













#5



#4



#3



#2



#1

Response from Jim Rising:

Hi Dave. If those pictures were taken along the coast I don't think that we would hesitate to call the bird a Saltmarsh--and I am pretty confident that that is what it is. The bill does look OK to me to be Saltmarsh, although a bit small. Why don't you send the photos to Jon Greenlaw jsg@iilinc.com He knows these birds better than I--esp the coastal ones. I'd be really curious to hear what he thinks, and what others think as well. Please do keep me posted. There is one specimen of a Saltmarsh from western PA, ID by Kenneth Parkes, in the Carnegie Museum, I think. I don't know of any other inland records. Let me know if you know of some, s.v.p.

Thanks for sending these, and keep me posted about your decision, if you will. Cheers!

rising@zoo.utoronto.ca

Response from Jon Greenlaw:

Dave,

There is little doubt that your bird is a bona fide Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow. It is indeed unusual for this species to appear inland away from the coast. In this case, easternmost Pennsylvania near the New Jersey border is not very far from the New Jersey/Delaware Bay coasts. The putative specimen of 'caudatus' from the Pittsburgh area (CMNH 144952, Oct 1972, Westmoreland Co.) in western Pennsylvania is a lot farther from the coast, & should be re-examined. Your photo documentation of Saltmarsh STSP should be archived somewhere for future reference. The usual course is to submit your observations as a report to your state bird records committee & let them verify identification for purposes of converting your report to a state record.

All visible plumage and morphological (bill) characters in the photos fall within range of variation of Saltmarsh STSP. The combination of strong contrastiness between orange ochre malars & buffy breast, and strongly developed, relatively discrete streaking across the breast & down sides & flanks confirm ID. The dull (vs bright white) scapular streaks help to discount 'n. nelsoni.' The bill length is on the short side, as Jim Rising pointed out, but seems to fall within the range of variation found in Saltmarsh STSP.

Remarks on other features that you mention: (1) Yes, nominate Nelson's STSP can be boldly marked below, but it is distinguished by other features, notably strongly patterned dorsum, little malar-breast contrast, & small bill). (2) The head profile (rounded vs flattened) has been oversold as a character. The position of crown feathers is subject to bird's motivational state. There may be an "average" appearance, but that is not helpful for critical ID's of individuals. (3) Throat whiteness is variable in both species, most subspecies. There often is a wash of buffy on the throat of Saltmarsh STs, but in other cases, throat can be quite white. (4) Contrast between breast color and white abdomen is not useful; it depends much on wear. The buffy color on the breast is bright in fresh-plumaged birds, but very dull & pale in worn birds. Your bird is a fresh-plumaged bird, so you should expect some contrast. (5) The dark markings around the eye is individual variation; no species-specific significance. (6) Discreteness of dark streaking on underparts also will depend to some extent on wear. In fresh-plumaged STs, streaks in Saltmarsh STs typically appear blurred along the edges; this is caused by some pale barb tips. Later, as feathers age & barb tips disappear, the streaks "harden", or become more strongly discrete. (7) Grayish sides of neck not species specific in Saltmarsh STs.

Your e-mail to Jim Rising identified the location as "Lake Minsi", Northampton Co., PA. My small-scaled maps do not show that lake, so could you identify the nearest town for me? Thanks.

Appreciate seeing the photos. I shall cc a copy of this return to Jim Rising.

All the best.

Jon (S. Greenlaw)
Archbold Biological Station
Venus, Florida

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of 2

Species: Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

Date of Sighting: 12 November 1996 to 12 November 1996

Location: MINSI LAKE

County: NORTHAMPTON

Observer(s): Rick Wiltraut

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Rick Wiltraut

Written Description: NO

Photo: YES

Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas								X
N. Pulcinella	X							
E. Kwater								X
R. Ickes	X							
G. McWilliams	X							
P. Schwalbe	X							
S. Feldstein						X		
TOTALS	4					1		2
DECISION								

Comments:

Send for second round.

Signature (Secretary):

L C Haas

Date:

8-16-97

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 2 of 2

Species: Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

Date of Sighting: 12 November 1996 to 12 November 1996

Location: MINSI LAKE

County: NORTHAMPTON

Observer(s): Rick Wiltraut

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Rick Wiltraut

Written Description: NO

Photo: YES

Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas	X							
P. Schwalbe	X							
E. Kwater								X
R. Ickes						X		
S. Feldstein								X
J. McWilliams								X
N. Pulcinella	X							
TOTALS	3					1		2
DECISION						X		

Comments: Discuss at PORC meeting. 2 abstentions
Accepted? Rejected?

Signature (Secretary):

J. C. Haas

Date:

4-19-95

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round Three

Species: Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (Ammodramus nelsoni)

Date of Sighting: 12 November 1996 to 12 November 1996

Location: MINSI LAKE

County: NORTHAMPTON

Observer(s): Rick Wiltraut and multiple observers

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Rick Wiltraut

Written Description: No

Photo: Yes

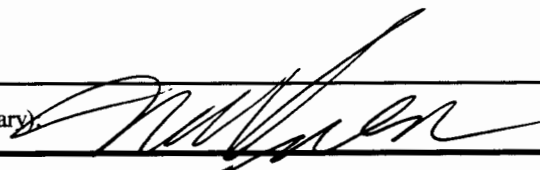
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead	X ^{SWT}							
D. Heathcote						X		
P. Hess						X [♂]		
J. Stanley	X ^{SMSF}							
E. Witmer					X			
R. Leberman								X
M. Sharp	X ^{SMSF}							
TOTALS	3				1	2		1
DECISION								

Comments: Accept as Salt Marsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow - PH, JS, GLA, DH, EW
 6/01 - accept as Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow

Signature (Secretary)



Date: 1/5/04