

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

1. Species Sharp-tailed Sparrow 2. Number 2 (maybe more)  
3. Location Snake Creek Marsh - Greene County  
4. Date: Sept. 30, 1985 5. Time Bird Seen: 11:45 A.M. to 12:00 Noon

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):

One bird sat in the open for almost 10 min. and offered excellent view. Bird was sparrow shaped and about size of house sparrow with a shorter tail. Flight pattern was "buzzy" staying low over weeds and then almost falling in (rail fashion). Robust-chunky bird. Face was very orange-yellow with a brownish streak behind eye and a grayish cheek patch. Eye = dark. Crown was dark brown with what seemed to be faint grayish stripe down middle. Back of neck (nape) was gray. Back was blackish with 4 (2 per side) white stripes (easily seen - even in flight). Upper breast was buffy (as were sides + flanks) with brown streaks. Belly and lower breast = whitish. Grayish bill. Wings + tail = brownish.

7. Description of voice, if heard: High pitch chip - ~~similar~~ <sup>similar to white-throat but shorter.</sup>  
8. Description of behavior: Birds would flush, fly short distance, and usually disappear into grass. Sometimes one would set in open. They responded to "squeaking".  
9. Habitat - general: Marsh

specific: open water surrounded by duck weed (waist high)

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:  
Larger + darker than LeConte's and did not have light central crown stripe. LeConte's do not show the vivid white stripes on back. Several LeConte's were also present and comparison was easy.

11. Distance (how measured)?

20-25 ft. - stepped off

12. Optical equipment:

10X40 binocs

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):

Bright - overcast day - good viewing

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:

First time for sharp-tail but have seen many LeConte's

15. Other observers: Gene + Eloise Armstrong (later in day)

16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

I checked National Geographic guide.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 1 hr.

Signature: Robert K. Myers Address: R.R. 2, Box 153

Date: Sept. 30, 1985 City, State: Perry, Iowa 50220