DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Sharp-tailed Sparrow How many? 1 or 2

Location? Hendrickson's Marsh - Story County

Type of habitat? Tall grass, Knee-high weeds, small willow thickets

When? date(s): October 10, 1984 time: 3:15 to 3:25 p.m. - 4 times
3:40 to 3:41 p.m. - 1 time

Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowa

others with you: (none)

others before or after you: (none today) - Paul Martsching and Joe Schaufenbuel a week ago

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.

I was looking for sparrows in the weeds and grasses and one flew up and landed in some small willow sprouts up out of the grasses. I was very fortunate to get some very good looks at the bird 15-20 feet away as it stayed out in the open for up to 1 minute before flying to another willow sprout. The sparrow had a dark crown but had gray in a crown stripe at the back of the head. It had a light gray bill, a dark gray unstreaked neck all the way across its neck except it had a thin line of brown in the middle of the neck, and a deep rich orange color in the face. It had a deep rich orange-colored buffy breast and a white belly. It had deep rich orange around the eyes and eyebrow. It had very distinctive white lines on its back, dark brownish wings, and its gray ear patch was faint and not very distinct. Later I saw another sharp-tailed sparrow (at least I think it was another one) about 15 feet away that had distinctive streaks on its sides and flanks.

Similar species and how eliminated: Le Conte's Sparrow has white central crown stripe, chestnut streaks on nape, and a much lighter color on wings and back overall than does a Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? —

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Partly sunny, Sun behind me 3 times and at the side the first time, distances estimated, 7x35 Binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

First time for Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Have seen good looks at quite a few Le Conte's sparrows.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Field guides — Nat'l. Geographic, R.T. Peterson's, Robbins.

How long before field notes made? Right after viewing this form completed? Oct. 11, 1984

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