

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Sharp-tailed Sparrow 2. Number: 1, 2
3. Location Coopers Marsh, N E of Ames, Story County, Iowa
4. Date: 18 and 19 May 1985 5. Time Bird seen: 18th 6 PM CDST 19th Noon CDST  
to \_\_\_\_\_
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): On 11th, 12th and 15th saw a smallish very dark backed sparrow with orange on side of head, but would flush just once and dive back into the sedge & cattails. Was not ever able to flush a second time. I strongly suspected Sharp-tailed sparrow then. On the 18th a sparrow flushed and sat on a sedge stem for about 20 seconds providing an excellent side view - top of head very dark gray to black; side of head orange with gray triangle with a thin black line on top side of triangle; back nearly black with white striped, wings and tail dark brown, breast pale orangish with vague orangish streaks. The 19th May birds - one flushed dropt down onto path ahead of me - nearly black back with white stripes, top of head very
7. Description of voice, if heard: dark; could see some orange on side of face, but view not very good; the 2nd 19th May bird saw a very short time & then it flew - very dark back dark brown wings & tail, orange face with gray triangle patch.//At one time both were perched in sedge abt 4 feet apart, but too far away for me to see well as I didn't have binocualrs on the 19th when I went out the second time that day (with Steve Dinsmore)(late afternoon).
8. Description of behavior:
9. Habitat - general: marsh  
specific: sedge
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:  
Le Contes Sparrow has lite stripe thru crown and doesn't have gray traingle on side of face. Also is lighter backed. There were a good many Sedge & Marsh Wrens around but they don't have orange faces with gray triangles and are ~~sparrow~~ shaped different, and fly different.
11. Distance (how measured)? 18th May bird 25 ft → 7 X 35 bino 12. Optical equipment: None second time/on 19th.  
19th May birds (in Path) 12 ft; other bird 6 ft (no binoculars)
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
clear; 18th May bird to north of me; 19th May birds 1 to north, 1 to east & flew to north.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:  
Saw several last fall at Hendricksons Marsh. Have seem quite a few LeConte's Sparrows.
15. Other observers: Steve Dinsmore - ~~the~~ he wanted to know exactly where I'd seen them so I went out late in the afternoon of 19th without binoculars as I'd already seen them earlier
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes that day.
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?  
In both cases less than 10 minutes.
- Signature *Paul M. ...* Address: 1120 Marston
- Date: 26 May 1985 City, State: Ames, Iowa 50010