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows would be feeding with the Golden-crowned Sparrow. This gave an excellent opportunity to observe all four of these crowned sparrows at the same time. I believe it was keeping company with the White-crowned Sparrows as it was most generally with them. There were bad storms in Colorado and Wyoming 2 days before the arrival of this bird, so perhaps this may have had something to do with it being in Iowa, as they have been sighted in Colorado on rare occasions in the past. The Golden-crowned Sparrow winters along the west coast and breeds in western Alaska.

Peter Petersen of Davenport was contacted about this sparrow. He suggested that Dr. James Dinsmore of Ames be contacted to see if it should be collected as a specimen. Dr. Dinsmore felt it would be best to try and mist net it, then band and photograph it if possible. Dean Mosman, one of Iowa's banders, was called in to attempt this feat. Nets were put up for several hours Saturday, May 7, but the bird did not cooperate. It came near the net on a few occasions, but would not allow itself to be netted. Pictures were taken with a small camera, but they will not show the details of this bird.

I.O.U. members who came to observe this bird were Woody Brown, Dick Mooney, Gene Armstrong, Ruth Buckles, and Margaret Brooke all of Des Moines, Dean and Diane Mosman of Ankeny and Barney Cook of Ames. They all were fortunate enough to see it shortly after they arrived. Mark Roew and Mark Allen of Des Moines came on Sunday, May 8, but they did not get to see it as the bird had apparently left the vicinity. Documentation of this sighting was made and forwarded to Dr. N. S. Halmi of Iowa City. - GENE BURNS, Jamaica.

Middlewestern Prairie Region  
(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

## BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species: Golden-crowned Sparrow 2. Number: 1
3. Location: Jamaica, Iowa (Guthrie County), in my back yard.
4. Date: May 3, 1977 (Tuesday) 5. Time Bird seen: 515pm to 520pm
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):  
Slightly bigger than a White-throated Sparrow, grayish clear breast, dark rich gray throat area, large wide black stripe on each side of head running back through the eye to back of head, yellowish wide stripe through crown of head turning to buffy near end of this stripe, darkish bill, 2 wing-bars, longish tail (by this I mean longer than a House Sparrow's), unable to see feet account hopping around in the grass, back and wings brownish sparrow like color, with the tail being darker than this back and wing area. The prominent and very striking and outstanding thing about this bird was his yellowish to golden wide stripe through the crown of his head, and the wide black stripes on each side of his head and the rich gray color of the throat area and sides of his throat and lower head.
7. Description of voice, if heard: Not heard.
8. Description of behavior: He was feeding in our back yard, near our ground feeders which contained sunflower, bread crumbs, wheat, wild bird seed, corn hearts and cracked corn.
9. Habitat - general: Our back yard, which is kept closely mowed, surrounded by many specific different kinds of trees and bushes. I keep 4 ground waterers filled at all times and had my garden hose dripping into one of them. He was feeding close to our ground feeders, but not actually in them.
10. My first sight told me it was something different than a White-throated, White-crowned or Harris Sparrow. I immediately called for my wife to come quickly and observe him with me. We sit by the hour at our large window where I have my desk and bird books and binoculars, scope, recorders and camera. We had an excellent view of him at close range in good light.
11. Distance (how measured) From our window to the center of our feeding station (which is where he was) is about 30 feet. 12. Optical equipment: Jason Zoom binoculars.
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): B&L Zoom Scope.  
The sky was slightly overcast and the sun was partially hidden behind this overcast. It had been raining during the day previous to this.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: None.
15. Other observers: Marilyn Burns, my wife.
16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes, she definitely did.
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: None.
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: Peterson's Field Guide to Western Birds, & Birds of North America by Robbins, Bertel, Brunn and Zim. These books did not influence my identification, they confirmed it beyond doubt.

Signature

Jane Burns

Address: P.O. Box 32

Date: May 3rd, 1977.

City, State:

Jamaica, Iowa 50128

We again saw this bird Wednesday, May 4, 1977 from 438pm to 440pm and again at 705 to 706pm. I called Pete Peterson about it. He asked me to call Jim Dinsmore to see if he would have time to try and collect it as a specimen. Then I called Dean Woman & ...

The bird was seen again 3 times on Thursday evening May 5th so I called for Woody Brown and Dick Mooney of Des Moines that it was still here and that our house would be open to them if they would like to come up the next afternoon and try and see it. They brought Margaret ~~Brook~~ Brook, Ruth Fuckles & Gene Armstrong along with them. They all were fortunate enough to get to observe it. Then on Saturday Barney Cook of Ames came and got to observe it. Dean Mosman and his wife Diane came also Saturday afternoon and they got to see it. Dean set up his mist nets hoping to net it and band and photograph it. The bird was observed 3 or 4 times but he would not come near the nets. This may have been because our neighbors to the north has just moved in and were in and out of the house and back yard quite frequently all afternoon. ~~The bird was~~ More people came from Des Moines on Sunday to see it. We were gone all day and left our house open for them. They were here about 2½ hours and did not see it. We have not seen it today, so perhaps it has moved on. If there are any more sightings between now and this week-end, I will let you know at Marshalltown.

\*\*\*