

Baird's Sparrow
13 May 1989
Anderson Prairie, Emmet Co., IA
*Harr
IBL 59:79, 85, 61:86

Record Number: 89-18
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Douglas C. Harr

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:79, 85

Records Committee: IBL 61:86

VOTE: 1 A-D, 6 NA

NA. This is quite possibly a correct identification, but a more detailed description would have helped for a first state record. For example, did color of median stripe extend on to nape? What about whisker marks? Baird's can have some streaking on the sides, but description says "little streaking on sides." Was this in comparison to Savannah side streaking? Was chestnut on coverts and scapulars seen? Again, quite possibly correct but doesn't seem beyond a reasonable doubt.

A-D. Despite scanty details, width and color of crown stripe and description of breast streaking help eliminate Savannah. While not noted, I assume the observer would have noticed yellow loreal patch had bird been Savannah. Also supporting this record, the habitat was right, the date was right for migrating bird, and it was from the quadrant of the state where this species should be looked for. Also, observer has experience with the species. I sure would have liked more detail for a first state record, though.

NA. Observer needs to eliminate other possible species not just Savannah, but Grasshopper, Henslow's, and LeConte's. Important field marks were not mentioned even though the bird was seen for 6 mins. Such as, dual black whisker marks, notched tail, rounded head, and nape color. A strong possibility exist that this bird indeed was a Baird's Sparrow, however a more detailed description of this hard to identify sparrow is required at this time.

NA. The features described are consistent with Baird's, but I'm not convinced Savannah is adequately eliminated. Savannah's are highly variable, with some individuals having less streaking below. Also, Savannah's don't necessarily have white crown stripe. If observer can eliminate a Savannah Sparrow, I will accept this record.

NA. Baird's Sparrow is certainly a possibility in Iowa, and date and place would fit with what would be expected. The description of the bird is practically limited to the crown stripe and breast streaking. Only one observer of many provided a documentation. Crown stripe of Baird's Sparrow should narrow anteriorly and widen posteriorly. To accept a first state record for Baird's Sparrow I would like to see a complete detailed description, a photograph, and a description or recording of the song. At this time of year, I would expect a perched bird to sing if given enough time.

NA. No mention of malar stripes. Possibility of chestnut on scapulars and wing coverts not addressed. Only species considered and eliminated was Savannah. What about Henslow's or LeConte's, which I would think would be possibilities. Not enough detail and similar species not completely eliminated.

NA. Date fine for spring vagrant records of this species; location is logical also. I like description of streaking on breast and also "showy" nature of head stripe. I would have liked a description of head stripe shape--it is said to widen into a buffy nape. Overall, I like the documentation, and am inclined to accept it except that there are no other confirming records. This record however contributes to an emerging pattern of reports from NW Iowa that appear now to be probably of this species. No call or song was heard.

SENT TO: Douglas C. Harr, P.O. Box 65, Larchwood, IA 51241

[8/7/89]

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Baird's Sparrow 2. Number: 1

3. Location Anderson Prairie State Preserve, Emmet Co., Iowa

4. Date: May 13, 1989 5. Time Bird seen: 8:42 to 8:48 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):

Size of Savannah Sparrow, and in fact, we thought it was that species at first. However, noted the buffy-yellow median stripe (top of head) was wide and showy (more than in Savannah). Also noted more finely spotted or streaked breast, with spots ending abruptly, so as to suggest a "bib", with little streaking on sides

7. Description of voice, if heard: Did not sing or call

8. Description of behavior: Sitting perched on tall, dead stem of prairie plant.

9. Habitat - general: ^{open} Grassland
specific: tall-grass prairie

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

Savannah Sparrow - narrower median stripe, more of pale yellow-white. Heavier streaking on breast and down sides.

11. Distance (how measured)? about 75 ft. (estimated) 12. Optical equipment: ^{7x50} binoculars

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): light excellent.
Bird to NW, sun in east, behind viewers

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Have seen Baird's Sparrow in 1988; regularly see Savannah Sparrows throughout region.

15. Other observers: Lee Schoenewe, Bob Moats, Mr & Mrs. Bob Madson, Mr. & Mrs. Russ Heine, Pearl Osher, Dave Kuel and 3 others.

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:

Used Peterson Guide & Birds of N. Am (Zim, et al) in field while observing. One of party read descriptions while rest of group observed. However, I made tentative identification before guidebooks were consulted

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? about 6 hours

Douglas C. Harr Address: P.O. Box 65
Signature

Date: May 13, 1989 City, State: Larchwood, IA. 51241