

Smith's Longspur

18 Mar 1983

4 mi. north of Red Oak, Montgomery Co., IA

*R. Myers, *B. Wilson, *T. Bray

also 20-22 May; IBL 53:55; 54:39

Record Number: 83-14

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Robert K. Myers (March 18)

Barbara L. Wilson (March 20)

Tanya Bray (March 21, 22)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 53:55

Records Committee: IBL 54:39

VOTE: 7-II

II, Birds seen by many in same location.

II, Unusually good plumage on one bird!

What species? Smith's longspur How many? 30 (approx.) at park no.
 Location? 4 mi. north of Red Oak - Montgomery Co.
 Type of habitat? last years hay field - on hill - very rolling country
 When? date(s): March 18th, 1983 time: 10:00 AM. to 10:30 AM. - several other times also
 Who? your name and address: Robert K. Myers 1236 Sylvia Ave. Waterloo, Ia.
 others with you: Betsy Myers (wife.)
 others before or after you: Ross Silcock - Barb Wilson - many others

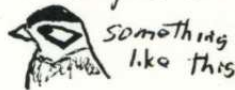
Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

The birds were in an old hay field on a hill top. I would stalk them and watch them scurry about before they gave their clicking sound and flushed. They would then circle above me (still clicking) and then land in different part of field and I would stalk again. The clicking seems higher & dryer than Laplands' call.

I will describe one bird - adult ♂

Bird was about sparrow size and most obvious characteristics noted as bird was sitting on ground were.

1. Very buffy - almost orange breast - brighter than shown in guides
2. white spot on shoulder
3. Head with black cap and white below with black triangle around ear patch
4. Back is buffy with darker streaks



In flight the birds shows a lot of white at edges of tail. The white shoulder spots and the white head markings are also very obvious when bird is flushed.

Similar species and how eliminated: I really can't think what looks similar to Smith's in adult breeding plumage.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

Day was sunny - I always kept sun behind me. Birds could be approached to within 10 yd. (stepped off) before flushing. I used B&L 7X35 binocs.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I saw Smith's in same location last year and have seen many Laplands.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NONE

How long before field notes made? 1 hr. this form completed? within the next week - I worked on it several days

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

Documentation

Smiths Longspur - about 25
 Dale W. Jones farm, S of Wales, Montgomery Co, Iowa
 March 20, 1983

Description: "Disappointingly bland and sparrow-like. The buff underparts + white outer tail feathers extending the length of the short, notched ~~tail~~ tail were distinctive, but we didn't see any in really good plumage. Some had the black triangle on the brown face, + some had ~~no~~ suggestion of it. None we saw ~~had~~ well had a white wing bar, though I thought I saw a prominent white upper wing bar on one that was landing. The birds varied in color. Some were quite buff below. Others were plain buff. Some were distinctly darker across the back. They had streaks (faint but obvious) on the flanks, + ~~a~~ a bit of streaking across the top of the breast. One bird had a white eye ring but others did not."

Behaviour: feeding in cornfield in high winds. Would run about. They flew as a flock + called, manoeuvring in the air + landing in the field again.

Viewing conditions: Sometimes quite close, often not. 8x binocs. Overcast. Various angles to birds.

Other observers: Ross Silcock. We were looking for birds located by Bob Myers. Most male birds saw them, on dates extending into April.

Similar species: they looked like every other little brown bird.

Quotes from notes not written until March 22.

Barbara Wilson
 Rt 1 Box 41
 Hastings, S. 515-10

DOCUMENTATION

SMITH'S LONGSPUR

March 21,22,1983

Dale Jones Farm; Montgomery County

Number; March 21(15); March 22(50)

Description:

Underparts buffy with light, thin streaking across the breast. Back was pale gray-buff with wide buffy feather edgings giving a "scaled" effect. Tail was dark buff with white outer tail feathers. Crown buff with thin black streaks and a buffy median stripe. Buff cheeks with a dark triangle and light eye line. Sharp, elongated conical bill. Several of the flock had definite white shoulder patches--more noticeable when the flock was in flight.

Voice: Rapid clicking or rattle--heard when the birds were flushed and in flight.

Habitat: Corn stubble and short-grass pasture

Behavior: Birds were feeding in corn stubble; flying to grassland and back often

Distance: March 21---40 feet
March 22--100 feet; in flight, directly overhead

Similar species: No other longspur is as uniformly buffy as these birds were

Equipment: 7 x 26 binoculars; 25x spotting scope

Others; March 21--Babs Padelford
March 22--Babs Padelford, B.J. Rose, Melba Wigg,
Jim and Sandy Kovanda

Eventually almost all Omaha-area birders saw the Smith's Longspurs at this location. On April 6, Ruth Green and John Upchurch saw approx. 200. None could be located on April 10/

Tanya Bray
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