

830A-04-2001

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow

Ammodramus nelsoni

Location: Presque Isle State Park, Erie County, Pa.

Date: October 5, 2001

Time: 10:30 to 11:00 AM

Weather: cloudy, wind 5 mph from the southwest .

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: Zeiss 10 X 40 and Kowa TSN 4 at about 30X.

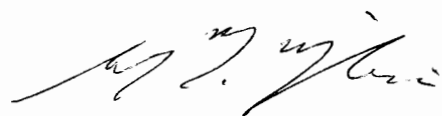
Viewing distance: As close as 25 feet.

Viewing conditions: very good

Details of sighting and description: At the east end of Leo's landing among clumps of yellow flowers (marigold species) in an open area between stands of cattails, were at least three Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows. There were small open patches of mud around each of the plants and the sparrows were feeding among the clumps of flowers. When they flushed as I walked they flew only a few feet and landed along the edge of the cattails on an exposed cattail leaf. This allowed me to get prolonged views and take photographs. I could only find sharp-tails in this one patch of flowers. I walked the entire area thoroughly including through the cattails and in the inlet of Leo's, but did not find any others. They seemed to prefer this patch of relatively open space between the cattails near the eastern end of the spit.

I never saw more than two birds at one time, but I did see a single bird on the opposite side of the patch from where I had seen these two birds moments later. I believe this single bird was a different one. All three birds had similar plumages. They appeared to be about the same size as the numerous Swamp Sparrows, but appeared chunkier and shorter tailed. Their crowns were a medium gray bordered on either side by a heavy black stripe. The supercilium and malar was a rich buff. The buffy plumage continued down from the malar onto the throat, upper breast, and down the flanks. There were narrow well defined brownish streaks across the breast becoming heavier down the flanks. The auricular was gray with some buff evident directly behind the auricular. A dark brown streak began at the back of the eye and continued over the auricular becoming clubbed at the juncture of the nape. The nape was gray contrasting with the dark mantle. There were prominent white streaks running down the dark brown mantle that could easily be seen when the birds flew directly away from me. The belly was white and well demarcated from the buffy breast and flanks. The flight of the sharp-tails were more direct than the other species of sparrows in this area. Their flight tended to be less undulating than the Swamp Sparrows. Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow was ruled out because this species has the buff in the face noticeably brighter than its breast and flanks. Saltmarsh sharp-tails have the orange breast and flanks more diffused with the white belly. The breast and flank streaking tends to be blacker than in Nelson's sharp-tails as well. See Photographs.

This is the first time I have seen this species in Erie County in 21 years. I have seen many Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows in New Jersey.



Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

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

Date of Sighting: 5 October 2001 to 5 October 2001

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

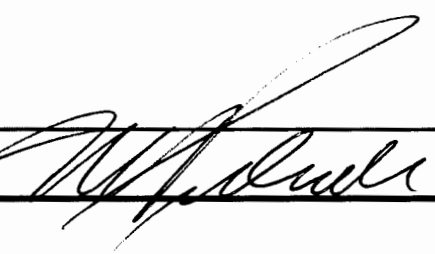
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead	X							
D. Heathcote	X							
P. Hess	X							
J. Stanley	X							
E. Witmer	X							
R. Leberman	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 2/11/03