

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

Species grasshopper sparrow 2. Number: 1

Location 3 miles west of North Liberty IA between H and Swan Lake roads

Date: 10-29-77 5. Time Bird seen: approx 11 am to 11.05 am

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, include only what actually was seen in the field):

Small sparrow facing me on fence wire. Very flat head, pinstripe over top of head. Faint broad eye stripe below darker upper head. Faint, thin white eye ring. Under parts plain and pale, whiter at throat. Clean looking bird with distinct back pattern and distinct, fine streaks extending just onto the shoulder. Narrow tail with ragged end, otherwise angle not good to define tail well.

Description of voice, if heard: not heard

Description of behavior: sat in same position for 5 min and then suddenly flew off and not seen again.

Habitat - general: open fields with small brushy area near roadside. Flock of savannah sparrows in brushy area.  
specific:

Bird on fence by combined corn field.

Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain: ..

Henslow's sparrow-this bird did not have color on wing.

LeConte's sparrow-lacked face pattern and straking.

Vesper sparrow-seen in same area 1 week before-not similar to this bird.

Distance (how measured)? 40 feet (estimate)

12. Optical equipment:

20X B&L eyepiece on Bushnell scope and

Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): 8X40 Leitz binocs clear, sun behind and to right of bird, however back light did not affect detail.

Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:

common species, more often heard than seen, but seen many times.

Other observers:

none

Did the others agree with your identification?

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

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

Used Robbins et al while viewing the bird.

Bent: Life Histories of North American Cardinals, Buntings, Towhees, Finches Sparrows, and Allies gives Oct 21 as latest date for grasshopper sparrow in Iowa.

Peterson & Fawks: A List of Birds of Quad City Region show bird rare to mid-October. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

Kent & Kent: Birding in Eastern Iowa show no Sept or Oct records in 25 years.

Address: 211 Richards ST.

Signature T. H. Kent  
Date: 10-29-77 City, State: Iowa City, IA 52240

Brown: An Annotated List of the Birds of Iowa gives Oct 28 as latest date for the grasshopper sparrow.

(over)