

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

1. Species Sharp-tailed Sparrow 2. Number 3

3. Location Muskrat Slough Jents County

4. Date: MAY 24 1982 5. Time Bird Seen: 7:45am to 8:30am

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):

Head dark bill, dark eye. Black cap with gray median stripe. Bright ochre eyebrow stripe.
A thin black zigzag eye line, faint gray ear patch. Bright ochre area just below eye and ear patch
Breast ochre continues over throat and breast but not as bright. Throat is clear of streaks.
belly ochre on breast is interrupted by faint narrow gray streaks which become longer and continue from the breast down the sides. Belly and underparts appear an off white.
Back a small nape patch is a grayish brown, slightly more visible than the ear patch. The back is darker brown interrupted over the shoulder area by two highly visible white streaks
tail quit short, legs a pinkish gray.

These notes include three points not noted when observing two birds May 23. (1) the gray-brown nape, (2) the light streaking on the sides, and (3) the gray median stripe. The latter created some problems for identification. Although not noted in Peterson's latest field guide, his illustration does indicate the presents of this line.

7. Description of voice, if heard: VOICE a long shreeeee, no introductory note, two birds were seen while singing

8. Description of behavior: The birds were quit easy to locate and observe. The first bird flew up and into a dead weed in the center of a tall wet grassy area and perched in the open for several minutes. It then dropped to the grass and walked away from us. The flight was short, just over the grass, ending when the birds took a quick dive into the grass or on to a low perch.

9. Habitat - general: the grass, ending when the birds took a quick dive into the grass or on to a low perch.

specific: Knee high wet grassy marsh edge. Cat tails and some shrubs nearby. The birds would perch in the shrubs but then circle back to the grassy area

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain: LeConte's sparrow has a lighter median stripe, is not as brightly colored on the face and does not have white lines on the back. These birds were larger than any LeConte's I have seen.

11. Distance (how measured)? est.
The birds were seen from 10yrd to 40yds away

12. Optical equipment:
7x binoculars

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
Overcast, sun not visible. Our backs were to the east, north or north east when observing the birds

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
Two sharp-tails were seen in the same location May 23, with Tom Kent, Carl Benderf

15. Other observers: James Huntington
John Cordell

16. Did the others agree with your identification? YES

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: NONE

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
Peterson's A Field Guide to the Birds. The book was used while observing the birds, but not when notes were written.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? NOTES WERE TAKEN WITHIN 2 HRS AFTER THE SIGHTING, THIS WAS WRITTEN FROM THOSE NOTES ON MAY 25

Signature: THOMAS J. STAUDT Address: 931 N. Summit

Date: MAY 25 1982 City, State: Iowa City, Iowa