

Smith's Longspur
27 Mar 1982

Record Number: 82-13
Classification: A-P

ne. of Lone Tree, Johnson/Muscatine Cos., Johnson Co., IA
*M. Newlon, *R. Hollis, *#T. Kent
P-0082, IBL 52:63(photo); 53:36

DOCUMENTATIONS

Michael C. Newlon
Rick Hollis
Thomas H. Kent

PHOTOGRAPHS

Thomas H. Kent, P-0082 (IBL 52:62, 63)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 52:63
Photographs: IBL 52:62, 63, P-0082; Am. Birds 36:860, 1982, P-0082
Records Committee: 53:36

VOTE: 4-I-P, 1-I, 2-abstain

I-P, Very nice.

Golden-winged Warblers were reported including eight at Van Meter S.P., Mo., May 15 (KH, CHo). Five "Brewster's" Warblers were reported from Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. Tennessee Warblers were generally abundant beginning with Apr. 17 arrivals at Chicago (MD) and Henderson County, Ill. (LM) and one at Waterloo, Ia., Apr. 21 (FM). A normal number of Orange-crowned Warblers was reported beginning Apr. 13 at Chicago (TM) while a very late migrant was at Big River S.F., Ill., June 5 (†LM). A Magnolia Warbler appeared at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P., Ia., Apr. 18 (JSa) while one lingered at Chicago through June 12 (AA). Cape May Warblers received mixed reports. Five sightings in Iowa and 3 in Missouri were normal. Early Black-throated Green Warblers returned to McCreary County, Ky., Mar. 20-21 (NS, RBa). Cerulean Warblers were scarce in many areas but not Mammoth Cave N.P., Ky., where 100 were noted May 1 (DN). An early Yellow-throated Warbler returned to Pike County W.M.A., Ill., Apr. 1 (RSa). This species continues to expand N as evidenced by 13 in Van Buren County, Ia., Apr. 18 (JSa). A Bay-breasted Warbler returned to Lacey-Keosauqua S.P., Ia., Apr. 18 (JSa) while one at Chicago June 12 was late (AA). Early Blackpoll Warblers were discovered Apr. 17 at Falls of the Rough, Ky. (KC) and Maumee Bay S.P., O. (J, CH) and at Forest Park, Mo., Apr. 19 (RK). They passed through several areas in good numbers. A Prairie Warbler at Lansing W.M.A., Ia., May 23-30 (†RMy *et al.*) was noteworthy for Iowa. Palm Warblers were also quite common beginning with a Mar. 28 migrant at S. Bend, Ind. (T & LS). The mid-April overflight scattered N. Waterthrushes across the n. states while a Louisiana Waterthrush appeared at Ledges S.P., Ia., Apr. 2 (†JR). Connecticut Warblers were reported in good numbers from all states except Missouri while Mourning Warblers were also widespread. Hooded Warblers were observed in increased numbers in n. states. A bird appearing to be a Wilson's x Canada Warbler hybrid was described in detail from Chicago June 1 (†PC).

BLACKBIRDS THROUGH TANAGERS — Bobolinks passed through most states in fair numbers although 80-100 in Bullitt and Jefferson Cos., May 8 were unusual for Kentucky (DP). A very early migrant appeared at Marias Temps Clair W.M.A., Mo., Apr. 4 (G & TB). Western Meadowlarks in Lyon County, Ky. (S, FS), Pickaway County, O. (JF) and Holmes County, O. (DK) were unexpected. Yellow-headed Blackbirds returned to traditional marshes e. to L. Erie but numbers were reduced in n.w. Indiana and n.e. Illinois. Extralimital reports included one at Dayton April 21-29 (m.ob.), three at Marias Temps Clair W.M.A., Mo., Apr. 23-May 1 (RW *et al.*) and one at Farmington, Mo., Apr. 27 (RL *et al.*). Brewer's Blackbirds were more numerous than usual in e. states; Illinois reports included 3 flocks of 20-32 birds and 100 near Meredosia in early April while 40 were observed in Fulton, Ky., Mar. 16-17 (BP) and nine in Knox County, Ind., Apr. 3 (DJ). Great-tailed Grackles were present at S.C.R. throughout the period with a maximum of 17 on Mar. 27 (L, KJ). An early Scarlet Tanager returned to Dayton Apr. 14 (CM, PH). Only six Summer Tanagers were reported n. of their normal range. They were scarce in some s. localities.

FINCHES, SPARROWS — Black-headed Grosbeaks were discovered at Champaign, Ill., May 4 (†VL) and St. Louis May 12 (†CP *et al.*) while one thought to be a hybrid was observed at Amana, Ia., May 10 (†T *et al.*). Normal numbers of Blue Grosbeaks were reported from within its regular range but one at Chicago May 19-20 was unusually far n. (JL). Several Painted Buntings were found near Eagle Rock, Mo., May 10 (MM). They are apparently rare but regular in s.w. Missouri. Evening Grosbeaks were scarce with only 1-6 reports from each state and ten or fewer birds at most locations. Purple Finches were also scarce in most areas. The only noteworthy concentration was 75 at Falls of the Rough, Ky. where a few lingered through May 25 (KC). The House Finch expansion continued at a fast pace. In Kentucky, they appeared at new locations in Warren, Barren, Casey and Boone Counties. New Indiana locations included Porter and Vigo Counties while as many as 11 were observed at Ft. Wayne (JHa). In Illinois, up to five were regularly observed at Urbana (RCh) while 1-2 briefly appeared in Douglas and Vermilion Cos., and at Chicago. In addition to the winter reports, Hoary Redpolls were also identified at Laurens, Ia., Mar. 2 (RC, RH—ph.) and Toledo Mar. 22 (†ET). Common Redpolls generally departed from s. areas by late March although they lingered at M.M.W.A. through May 4 (JP). Among the hundreds banded in n. Ohio were two "Greater" Redpolls (*Carduelis flammula rostrata*). Pine Siskins were widespread with daily maxima of 15-40 in most areas. Many lingered into late May and early June.

While nesting was suspected at many areas, definite breeding records included seven nests at Urbana, Ill. (RCh) plus single nests at Naperville, Ill. (JWt), Davenport, Ia. (*vide P*) and Ames, Ia. (JD). Red Crossbills appeared at 14 locations in all states except Kentucky. A nest was destroyed at Des Moines (MBR) while late birds lingered through June 1 at Columbia, Mo. (*vide SS*) and Sterling, Ill. (BSH). White-winged Crossbills were equally numerous, appearing at 12 sites in all states except Indiana. A flock of 34 at Bernheim Forest, Ky., Mar. 24 (LS) was the largest reported.

Lark Buntings were found May 4 in Fremont County, Ia. (†RP) and Urbana, Ill. (†RCh). Savannah Sparrows were numerous during April including 117 at Spfld Apr. 9 (H). Le Conte's Sparrows were reported in normal numbers in w. states while singles were observed at 3 Illinois sites and in Gibson County, Ind. Small numbers of Henslow's Sparrows appeared in all states; populations may be declining in some areas. Sharp-tailed Sparrow reports included one at Spfld May 22 (H) and three at Muskrat Slough, Ia., May 23-24 (†T *et al.*). Vesper Sparrows were numerous during the April snowstorms with Apr. 9 flocks of 140 at Spfld. (H) and 75 in Johnson and Louisa Counties, Ia. (T). Lark Sparrows appeared to be stable within their normal range. The only Bachman's Sparrow was found near Hamlin, Ky., May 8 (JE). A Dark-eyed Junco at Michigan City, Ind., May 29 was very late (KB). In e. states, Clay-colored Sparrows were discovered at 4 Illinois locations while one was in Ottawa County, O., May 19 (†JP). A singing ♂ Brewer's Sparrow at Chicago May 26 (†PC, HR, tm.ob.) provided the first record for Illinois. A Harris' Sparrow near Wabash, Ind., Mar. 5-9 (m.ob.) was the only report e. of its normal range. Fox Sparrows were plentiful with concentrations of 132 at Chicago Mar. 24 (RG, PC) and 50 at Spfld., Apr. 6 (H). Lincoln's Sparrows received mixed reports although 45 at Chicago May 14 (JL) were noteworthy.

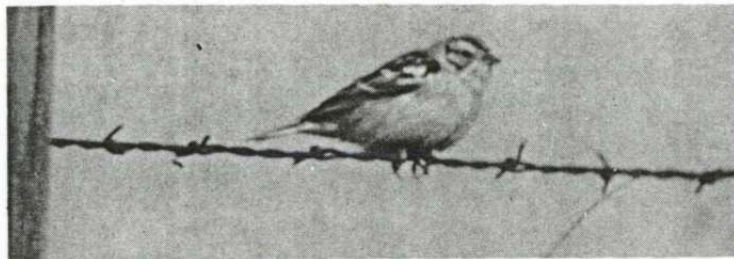
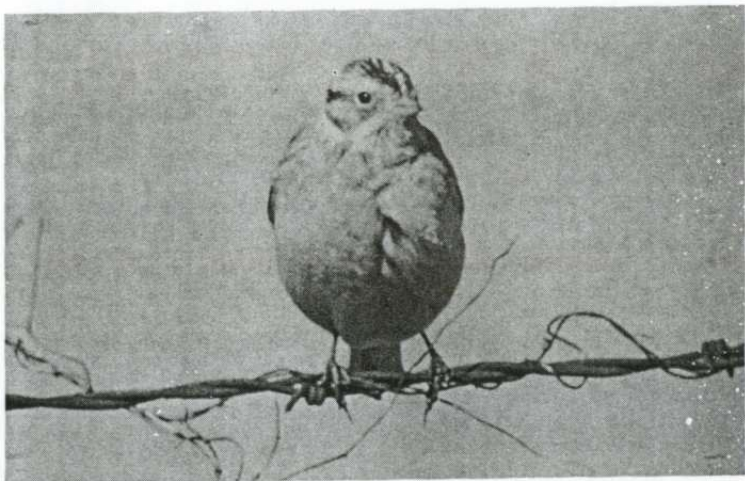


Smith's Longspur, near Lone Tree, Iowa, Mar. 27, 1982. Photo/T.H. Kent.

S.A.
Weather conditions undoubtedly contributed to this spring's longspur flight, which was one of the largest in recent memory. A McCown's Longspur was discovered among the herds of longspurs in Parke County, Ind., Apr. 6 (†ABr). At Least 4000 Lapland Longspurs were noted there Apr. 6 while many flocks were observed in migration the following day (ABr *et al.*). Other noteworthy Lapland Longspur concentrations included 1000 in Johnson County, Ia., Mar. 27 (T *et al.*) and 1000 at Spfld Apr. 8 (H). Smith's Longspurs made an impressive showing. In Iowa, a concentrated effort to find this species yielded 9 reports Mar. 21-Apr. 18 including 200 near Lone Tree Mar. 30 (†TS). Illinois maxima were 100 at 2 locations during early April. In Indiana, an incredible 1500 were estimated in Parke County Apr. 7 (ABr, EH *et al.*) while they were also observed in Knox County Mar. 13-Apr. 18 including 150 on Apr. 11 (DJ). To complete this extraordinary migration, single Chestnut-collared Longspurs were discovered at 3 locations, near St. Joseph, Mo., Apr. 3 (†KJ), Muscatine County, Ia., Apr. 4 (†JH) and near Sangchris Lake S.P., Ill., Apr. 10-11 (†RCh, m.ob.).

ADDENDA — Satisfactory documentation has been provided for the Pomarine Jaeger at Michigan City, Ind., Aug. 8, 1981 (AB 36:185) (†EH). After review of the photographs and documentation, the imm.

- Common Redpoll:** A number of contributors noted last dates with many extending to late Mar. and two into Apr.: 1 Apr. at Pocahontas (RC,WJ) and 8 Apr. at Davenport (PP). The latter is the second latest date.
- Pine Siskin:** Pine Siskin were common with many reports into mid-May with some still present at a feeder in Iowa City (TK) and in Davenport on 31 May (PP). A nest with 3 eggs at Davenport on 27 Apr. was later predated (BB fide PP) and a nest with eggs was found in Ames in early May (JD).
- Red Crossbill:** Nest building was noted at Greenwood P. in Des Moines on 22-25 Apr. but the nest was destroyed on 30 Apr. (MBro). This would have been the first Iowa nesting of crossbills. Other reports were 2 at Iowa City on 27 Mar. (JPS,DJS) and 7 remaining at Cherokee until 15 May (DBi).
- White-winged Crossbill:** 3 were at Ingham L. on 14 Mar. (DHe, HW), 1 at Shenandoah on 18 Mar. (RP), and 2 at Iowa City on 17 Apr. (TK).
- Lark Bunting:** A male was seen w. of Tabor, Fremont Co., on 4 May (+RP).
- Henslow's Sparrow:** Reports were from Hickory Hill P. in Iowa City on 25 Apr. (+MAS) and Cone M. on 30 Apr. and 10 May (+TStau et al).
- LeConte's Sparrow:** Reports from eight localities in Apr. and early May.
- Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** 3 were well-studied and sang at Muskrat S. on 23, 24 May (+TK,TStau, +CJB, m. ob.)
- Vesper Sparrow:** 6 were at Amana in a snowstorm on 3 Apr. (CJB,LH,TK). A migration peak occurred on 9 Apr. when snow drove 75 to roadsides in Johnson and Louisa Cos. (TK).
- Lark Sparrow:** 1 was early on 21 Apr. in Cherokee Co. (MBre).
- Northern Junco:** The latest date was 30 Apr. at Pocahontas (RC).
- Chipping Sparrow:** The earliest was 14 Apr. at Ledges SP (JR).
- Fox Sparrow:** 1 on 7 Mar. in Ames was early (RM).
- Lincoln's Sparrow:** The latest was 27 May at Ames (PM).
- Song Sparrow:** A migration peak of 50 was noted at Iowa City on 24 Apr. (TStau).
- Lapland Longspur:** There were many reports from late Mar. to late Apr. with peak of 1,000 in Johnson Co. on 27 Mar. (TK et al) and latest of 50 in Story Co. on 25 Apr. (PM).



Smith's Longspur, near Lone Tree, 27 Mar. 1982
Photos by T. H. Kent

- Chestnut-collared Longspur:** James Huntington found a male in breeding plumage in NW Muscatine Co. near the Johnson Co. line on 4 Apr. (+JH) for the first well-documented record for Iowa. The record was accepted by the Records Committee. There are several old reports, all prior to 1939, but none are sufficiently detailed for positive identification.
- Smith's Longspur:** There were nine reports from six counties, seven in EC Iowa, two in central Iowa, and two in SW Iowa for this species which has been seen only three times in the last 50 years: 6 on 21 Mar., 4 miles n. of Red Oak, Montgomery Co. (+RKM); 30+ on 27 Mar. n.e. of Lone Tree on the Johnson-Muscatine Co. line (+MN, +RHo, +TK, see photos); 7 on 28 Mar. 2 miles n.w. of Red Oak (+FM); 200 on 30 Mar. n. of Lone Tree (+TStau); 1 in flock of 50-60 on 1 Apr. e. of Polk City, Polk Co. (+JSb); 16 and 9 on 6 and 9 Apr. s. of Nichols, Muscatine Co., (+TD, AH); 3 on 10 Apr. n. of Bettendorf, Scott Co. (+PP, m. ob.); 50 on 16 Apr. in NW Muscatine Co. on the Johnson Co. line (+CJB, +TK) which had been there since 4 Apr. (JH) and possibly since 27 Mar. (TK); and 2-3 on 18 Apr. at Larson's M., Story Co. (+PM).
- Snow Bunting:** Several were seen in Howard Co. on 9 Apr. (RAB, CAB).
+ equals Documented.

CONTRIBUTORS

Russell P. Baldner, Calmar; Carl J. Bendorf, Iowa City; Dick Bierman, Cherokee; Tanya Bray, Omaha, NE; Margaret Brooke, Des Moines; Marion Brewer, Cherokee; Raymond Cummins, Pocahontas; James Dinsmore, Ames; Timothy L. Dwyer, Muscatine; Ruth Eash, Wellman; Ione Getscher, Hamburg; Ronald Harms, Laurens; Douglas Harr, Larchwood; Dennis Henrickson, Estherville; Rick Hollis, Iowa City; James Huntington, Iowa City; Thomas Kent, Iowa City; Darwin Koenig, Montezuma; Lowell Konradi, Odebolt; Rene Laubach, Des Moines; Paul Martsching, Ames; Richard Mooney, Des Moines; Francis L. Moore, Waterloo; Dean Mosman, Elkhart; Mary Musgrove, Des Moines; Robert K. Meyers, Waterloo; Weir Nelson, Cedar Rapids; Michael C. Newlon, Iowa City; Babs Padelford, Bellevue, NE; Loren Padelford, Bellevue, NE; Peter Petersen, Davenport; Ruth Phipps, Shenandoah; Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb; John Robinson, Ames; Dean M. Roosa, Ames; James P. Sandrock, Iowa City; Joe Schaufenbuel, St. Lucas; Ann Sernett, Laurens; W. Ross Silcock, Malvern; Mark A. Snyder, Iowa City; Thomas Staudt, Iowa City; Robert Thornburg, Pleasantville; John Van Dyk, Sioux Center; Pete Wickham, Cedar Rapids; Barbara L. Wilson, Hastings; Hank Zaletel, Ames.

OTHER OBSERVERS

Carolyn A. Baldner (RPB); Mary Bannisek (PP); Brian Blevins (PP); Lewis

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation
by the Records Committee
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: Smith's Longspur

DATE SEEN: 27 March 1982

SITE OF OBSERVATION: Johnson-Muscatine County line 6 mi. S. of Rt. 6

OBSERVERS: Newlon, Hollis, Kent

DATE OF REVIEW: 22 August 1982

METHOD OF REVIEW: mail vote

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: I-P

COMMENTS:

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.

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

NEW LON 82-13

1. Species Smith's longspur 2. Number 30⁺
3. Location Johnson - Muscatine Co. line, 6 mi S of Hwy 6
4. Date: 3-27-82 5. Time Bird Seen: 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM
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):
A sparrow-like bird, perhaps a bit larger than lapland longspurs (ample opportunity for size comparison) and with a slightly heavier bill. Upper parts streaked brown, with a pale crown stripe. Streaking on upper-parts less contrasty than in laplands. face pale. auricular patch strongly outlined with dark; center of patch pale; upper rear corner of patch outline had projection reaching around on nape. Underparts pale; grey-brown to buffy-ochre. Tail brown, outer tail-feathers white for their full length. Wings brownish, with two very dull wingbars. White in ^[lesser] wing-coverts; with most birds this was an irregular patch mixed with darker brown feathers; appearance (over)
7. Description of voice, if heard:
A 3 or 4 note "tut-tut-tut-tut", [low pitched; given in flight]
8. Description of behavior: (over)
9. Habitat - general: large area of farmland: pasture, stubblefields; few trees.
specific: CORN + soybean stubble
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:
Call notes and behavior, stretch suggest longspur, as does association with lapland; tail pattern, face pattern, coloration suggest Smith's. (over)
11. Distance (how measured)? 15 feet - 100 yds (est) 12. Optical equipment: 8x40 binocs 25x60 scope
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
Bright sunny day; sun often behind obs → bird line.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Have seen all 4 longspurs and all other sparrows/finches of e + c N. Am (except we seed eater, black rosy finch, W-winged junco). Have seen breeding-plumaged males of Smith's longspur in AK and also, 10 years ago, a single ♀-plumaged bird, also in AK.
15. Other observers: T. Kent C. Newlon, R. Hollis
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:
RTP IV Robbins + Birm Consulted during sightings. I do not think that this affected the above description.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? notes made immediately after sighting, transcribed 3/29. Some material added later
Signature: Nickel C. Newlon Address: 408 Wales St. on day of sighting
given in brackets
Date: 3-29-82 City, State: Iowa City IA 52240

Appearance

varied with attitude of bird. a few individuals had larger completely white patches.

Bill pale brown. ^{by color?} dark. eye dark

[Some had faint streaking at sides of breast; underparts often had irregular patches of brighter ochre color. overall color warmer than lapland: warm brown rather than greyish or blackish.]

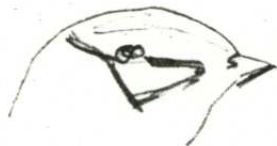
Behavior

[two very large flocks, perhaps a ~~thousand~~ thousand in all, feeding in corn/soybean stubble. feeding flocks showed a steady eastward drift, as small groups (3-20) of birds would fly up, move forward, then drop to ground, fence line, or roadside for a few minutes, then move on. Sometimes a large group would fly up and circle erratically for several minutes, covering ^{a radius} ~~distances~~ of up to a half-mile, before settling again.]

[although many birds could not be identified, flock appeared to be $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ Smith's.]

Identification

voice + strong facial pattern rules out vesper sparrow (as does numbers and behavior). Lack of white in ~~throat~~ rules out ♀/i lark bunting. greater coverts



Tracing of
drawing made
at time of sighting

What species? ~~Smith's Longspur~~ Smith's Longspur How many? 7-?

Location? - 3 miles E of 1.5 miles W Lone Tree on Gravel Rd [on Johnson/Muscatine Co Line]

Type of habitat? ~~Gravel Rd~~ roadside ditches + corn + soy bean stubble

When? date(s): 27 March time: 8⁴⁵ to 9¹⁵ AM

Who? your name and address: Rick Hollis 3351 Lower W Branch Rd Ia City IA 52240

others with you: Tom Kent, Mike & Carol Newlon

others before or after you: _____

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.

General size and shape of the Smith's Longspur was like the Lapland Longspurs although 2 of us RH+MN felt that some of the birds we called Smith's were ^{slightly} smaller than Lap. The birds were in a loose flock of ~1000 birds. We could not clearly see all the birds as they were nervous + many never got close to us. Of the birds we could see, we could not ID most of birds as they were ♀ or imm ♂. Some of the birds were clearly Lap and a few were Smith's.

The birds we called Smith's displayed the following characteristics. All showed #3 142.

1. White patch on the wing - this was above & in front of 2 very faint wing bars (that all of the birds had). This patch was quite variable between birds and in fact on some bird it seem to appear + disappear as we watched.

2. The breast, sides + belly was a dull, buff-yellow (ochre)

3. On some birds there was a triangular ~~shape~~ pattern - black, outlined with light white. In the center of this patch was a white patch. The molting ♂ Lap's had a buffy ear patch.

4. On some of the birds we noted that the white on the outer tail feathers continued the full length of the tail (like a Junco).

Similar species and how eliminated: Lapland Longspur was eliminated as described above.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: distances varied from 10' up (est), 7x35 Binocs, Spottingscope 20x. Clear sun but the light varied as flock surrounded us - some birds were seen with the sun behind us & the birds, to the front

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I had never seen Smith's but others with me had previously seen both Smith's + Lapland's

References and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson and Robbins were consulted in the field

How long before field notes made? during observation this form completed? 11 hours

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

What species? Smith's Longspur How many? ~ 25Location? 3 mi e, 2 mi n of Lone Tree on Johnson - Muscatine Co Line, IowaType of habitat? gravel road, corn stubbleWhen? date(s): 27 Mar 1982 time: 8³⁰ to 9¹⁵Who? your name and address: Thomas H. Kent 211 Richards St Iowa City IA 52240others with you: Mike + Carol Newton, Rick Hollis

others before or after you: _____

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.

We watch a large loose flock of longspurs for some time before getting a good look at a Smith's between two rows of corn stubble. It had plain, slightly yellow-buff underparts, a white patch at the shoulder, and face patch - triangular outlined in white including supercilious line. There was a white dot in the center of black face patch. White outer tail feathers were seen in several birds. At least one other male was seen and a number of winter or females with white wing patches and white outer tail feathers were seen. Later we saw several on fence wires and took photos. Plumages were variable with underparts ranging from buff to light grey, facial markings of variable intensity, and variable sized white wing patches. Many male Lapland longspurs in near breeding plumage were seen.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Lapland longspur - color, face pattern, wing patch, and long white outer tail feathers eliminate Lapland.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

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

Previous experience with species and similar ones: seen in Alaska + IowaReferences and persons consulted before writing description: We looked at

Robbin + Peterson while observing and consulted each other
How long before field notes made? 6 hrs this form completed? 6 hrs

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