

Barbara L. Wilson
Rt 1 Box 41
Hastings, Iowa 51540
Winter 1981-1982

Iowa

Vesper Sparrow - 1 December 23, 1981
5 miles North, 1½ miles west of Hastings, Iowa Mills County

Description Size: Sparrow-sized.

Face: bill tan, upper + lower mandibles about the same. Conical. White eye ring, no white eye line. Crown grayish. Cheek dark. White line outlines cheek from below + curves up a bit at back of cheek. Dark line at edge of throat. Crown maybe obscurely streaked.

Underparts: Breast streaked, streaks not heavy, they end at the belly. A couple feathers in the center of the breast are a little more heavily marked, and from some angles they look like a faint central breast spot. Belly white, flanks streaked.

Wings: brown with lighter brown wing bars.

Upperparts: hard to see. Obscurely streaked?

Tail: white outer tail feathers. Somewhat long.

Similar species: White outer tail feathers on a streaked Sparrow suggests strongly Vesper Sparrow. Lapland Longspurs have white outer tail feathers, but lack the white eye ring, are streaked on the sides but not, or only faintly, across the breast. Longspurs do not typically sit in trees. Longspurs have short tails, too.

Behavior: flushed from snow-free area on the road ~~to~~ to land in an elm tree by the house.

Flew off into soybean field

Time, light, etc. About 3 minutes beginning 10:30 am. Sunny, few clouds in blue sky. light wind from west. Distance about 30 feet at closest. 8.5 x binoculars. No bird book used until after description written, as it was about 5 minutes after I saw the bird. Bird NNE of me. In ~~tree~~ 21m tree by house as I stood by mailbox.

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