

## UTAH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## Verification of Unusual Sight Record

Common Name: LeConte's Sparrow

Scientific Name: *Ammodramus leconteii*

Date: 9/23/90 Time: 11:00 AM

Length of time observed: 21 minutes

Number: 1 Age: ADULT

Sex: ?

Location: Simpson Springs, Tooele Co., Utah

Lat/long: 4 ?

Elevation: 4500 ft.

Distance to bird: 3 ft - 25 ft.

Light conditions: excellent

Optical equipment: 10x40 Binoculars

Weather: Hot/Clear

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

Very small (wren sized) sparrow flushed from sedges in a marshy area @ Simpson Springs. After flushing, the bird flew about 12 ft. and dropped back into sedges. Breast, sides of throat, and supercilium orange-buff. Light gray auriculars with a fine dark eyeline behind eye. Overall light head and face made the dark eye stand out on the face. Median crown stripe white with black lateral stripes. Mid-throat lighter buff than the sides of the throat and the breast. Lower breast and belly was white that contrasted with the orange-buff of the upper breast. The sides of the breast and flanks were heavily streaked with dark brown. Nape appeared buffy and mantle (back & sp.) was boldly streaked with dark stripes. The wings were light brown with a hint of rufous in the primaries. The short tail was darker than the rump. The tail had a scraggly appearance (almost like a cat grabbed it). Bill and legs were pinkish gray. Head seemed large in proportion to body and bill. Short tail.

**Voice or call notes:**

Chipped only once when flushed - sounded similar to a short weaker McAlluvay's Warbler.

**Behavior:** Flushed, flew for a couple of yards and then "plopped" back into grass. It held tight until almost stepped on. It was repeatedly flushed and never flew over 12 feet before dropping into sedges.

**Habitat:** Sedge marsh in a narrow draw at Simpson Springs

**Describe what specific features you saw or heard that caused you to reach your conclusion:**

Size, big head, short tail, eye standing out prominently on face, orange-buff coloration, black head stripes with median crown stripe, flank streaks - all pointed toward LeConte's (Only field mark missed was purplish streaking on nape)

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

Grasshopper Sparrow - habitat wrong, behavior wrong. This bird had obvious streaking down flanks whereas grasshopper sp. do not. Wasn't as big billed and flat-headed as Grasshopper sp. Orange-buffy coloration much different from grasshopper. Nape of neck was a light buff color whereas a grasshopper has a darker brown on nape that matches back coloration.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow - crown stripes different color - dark gray and black instead of white and black - face, head and throat more contrasty than a LeConte's. Overall darker coloration

**What experience have you had with this and similar species:**

No previous exp with LeConte's or Sharp-tailed. Confident with Grasshopper.

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

Field notes taken at time of observation - National Geographic confirmed

**Significance of record in this area or the state:**

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

Photograph

Observer: CRAIG L. KNEEDY

Signature:

Address: 314 S. 4500 W.  
West Point, Utah 84013

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Date prepared: 12/28/90 (from notes at time of sighting)

Return this form to: Utah Ornithological Society  
C/O Ella Sorensen  
3868 Marsha Drive  
West Valley City, Utah 84120