

Illinois Documentation for Unusual Bird Sightings

Documentation for: Unusual Species

Species: Brewer's Sparrow

Number of Birds: 1 Adult

Date: 5/8/2012 at 0945H with good sunlight, 53-69 degrees, and Northwest winds from 5-20mph.

Location: Braidwood Cooling Lake Area; North of Tridium Pond; Will County, IL

Observers: Jed Hertz, [REDACTED]

No others were present.

Description (from my field notes on back of 4x6 card at time of sighting):

Small sparrow with long tail compared to the Savannah Sparrow and Henslow's Sparrow in same bare shrub and Field Sparrow in same location. This was a very plain grayish sparrow with little to distinguish the face or body. The crown was brownish and darker than the face but without a noticeable crown stripe, the face was plain without distinctive supercilium or malar stripe, only the white eye-ring caught my attention. The body was pale under and some shades darker above with two subdued wing stripes. The bill was conical in shape, quite small, and pink. The tail was longer than the Henslow's Sparrow's tail that was perched in the same shrub.

Description of behavior: The bird responded to my tape (playing Grasshopper Sparrow song) as did the Savannah and Henslow's Sparrows all flying to the same bare shrub (small) with the tape player hung low to the ground.

Description of Vocalization: None from the Brewer's that I noticed. The Henslow's Sparrow however was quite vocal from its original perch and seemed to dominate the area along with the Field Sparrows. The Savannah Sparrow that flew to the same shrub was not heard.

Description of immediate habitat: Field with thick 1'-2' mostly grass with small bare shrubs scattered throughout (see photo). A few mature trees to the north and a wooded area to the east. Small fenced-in pond/quarry to the south.

Viewing Conditions: 10x42 Nikon EDG at 40-50' for 30-60 sec at 0945H. Weather: good sunlight, 53-69 degrees, and NW wind at 5-20 for the morning.

Previous experience with this species: Saw my 1st Brewer's Sparrow in May 2002 at the Pawnee National Grasslands, CO. Later sighted 20 at San Pedro House, AZ in Dec 2004.

Similar Species:

Clay-colored Sparrow (Adult): Clay-colored show more distinctive facial pattern than this bird especially the dark mustache and the buffy auricular. Also the Clay-colored don't show a distinctive white eye-ring like this bird. I have photographed the Clay-colored Sparrow on 4 occasions over the years: 5/11/04, 9/29/05, 5/8/07 and 5/11/09.

Field Sparrow (Adult): The rufous crown and post ocular stripe were not present on the sparrow I saw nor were the more prominent white wing-stripes of the Field Sparrow. I'm very familiar with this species having photographed it 21 times over the years.

Chipping Sparrow (Adult): The rufous crown, prominent white supercilium, and black eye-line and lores were not present on the sparrow I saw. I have photographed this sparrow 9 times over the years and am quite familiar with it.

Grasshopper Sparrow: I mention this species only because I was playing it's song when the three sparrow species flew to the bare shrub. The Savannah and Henslow's landed on either side of the sparrow in question and my initial reaction was to think the Grasshopper probably perched between the other two. However, I immediately realized I had something totally different than a Grasshopper Sparrow which I'm very familiar with and have photographed >30 times. Grasshoppers perch more horizontally than this bird, have larger bills, and more distinctive pattern to their face and uppers.

Photographs: None were obtained though I make an attempt to retrieve my camera a short distance away and the sparrow had flushed when I returned.

Books and illustrations: Consulted to reference the similar species.

Field Notes: Taken at time of observation.

Documentation Form: Started_May 31, 2012 and uploaded to ebird on June 2, 2012.