

814 - 02 - 1994

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW

Spizella pallida

Location: Presque Isle State Park

Date: May 15, 1994

Time: Approx. 2:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Weather: Variably cloudy, wind southwesterly to approx. 10 mph

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: Zeiss 10 X 40 Binocular and Kowa TSN 4 with variable eyepiece set at 30X

Viewing distance: As close as 100 feet

Details of sighting & description: Feeding with 2 or 3 Chipping Sparrows (*Spizella passerina*), 2 Field Sparrow (*S. pusilla*), and 50 or 60 White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) was a Clay-colored Sparrow. The sparrows were feeding in short grass and bare ground in Beach 11 parking lot. The Clay-colored was about the same size as the other *Spizellas*. It seemed larger headed and shorter tailed than the Chipping Sparrows. The entire bird was buffy-gray with dark streaking on the back. The head was prominently marked. The top of the head was medium brown with a white central stripe. The cheek was medium brown surrounded by white. The white throat was separated from the brown cheek patch by a dusky whisker stripe. The gray nape was distinctive. The rump was brownish unlike the pure gray rump of the Chipping Sparrow. The bill was pinkish yellow similar to the Field Sparrows bill. The underside was unmarked brownish-gray. I took about 40 photographs of the Clay-colored Sparrow. The bird remained in the Beach 11 parking lot until at least May 19 and was seen by Don Snyder, Ed and Cheryl Kwater, my wife Linda, Geoff Robinson, and Jean Stull. I have seen 5 or 6 Clay-colored Sparrows all of them in Erie County.

Jerry McWilliams

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CLAY-COLORED SPARROW IN ERIE COUNTY

On Monday May 9th 1994 I was birding alone along Deer Trail, Presque Isle State Park. At approx. 7.30 a.m. I came across a small group of White-crowned Sparrows, Zonotrichia leucophrys in an area of Bayberry, Cottonwood trees and fallen, dead branches. I paused to scan through them and almost immediately noticed a smaller sparrow in a nearby Bayberry bush. Upon examining the bird with my binoculars I was surprised to discover that it was a Clay-colored Sparrow, Spizella pallida.

In size the bird was noticeably smaller than the nearby White-crowned and had a fairly long tail and a round-headed appearance. The head pattern was very pronounced. The forehead and crown were buffish-brown, heavily streaked with dark brown and with a bold, prominent creamy-white central crown stripe. The supercilium was buffish-white, very pronounced, and extended from the base of the bill well behind the eye and almost on to the nape. There was a thin black post-ocular stripe forming the upper border of a buffish-orange ear coverts patch, and a pronounced blackish moustachial stripe forming the lower border. These two stripes were joined by a thin dark vertical stripe along the hind border of the ear coverts. The sub-moustachial area was grayish white separated from a white chin and throat by a very indistinct gray malar stripe. The nape and the area immediately behind and below the ear coverts were a soft, pale gray color & the

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underparts were grayish-white strongly suffused with bright buff across the breast and down the flanks. The mantle and scapulars were buff-brown heavily streaked with dark brown. The rump was not clearly seen but the tail was dark brown and notched. The wings were fairly dark brown with paler edges to the primaries and secondaries and narrow white tips to the greater and median coverts forming a double wing bar. The bill was short and conical, typical of a seed-eating bird. It was pinkish-orange with a brown culmen. The legs and feet were a dull pinkish-brown.

The bird remained in full view for several minutes at a range of 10-15 yards and I was able to study it through $\times 10$ binocular and $\times 30$ spotting scope. It eventually disappeared into a nearby thicket and could not be relocated despite a thorough search of the nearby bushes. The light was good throughout the duration of the observation and conditions were still (very little wind).

I have seen a number of Clay-colored Sparrows before - at least a dozen in Texas and one on territory in Mercer Co., PA during two consecutive summers (1991 and 92).

Ed Kwater

Record No.: 814-01-1994

814-02-1994

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*)

Date of Sighting: 15 May 1994 to 15 May 1994

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Ed Kwater

Date of Submission: 1994

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams; Ed Kwater

Written Description: YES Photo: YES Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
	02		01					
F. Haas	X		X					
N. Pulcinella	X		X					
E. Kwater	X		X					
R. Ickes	X		X					
G. McWilliams	X		X					
P. Schwalbe	X		X					
J. Skinner	X		X					
TOTALS	7		7					
DECISION	X		X					

Comments:

Actually 2 records.

Signature (Secretary):

J. C. Haas

Date:

3-31-95