









814-02-1998

Supporting documentation: ~~Clay-colored Sparrow~~ ~~Clay-colored Sparrow~~

Attached is a photocopy of my birding journal entries for Clay-colored Sparrow. The entry dated 5/9/98 describes my first encounter with this species, in N.W. North Dakota, and offers background for assessing my familiarity with it.

My Pennsylvania sighting of 7/17/98 includes a list of field marks, taken in the field while observing the bird (without consulting any field-guides, as none were at hand), and transcribed verbatim.

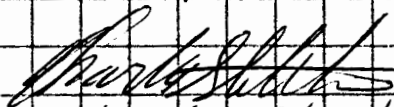
Some additional data...

Weather: Hazy overcast, 75° +/-, light breeze

Optics: B+L Elite 8X42 binoculars

Kowa TSN-4 'scope, 20X-60X eyepiece, on tripod.

Audio: Amplified directional microphone with headset



Charles Studholme

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(334)

Clay-colored Sparrow

*Spizella pallida*

5/9/98

10:35 AM, Buffalo Lodge Lake, McHenry Co., N.D.

Seen also many times during the ensuing week, this obliging little sparrow responds well to pishing, and often allows comparatively close approaches as it sings from a low, exposed perch.

The size and shape of a Chipping Sparrow, it's crown is streaked black and white<sup>(ish)</sup>, with an eyering and buffy auricular patch, and un-streaked breast.

7/17/98

8:30-9 AM, Piney Tract (reclaimed strip mine near Clarion, PA)

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While John Fedek was finishing a short tour for me of this fascinating place, he stopped in mid-sentence & mid-stride & cocked his head, exclaiming "clay-colored sparrow!" We spotted the bird, briefly viewing it as it perched half-way up a locust sapling. It flew down & away, and I staked-out the spot as John ran for his camera, left in the truck, less than 1/2 mile away.

On his return, we separated to stalk cautiously into the scrub-island dotted "prairie".

The bird re-appeared in another sapling, then flew successively to two small, dead pines, finally circling

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back toward the original spot. It perched, posed, and sang at each stop long enough for satisfying scrutiny and several photographs.

Notes from my notebook:

Size/shape of chipping Sparrow

Dullish-pink bill

Light Crown-stripe, narrow on forehead + widening to nape.

No Conspicuous eye-ring

Light superciliary

Dark eye-line, from fine behind eye to broader toward nape

Buff cheek-patch

Notched tail

Clear breast, flank, + belly.

♂ "Bzz-bzz-bzz" slow, low, on one pitch.

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814-03-1998

### Breeding Clay-colored Sparrows at Piney Tract

While birding Piney Tract on July 17, 1998, with Charles Studholme, I heard a Clay-colored Sparrow singing. The buzzy song was unmistakable. Charles and I took extra time to try and locate and verify by sight the bird. We soon located the bird and I ran back to the car to get my camera to try and photo document the sighting. I took 2 pictures. While we were observing the bird, it sang. I had a singing bird about 1/2 mile from this spot earlier in the year, but could not verify it by sight.

I was not able to get back to the location until July 19th. At that time, I located an adult, heard another bird singing at the same time, and observed what I thought could have been 2 fledged Clay-colored Sparrows. I went home and researched the species and became sure that the young birds could have been Clay-colored because of the coloration and the white median stripe on the crown. I called Margaret Buckwalter with the news and she told me another observer had seen an adult carrying food.

I spent the morning and late afternoon July 20th trying to document the breeding of the sparrows. I saw the adult Clay-colored Sparrows carrying food and I also observed the young birds. However, I also observed many young Chipping Sparrows. When the young birds could be compared, it was noticed that the young Clay-colored Sparrows were more buffy and had the white median stripe on the crown. The juvenile chipping sparrows were darker, seemed almost sooty, and did not have a stripe on the crown. I was able to take 2 adult pictures, but no feeding or young shots. I also never saw the adults feeding young. However, I did get a recording of the song.

I went back on July 21 and took a shot of an adult. Later in the day, I found an adult Clay-colored Sparrow with food and a young Clay-colored Sparrow in the same tree. I took the picture of the young bird, but didn't get a shot of the adult. The adult was about 3 feet higher up in the tree than the young bird carrying food. I never saw any young being fed by adult Clay-colored sparrows. I did watch young Chipping Sparrows being fed. Never did I observe a young Clay-colored being fed by a Chipping Sparrow and never did I observe a young Chipping Sparrow being fed by an adult Clay-colored.

Since I was traveling west, I took the young Clay-colored picture with me and compared the photo with actual young Clay-colored. This convinced myself and Jason Horn that we did have young Clay-colored Sparrows. I realize how the juveniles of both species resemble each other, but, after seeing literally dozens of juvenile Clay-colored Sparrows, I am sure that the bird in the photo is a juvenile Clay-colored Sparrow. The habitat seems ideal - fields, locusts, and young pines. The song seemed to only be heard early morning and late evening.

John G. Fedak

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**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation - Round One**

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

Date of Sighting: 15 July 1998 to 25 July 1998

Location: PINEY TRACT

County: CLARION

Observer(s): John Fedak, Charles Studholme

Date of Submission: 1998

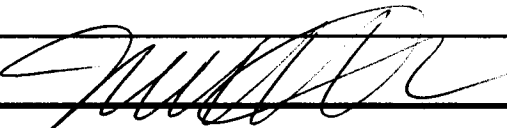
Submitted by: John Fedak, Charles Studholme

WRITTEN DESCRIPTION YES PHOTO YES SPECIMEN NO RECORDING NO

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman	X							
T. Floyd								X
P. Hess	X							
R. Ickes			X					
J. McWilliams	X							
B. Reid		X						X
P. Rodewald	X							
TOTALS	4	1	1					1
DECISION	X							

Comments: 6/10/12

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

9/28/10