

830A-01-1999

RARE BIRD REPORT

Species: Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow

Date of this Observation: October 12, 1999

Date Found: October 12, 1999

Last Date Seen: October 12, 1999

Location: Yellow Creek State Park, on the south shore, northwest of the maintenance building along the path to the lake; Brush Valley Quad, Block 4

Township/City: Brush Valley Twp.

County: Indiana

Person Writing This Report: Margaret Higbee

Address: 3119 Creekside Drive, Indiana, PA 15701

Phone: 724-354-3493

Other Observers: Carol Guba, John Salvetti, Dory Jacobs, Bronnie Bekker

Who found the bird first: Margaret Higbee

The five of us were observing a flock of migrants which included Field, Song, Swamp, and White-throated Sparrows, Yellow-rumped and Blackpoll Warblers, and Rusty Blackbirds when I spotted a very orangish sparrow perched in a shrub no more than 30 feet distant and about 6 feet high. I immediately put the bird in my scope to make sure everyone saw it. It was very cooperative as it kept the original position for at least 5 minutes— long enough for everyone to take turns at the scope and study field marks. The bird was facing us, and we first noted the bird's flat-headedness and a "Pectoral Sandpiper-like" break where the streaking and buffiness of the breast met the white belly. The breast beneath the orange was streaked as were the flanks. The throat contrasted with the breast and was lighter buffy. It had a black stripe behind the eye with a wide orangish supercilium. The cheeks and the nape appeared greenish gray. The crown was dark with a grayish median stripe. The bird's wings were very reddish. The bird flew into another shrub about 50 feet away, but we were able to get the bird once again in the scope. From this angle we could see the white stripes on the back as the bird had its back toward us. Once again everyone took turns looking through my scope. The bird dropped down for a few minutes out of sight, but we decided to just wait instead of approaching. We were fortunate for it flew a third time and once again we had a head-on view from a distance of about 75 feet in yet another shrub. The total observation time was at least 15 minutes, possibly 20.

We eliminated LeConte's Sparrow as a possibility when we saw the very white streaks on the bird's back. In addition, the median crown stripe was not white. We eliminated Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow because of the amount of reddish in the wings and the overall brightness of the bird as well as the definite break between the orange breast and the white belly.

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Mary Jane Seipler and I tried to relocate the bird on the evening of October 12, but we were unable to find it or very many of the other species we had seen in the a.m. The time of the original observation was approximately 8:30 to 8:45 a.m. Several others tried the following morning but did not find the bird.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Ballot - Round One

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

Date of Sighting: 12 October 1999 to 12 October 1999

Location: YELLOW CREEK STATE PARK

County: INDIANA

Observer(s): Margaret Higbee, Carol Gruba, John Salvetti, Dory Jacobs, Bronnie Bekker

Date of Submission: 1999

Submitted by: Margaret Higbee

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: ~~Video~~

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead			X					
D. Couchman					X			
P. Hess			X					
R. Ickes			X					
B. Reid			X					
P. Rodewald			X					
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			6		1			
DECISION			X					

Comments: 6/1

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

2/27/01