

VERIFICATION OF UNUSUAL SIGHT RECORD FOR UTAH

Common Name: Clay-colored Sparrow

Scientific Name: *Spizella Pallida*

Date: 9/15/85

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Length of time observed: 4-5 minutes

Number: 1

Age: Unknown (see desc.)

Sex: Unknown

Location: N. of Salt Lake International Airport; road deadends into airport.

Lat/long:

Elevation (if known):

Distance to bird: 40'-50'

Light conditions: Excellent

Optical equipment: 20x Bushnell Spacemaster II scope.

Weather: Clear, sunny.

Description: (Write a detailed description of the bird's appearance, including size, shape, plumage pattern, color, and any unique features.)

Transcript of notes made shortly after sighting:

" Small sparrow - size of chirping at most - Grayish median stripe on crown - Brown rump - fairly distinct facial pattern - brown 'ear patch' bordered by lighter markings - noticeable blackish streaking on back - clear breast - "

The median crown stripe was quite distinct, and seemed grayish to me*. The bird was perched on a fence wire, and changed positions, giving me excellent fore and aft views. The rump was brown, ^{and clear} showing absolutely no trace of gray. Overall plumage was somewhat buffy; the facial pattern, while noticeable, and definite, was not what I would call striking - there were definite markings but they were not bold or bright. Breast was basically uniform in color.

* The stripe was definitely lighter than the rest of the crown - width, maybe 1/6 of head diameter. (The latter is an after-the-fact ^{estimate} observation.)

Voice or call notes and method of delivery:

soft hissy peep - maybe a "tsip" or "seep"

Behavior:

Bird was perched on fence wire; faced both ways; flew off and went down - not seen again.

Habitat:

thick weedy field type area - cornfields near - edge of road near airport. Observer not familiar with species designation of flora.

What similar species might it have been and how were these eliminated:

Brewers Sp. - median line on crown

Chipping Sp - brown rump, face pattern

imm. White-crowned Sp. - configuration & size (very familiar with White-crowns), face pattern

Grasshopper - definitely did not have that flat-headed appearance (familiar with Grasshoppers from Ariz.) Also, tail not short to the eye.

What experience have you had with this and similar species:

Have observed species in Colorado in spring several times. Of above, quite familiar with Chipping and White-crowns, fairly familiar with Brewers, and have seen Grasshoppers on several Arizona trips.

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

Peterson, Golden, Audubon Master, and National Geographic.

I couldn't "make" this bird into anything else.

Significance of record in this area or the state:

Rare.

Additional material: (attach drawing, photograph, tape recording if available)

Description from notes taken at time of sighting _____ notes made later about 20-25 minutes from memory _____

Observer: Joseph E. Leigh

Signature: Joseph E. Leigh

Address: 5041 S. 4420 W.

Kearns UT 84118

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

None

Date prepared: 9/17/85

Return this form to:

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