

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa ✓

What species? SHARP-TAILED SPARROW How many? one

Location? North Marshall county, country gravel road (dead end) leading to timber and creek- corn fields and a wet shrubby area.

Type of habitat? wet, marshy, weedy low spot by road in a corn field with three shrubby bushes

When October 19, 1986 Time 5:30 p.m.

Who Ramona R. Sommerlot, RR 1, Box 18, Union, Iowa
others with me --none
others before or after you-- two people tried to locate it again
not successful

Describe the Bird:

There was much activity with seven species of sparrows moving about in the bushes and weeds. Suddenly a bird flew up from the marshy area to light on a weed stalk ten inches tall, with the late sun shining on it. I noticed immediately the yellowish to orangish breast with darker streaks marking it. The bird turned its head sideways and there was an orange triangle patch on side of head--with grey patch behind the eye. The head appeared darker on top. I was sitting in the car on the road observing--about 25 feet away. The side view of the tail looked much shorter than the tree sparrows I had been seeing, but the total length of the bird about the same. I observed this bird for about 8 seconds--it didn't sing. It lifted off stalk and dropped right back into some area of marshy thick grass. I watched for an hour more--light getting bad, so walked area. Never saw it again.

Similar species and how eliminated: LE CONTES--too small, striped head
Lincoln's Sparrow--facial pattern not right--too little
Henslow's--not right coloration in breast and side of head

Viewing conditions: late sunshine walked to measure 7 by 35 Common Bushnell

Previous experience Saw one and documented in 1983

References: Robbins, Petersons, Nat'l Geographic

Made field notes immediately and completed this form the following week