

Short-billed Marsh Wren. *Cistothorus platensis*

March 26, 1977

10:15 - 10:40.

CF&I Reservoir Lakes. Pueblo, Pueblo County.

Adam Blatnick 2024 Driftwood 564-6059.

20x-45x Spacemaster II Zoom Telescope.

10x50 binoculars.

Light excellent. Directly behind at about 30° high.

At closest point about 30'. Walked off.

One bird seen. Sexes ~~was~~ similar. I believe it to be an immature bird.

Basically, it displayed the typical marsh-wren behavior. We heard it before ~~it was seen~~. We saw it. It then came up a few times, for a brief instant, to investigate. However, it did something very strange. After we had been watching and listening to it for about 15 min. it came up and sat in some rushes for nearly 5 min. It sat relatively motionless, giving its "chip" call.

It seemed to be about the same size as the Long-billed, but at the same time appeared a bit stubbier in its overall shape. The bill was light at the base, dark at the tip. I could tell no difference between its barred

tail and that of the Long-billed Marsh Wren's. The rump and upper tail coverts were uniformly brown. The underparts were white, interspersed with buffy. The under tail coverts were pure buffy however. The wings were brownish-grey with a few whitish markings, ~~and~~ as well as black spotting and barring. There was a buffy eye stripe, ~~or~~ but it was more grayish. In fact, the whole face (ear patch, throat, and chin) was a grayish color. ~~There~~ There was a white background interspersed with black, this must have given it its gray appearance. The ~~back~~ back was dark with white or light colored streaking. The streaking on the head didn't begin till just behind the crown and it ~~didn't~~ continued down the nape. The forehead was uniformly brown.

We heard mainly its chip note. Especially when it sat up in the rusher for nearly 5 minutes. The "trill" that is supposed to follow according to the field guides was only heard a couple of times.

It was in the marsh. According to the field guides, it was ~~in~~ out of its habitat. Somewhat. It kept in the rushes, and there was at least 6 inches of water below.

Obviously, the only other species that it can be confused with is the Long-Billed Marsh Wren. We've seen these many, many times. In fact, we saw a few right before we saw this Short-billed as well as during and after the time we saw it. The entire crown and nape of the Long-billed is solid brown, it has a very definite eye stripe. The ~~back~~ dark back with white striping is also clearly defined and outlined. ~~It is streaked.~~ It is more like a patch. The streaking doesn't run into the brown that outlines it. Overall, the Long-billed is a much "neater" appearing bird. It has the well defined eye stripe, ~~back~~ back patch and a very clean white underparts with buffy only on the sides. As for the call, I've heard the Long-billed many times. It also has the semblance of a chip note but what follows after that is ~~totally~~ completely different than what follows the chip note of the Short-billed. Instead of a simple trill, it gives a weird assortment of rattles and squeaks on different pitches.

When I noticed that it looked different than the other Long Billed wrens that we were seeing, I thought it was probably a Short Billed. When I looked in A Field Guide to Western Birds and Birds of N. A. my supposition was confirmed nearly completely. That is the bird I saw fit the descriptions in the field.

guides ~~to~~ almost exactly. The only thing that bothered me was the lack of streaking on the forehead. But when I later consulted Bent's Life Histories, I found a description of the immature, and it described the forehead as being solid brown.

This was written from notes made immediately after observation.

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