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OK  
Sharp-Tailed Sparrow

May 31, 1975 8:00 a.m.

Prairie Rose State Park  
Harlan, Shelby County, Iowa

Habitat: Lake shallows out to marshy area of grass and duck-potato plants. Surrounding area is grassland with few small shrubs and sumac plants

I was walking along the edge of the lake towards the marsh area when a small, brown bird flew across my path and went down in the knee-high grass bordering the lake. I could see him moving about in the bottom of the grass approximately ten feet in front of me. I stood still and "squeaked" on the back of my hand and he climbed into perfect view on the near-top of a grass stalk.

I first noticed the bright orange-buff of his face on which the gray-cheek triangle stood out clearly. His back was dark and had a clear white double V which was also very noticeable. His breast and sides were very buffy with a few thin streakings along the sides. His bill was small, sparrow-type and his tail short and pointed. He stayed on the grass

stalk for approximately 90 seconds and I had ample time to study him using 6-8 power zoom binoculars. After this he again dropped down in the grass and I did not see him again.

When I returned to the car, I consulted Birds of North America by Robbins, Bruun Zim and Singer. My observations coincided with the picture of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow-Inland Race. I also consulted the Audubon Land Bird Guide by Richard Paugh. Its picture showed much more streaking than I observed on my bird.

Unfortunately, I was alone when I saw this bird, but I am convinced it was a Sharp-Tailed Sparrow of the Inland or Nelson's Variety.

Submitted by:

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P.S. He did not sing but uttered a small "tic" or "chip" when he first flew in front of me.