





PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

SPECIES	Harris' Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia querula</i>
Subspecies	monotypic
NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS	1
SEX(ES)	unknown
AGE(S) AND PLUMAGE(S)	adult
DATE & TIME OF OBSERVATION	February 1, 2004, 14:00-16:00 pm Bird was present January 31 to February 1, 2004
LOCATION	Northampton County, PA
EXACT SITE	Farmland near the town of Stone Church
OBSERVER REPORTING	Dr. Nikolas K. Haass (NH)
Address:	4720 Pine Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143
Telephone:	215-476-3714
E-Mail:	nhaass@yahoo.com
OTHER OBSERVERS	Eric Pilotte (EP) & several others
HABITAT	farmland with bush rows
DISTANCE TO BIRD	approx. 50 m
VIEWING CONDITIONS	clear sky, -1 °C, sunlight from the back
OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED	Leica 12x50 BA; Zeiss Diascope 85*TL 20-60x

DESCRIPTION

Size and Structure: large, long-tailed, *Zonotrichia*-type sparrow (cf. KAUFMAN 1990; BEADLE & RISING 2002), larger than accompanying White-crowned Sparrows *Z. leucophrys* and other sparrows (see below)

Plumage: black crown, face, chin, throat and upper breast (crown mottled with some grey); spotted black in the transition zone between black upper breast and white lower breast/flanks and clean white belly; buffy ear coverts; upperparts streaks brown and black; two whitish wing-bars; brown tail; the bird was very similar to the adult winter bird shown in BEADLE & RISING (2002), but showed even a larger amount of black.

bare parts: pink bill; brown iris; brown legs

accompanying birds: House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: 50+, Am. Tree Sparrow *Spizella arborea*: 10+, Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*: 5+, White-crowned Sp. *Z. leucophrys*: 40+, White-throated Sp. *Z. albicollis*: 20+, Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*: 5+, N. Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*: 2,2.

BEHAVIOR

feeds on the ground; performs 'double-scratch' during foraging (cf. SIBLEY 2001); disturbed perches low in bushes and on a fence; dominant bird in the flock (matching its hormonal status, known by large amount of black in plumage; cf. ALSOP 2001)

VOCALIZATIONS	none heard
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SUPPORTING EVIDENCE IF ANY	none
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SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES

Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus*, *E. pallasi*, *E. yessoensis*: similar, but not identical coloration

Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*: similar, but not identical coloration; more bulky structure

Lark Bunting *Calamospiza melanocorys*: similar, but not identical coloration; stocky; short-tailed

Other *Zonotrichia spec.*: similar in shape, but smaller; very different coloration

DISCUSSION

Straight forward identification of a bird that probably came with a flock of White-crowned Sparrows. Within the observation time of two hours, the bird was seen four times – each about 15 to 30 seconds. The bird was first found and identified by Rick Wiltraut January 31, 2004.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES

The Harris' Sparrow was a 'life bird' for NH and EP, but both observers are familiar with all other *Zonotrichia* species from many observations in North America and Mexico.

ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION?

yes, because all field marks proved the identification

REFERENCES CONSULTED

The bird was easily identified without any literature. For confirmation of its age following references were consulted:

During observation: BEADLE, D. & J.D. RISING (2002): Sparrows of the United States and Canada – The Photographic Guide. San Diego. • NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC (3rd ed. 1999): Field Guide to the Birds of North America. - Washington D.C. • RISING, J.D. (1996): A Guide to the Identification and Natural History of the Sparrows of the United States and Canada. London. • SIBLEY, D. (2000): The Sibley Guide to Birds. New York.

After observation: ALSOP, F.J. (2001): Birds of North America. New York. • BEADLE, D. & J.D. RISING (2002): Sparrows of the United States and Canada – The Photographic Guide. San Diego. • BYERS, C., U. OLSSON & J. CURSON (1995): Buntings and Sparrows - A Guide to the Buntings and North American Sparrows. Mountfield. • KAUFMAN, K. (1990): A Field Guide to Advanced Birding. Boston. • NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC (3rd ed. 1999): Field Guide to the Birds of North America. - Washington D.C. • RISING, J.D. (1996): A Guide to the Identification and Natural History of the Sparrows of the United States and Canada. London. • SIBLEY, D. (2000): The Sibley Guide to Birds. New York. • SIBLEY, D. (2001): The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior. New York.

DATE OF THIS REPORT

February 1, 2004

SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER

Nikolas Haass (sent per e-mail)

Rare Bird Report

by Michael Schall

Harris's Sparrow

Dates seen: 2/1, 2/2, 2/9, 2/23, 3/9/04

Winter adult

Location: Just off Stone Church Rd in the town of Stone Church, Northampton County

Habitat: Cow pasture full of multiflora Rose and other medium size bushes surrounded by open fields

Viewing Conditions: Varied from sunny to cloudy

Distance to bird: Ranged from 15 feet to 100 feet

Optical Equipment: Pentax 10x42 binoculars, LEICA Spotting Scope

Photos: Taken with 35mm camera thru Scope and blown up on Computer.

No experience with this species, life bird

Description written: 3-10-04

I first saw the Harris's Sparrow on 2/1/04 in the morning. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to study and watch the bird on several occasions. The Harris's Sparrow spent most of its time hidden in a cow pasture full of multi-flora rose bushes, but would come to seed thrown in a dirt road that bordered the fenced-in pasture. Good numbers of white-crowned and house sparrows also visited the seed. In early February, snow covered the ground and the birds went to the seed regularly. Once the snow melted in late February, the Harris's Sparrow visited the seed less often. Most birders who went to see the bird had no problem picking out the bird with the black crown, face, and bib. I last saw it on 3/9/04.

It was a much larger sparrow when compared to the White-crowned sparrows. The crown, face, and bib were black surrounding a pink bill. The sides of the face were a light brownish color and the eye was black. Its belly was bright white with a few black spots along the upper flanks. From the bib on either side was a row of dark spots forming a necklace. The rump and lower back were gray. Its tail ~~and~~ ^{and wings} were brown and part of the primary edges and the tertial edges were white. When it fed at the seed, it lay tight to the ground and did not move about like the white-crowns. Because the seed was in the open, the sparrows were all very skittish and did not spend much time feeding before flying to cover.

Because of its adult plumage, I did not find any species in the field guides that might cause confusion. Its large size (about 7 1/2 inches) and black bib, face, and crown and pink bill easily separate it from other possible sparrows.

House Sparrows were common at the site and might confuse an inexperienced person. The adult male House Sparrow has a black bib and face. However, the crown is gray, bill is black, and the cheeks white with a chestnut patch from the eye around the white cheeks. This rules out House Sparrow.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round Two

Species: Harris's Sparrow *Zonotrichia querula*

Date of Sighting: 31 January 2004 to 11 April 2004

Location: STONE CHURCH

County : NORTHAMPTON

Observer(s): Rick Wiltraut m. obs

Date of Submission: 2004

Submitted by: Rick Wiltraut, Elaine Ryan, Nikolas Haass

Written Description: Yes

Photo: ~~No~~ YES

Specimen: No

Video: No

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

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary)

Date:

4/29/05