

APPENDIX II

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR THE COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS' RECORDS

56-89-5

Species: Fox Sparrow, eastern race ; Passerella iliaca iliaca aka P. i. zaborica
(Vernacular name) (Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students -- those studying occurrences 50 years from now -- must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Dates (s): 11/12/89 Time Bird Seen: ~2:30 to 3:00 pm

Locality: CFI ponds, south of Pueblo, Pueblo County, CO in shrubby/weedy area just south of Headquarters Building
Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: Bushnell 10x40 "Birdar" (Audubon) Binoculars

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: not photographed

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: unknown Plumage: adult

Light conditions: optimum conditions, sunny, calm, bright

Distance from bird, and how measured: many views, as close as 25' on several occasions

Describe the bird's overall behavior: for the most part it foraged with white-crowned sparrows, occasionally with song sparrows. It was noticeably larger than either of those species. When it flew, its rusty, long, squared tail was not pumped as song sparrows do.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:
Margin of large lake, seen in Chinese elms, weeds, thorny desert scrub and on bare ground

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):

Found on a CFO trip, many experienced birders observed it. Included were Mark Janos, Dave Silverman, Van Truan, Coen Dexter, David Martin, Joe Himmel, Bill Fink, Brandon Percival.

APPENDIX 11 Continued

Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. Emphasize particularly the field marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough). Describe what you actually saw in the field.

I found the bird in a Chinese elm, and recognized it immediately as a fox sparrow.
t. Size - very large for a sparrow (1" longer than the relatively large white-crowned sparrow).
The bill was large and bi-colored (upper mandible dark, lower mandible contrasted because it was pale). The wings were rusty, appearing even brighter than those of Swamp sparrows. The face was highly patterned, with a brownish ear covert surrounded by a sharply contrasting gray area extending from above the eye to the nape. The throat was white, abruptly demarcated from the upper breast by a huge central spot, perhaps 1" wide. The belly had bright rufous streaks which strongly continued longitudinally to near the vent. The tail was ^{incredibly} bright rust, long, and square-tipped. The legs were dark. The back had ^{longitudinal} rust streakings on a gray background.
Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.: if it culled, which was infrequent, its call was similar to white-crowned's.

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

All other races of fox sparrow either have much less patterned faces, gray heads + backs (rocky mt. race for eg), or sooty coloration throughout. No other race has the combination of a streaked back + strong face pattern.

By far the closest sparrow in appearance is the song sparrow, which is smaller, pumps its rounded tail in flight, and is always much more subdued in color. It also has a much different call note.

Known as a sparrow by short, conical bill, behavior + appearance.
Prior experience with this and similar species:

For sparrow - have seen at least 3 races in California in winter. Know songs + call notes from locating the nesting "schistacea" race in many areas in Mountainous Colorado and Wyoming. "Iliaca" race seen commonly in winter in Chicago area + New York State previously.

This report was written from notes made during ✓ after ✓ observation;
from memory _____.

Name (print) : Duane L. Nelson

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Signature: Duane L. Nelson

Return Form To:

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