

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? SHARP-TAILED SPARROW How many? 2Location? Muskrat Slough in Jones County, IA.Type of habitat? Grass about 2 to 3 feet high with scattered small shrubs and scattered small stands of cattails. Some shallow water under foot. About 50 to 100 feet from edge of water in marsh.When? date(s): May 23, 1982 time: 8:30 to 9:00 AMWho? your name and address: Carl J. Bendorf 825 7th Ave., Iowa City, IA. 52240others with you: Tom Kent and Tom Staudt of Iowa Cityothers before or after you: Tom Staudt, John Cordell, Jim Sandrock all of Iowa City saw three birds on May 24, 1982 in same spot.

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.

Size was $3/4$ that of Swamp Sparrow which at one point was perched nearby to this bird. Top of head was dark gray or blackish. Back was streaked brown and gray with four very prominent white streaks on the upper back. Tail was very short and dark in color.

There was a very prominent and distinct orangish stripe over the eye which began behind the bill, arched over the eye and ended behind the eye. Superimposed on the orange stripe was a smaller black stripe from the eye to the back of the head. The area around the eye (cheek area) was grayish. The lower face was again orangish in color.

The upper breast was a rich orange-buff color with a slight suggestion of streaking. The belly and lower breast area was white and without streaks.

As we walked through grass, several birds flushed and dropped back into grass. With much patience, we flushed birds again and observed them as they flew low over the grass or perched on grasses or small shrubs. Soon we began to detect a weak raspy insectlike "chip-chip-tseeeeeeeee", as the birds began to sing. We were trying to attract the birds with a recording of the Sharp-tailed from the Peterson Eastern record. The birds did not seem to respond but the song was identical. The "gasping" quality mentioned in the Peterson book was very apparent.

Attached is ^{copy of} a crude sketch made several minutes after the observation which shows the basic color ~~XX~~ scheme we observed.

These birds were apparently of the inland Nelson's race of Sharp-tail.

Similar species and how eliminated: The LeConte's Sparrow is eliminated by the presence of the white streaks on the upper back, the gray cheek area and the absence of a noticeable light stripe on the crown of the head. Two weeks earlier we all had heard a LeConte's singing and it was different.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
The lighting was excellent and at our backs. The distance was estimated at ten to 100 yards. 7X35 Binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: First for Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Have seen and heard LeConte's.

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? 15 minutes this form completed? 1 week.

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

Sharp-tailed Sparrow 23 May, 1982
Muskrat Slough Carl J. Bendorf
Tracing of sketch made 15 minutes after observation

