

UTAH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
VERIFICATION OF UNUSUAL SIGHT RECORD FOR UTAH

16-1987

Common Name: SWAMP SPARROW

Scientific Name: *Melospiza georgiana*

Date: 9/27/87

Time: 2:35 PM

Length of time observed: 1 Hour

Number: 1

Age:

Sex: ?

Location: REST STOP ON US HIGHWAY 30 APPROX 20 MILE SOUTH WEST OF PARK VALLEY, Box Elder Co.

Lat/long: # 1

Elevation (if known): ?

Distance to bird: 5 ft. to 30 ft.

Light conditions: good

Optical equipment: TASCO BINOX 10X50

Weather: Clear / warm

Description: (Write a detailed description of the bird's appearance, including size, shape, plumage pattern, color, and any unique features.)

Very small rounded tailed bird approx size of a Lincoln's Sparrow.

Rump, tail and large areas on upper surface of wings a bright rufous

Face, eyebrow, and nape of neck grey, with the face noticeably darker.

Dark crown stripes above eyebrow with a ^(narrow) gray central

Crown stripe with overall effect more contrasty than a Lincoln's

Throat was a grayish (dirty white) that blended into a grayish buff breast with very faint darker gray streaks.

Flanks were a bright buff with light streaks.

Belly a dirty white.

Faint whisker streaks from edge of mandible

Voice or call notes and method of delivery:

Call was heard several times - sounded like a cross between the call of a white-crowned sparrow & a y. Rumped warbler. A sharp chunk!

Behavior:

Stayed low - when flushed headed for grassy cover. Walked & ran between clumps of grass - fed and poked around in grassy areas

Habitat:

Bordering small seep-spring.
At said nest area there are two trees & a seeping spring which overflows to a marshy grassy area of about 30 ft. by 20 ft. This is the only large tree and water area for miles!

What similar species might it have been and how were these eliminated:

Lincoln's sparrow - first glance I thought it was a juvenile or some plumaged Lincoln's that I wasn't familiar with but the rufous was so much more extensive on the upper parts than any Lincoln's. Also the throat, breast and flank coloration was wrong for Lincoln's. The streaking on the breast & flanks weren't as crisp and clean as in Lincoln's. The cheek patch of this bird blended in with the neck and eyebrow without a heavy line delineating the border - it appeared as a darker shade of gray rather than the brownish in Lincoln's.

What experience have you had with this and similar species:

None with the Swamp Sparrow

I'm fairly confident with Lincoln's

Books, illustrations, and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

Audubon's Master Guide has a photo almost identical to the bird I saw - The National Geographic Guide would have left me wondering - I turned through both books after I saw the bird the 1st time - saw the Master Guide's photo, and returned to double check fine points

Significance of record in this area or the state:

Uncommon transient & winter visitant

Additional material: (attach drawing, photograph, tape recording if available)

Have photos in camera (yet to be developed)

Description from notes taken at time of sighting ☒ notes made later ☒ from memory ☐

Observer:

CRAIG L KNEEDY

Signature:

Address:

314 So 4500 W.

West Point, Utah

84015



Other observers who independently identified this bird:

None that I know of

Date prepared:

10/12/87

Return this form to:

Ella Sorensen
3868 Marsha Drive
West Valley City, Utah 84120