

Smith's Longspur

27 Apr 1983

southeast of Hills, Johnson Co., IA

\*T. Staudt, \*T. Kent

IBL 53:55; 54:40

Record Number: 83-17

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Thomas J. Staudt

NOTE

T. H. Kent

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 53:55

Records Committee: IBL 54:40, 64:70

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Tom Kent to Records Committee, 13 Sep 1993

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

IV, Prob correct but description not complete (female Snow Bunting?).

III, Rather sketchy, but observers familiar with species; seen in same location earlier.

III, for all Smith's--see no need to document regular migrant. IV, more details please.

IV, Description not detailed enough.

III, Obviously not a good close look at them. The 27 April one may represent someone knowing what to see, rather than, seeing it, but it's hard to draw the line.

REVOTE (at meeting, Oct 1983): no change in the vote.

REVOTE (1993): 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D, There is probably not enough detail here to accept if it was the first sighting of the birds that season, but adequate to establish date of departure.

NA, I have no problem with location or date -- I've seen Smith's near here myself. While there, I noted that they are extremely difficult to see and to separate from Laplands. While I agree that this is very likely a correct record, there is just too little here (the only real field mark is some white in the wings seen by one observer) to withstand the scrutiny of future skeptics.

A-D, Positive ID 3 days before makes this record acceptable.

A-D, White wing patch diagnostic. Regular species. Call note distinctive.

83-17

13 September 1993

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

**Record:** 83-17 Smith's Longspur

**Reason for request:** Negative voters provided insufficient analysis.

**Comment:** This is a record that I know to be correct because I was there, and because of my experience with this species. If this species were seen at this date now, it would likely get into the literature without documentation. We were concerned at that time in establishing a late date and went out to see the birds the morning we were leaving for Florida. James Huntington had seen them a few days before and we had seen them at this location all spring. Tom Staudt heard them, but failed to note this in his write up. I knew from previous experience with him that he could tell Smith's from Laplands by call note. The white wing patches seen on two birds was enough for us. The suggestion from one reviewer about Snow Buntings is unrealistic, because Snow Buntings would flash white, the flocking and flight pattern are not right for Snow Bunting, and the date is well beyond that where even one Snow Bunting might be found (latest date 9 April). Lapland Longspurs are usually gone at this date, and if present would not be in such a large flock at this date. The credibility of this record is based on much more than the sketchy details presented. The flight pattern, note, and white wing patches were enough to convince us that the flock seen earlier had remained until this date, and we headed for Florida.

83-17

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

by the Records Committee  
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: SMITH'S LONGSPUR  
DATE SEEN: 27 April 1983  
SITE OF OBSERVATION: Johnson County  
OBSERVERS: T. Staudt  
DATE OF REVIEW: 1983  
METHOD OF REVIEW: Mailing to Committee  
CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: IV

COMMENTS: While the Committee generally believed that these birds were indeed Smith's Longspurs, based on the circumstances of the sighting and knowledge of the observer, the documentation itself lacked sufficient detail to be conclusive.  
It seems that this species is indeed regular in Iowa, and time (along with further documented sightings) will surely elevate its status to regular.

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

83-17

IV

1. Species Smiths Longspar 2. Number \_\_\_\_\_

3. Location East Johnson Co. (I'll defer to you for exact location Tom)

4. Date: April 27 1983 5. Time Bird Seen: around 8:30 am to \_\_\_\_\_

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):

Sky, hazy overcast to clear.

33 birds were counted in the air over a pitched cornfield where Smiths and Lapland Longspurs were seen earlier in the spring. Flitty up and down flight was observed. 15 birds flew in close, as they banked prominent white wing patches could be seen on at least 2 birds. Head pattern was not observed. Bodies overall were brownish. These were longspur/sparrow sized birds.

7. Description of voice, if heard:

8. Description of behavior:

9. Habitat - general:

specific:

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:

11. Distance (how measured)?

12. Optical equipment:

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:

15. Other observers: TOM RENT

16. Did the others agree with your identification?

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

James Huntington/John Cordell at the same location April 24

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? The description comes from notes taken on the day of observation.

Signature: Thomas J. Standt Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

About 30 Longspurs - filled 2 x 15 of  
 hills, same area as just seen in March  
 8:30 AM - T. Strickland. Seen 24<sup>th</sup> by  
 Huntley & Cordell - They saw them well.  
 We walked out into the field and watched  
 them fly toward us against light. Strickland  
 saw white wing patches on 2 and heard  
 trill-like call. Otherwise we could not get a  
 good view of them but watched them  
 fly up over a 15 min period.  
 Partially ~~the~~ desked old soybean and corn  
 field.

T.H. Kent

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## T. Kent's Notes on Smith's Longspur Sighting 27 Apr 1983

About 30 Longspurs in field 2 e 1 s of Hills, same area as first seen in March. 8:30 AM with T. Staudt.

Seen 24th by Huntington and Cordell -- they saw they well. We walked out into the field and watched them fly toward us against light. Staudt saw white wing patches on 2 and heard tic-tic-tic call. Otherwise we could not get a good view of them but watched them fly up over a 15 min period. Partially disked old soybean and corn field.