

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD XSpecies: Red Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca iliaca*)

Red 11/18/00 wpl

Date: 6 & 8 November 2000

Number seen: one

Sex: unknown

Plumage:

Basic

Locality: Ouray

Elevation: about 8100'

Nearest town: Ouray

County: Ouray

Time observed: about 16:45 MDT (11/6); about 09:40-09:42 MST (11/8)

Duration of observation: total of about 2 minutes

Description: While standing on the porch at the Wiesbaden Inn (northwest-most corner), I saw a streaked sparrow fly into the top of the tree next to me. I alerted Rich and Doug as to its presence and we looked at it. It was only in the tree a little less than ten seconds, at which point it flew west over the inn and landed in some scrub on the hillside. I went up the hillside and saw it very briefly, whereupon I lost it for good. Two days later, as Rich, Doug, and I were packing the car in preparation to leave the Inn, Rich refound the bird on top of a tree across the street to the west from the Inn. All three of us got to see it as it perched there, then eventually retraced its flight of two day's previous to the tree next to the Inn's porch. It again stayed there only briefly, then flew over the Inn to the hillside to the east.

The bird was obviously a large sparrow with strongly-streaked underparts. The head was gray with fairly contrasting rusty auriculars, white malar (*sensu* Sibley 2000), rusty lateral throat stripe (*sensu* Sibley 2000), and a white chin and throat. The crown was also partly rusty, but I could not determine the precise pattern of the top of the head. There was a pale area before the eye and the bill was bicolored (dark maxilla, yellow mandible). The folded wings were rusty with thin, pale wingbars; I did not determine the tertial pattern. The back was gray with rusty streaks and the rump and tail were rusty. The underparts were white with strong, blobby, rusty streaking that coalesced in the center of the breast. The vent region was white and the legs were pale. In flight, the bird was strongly rusty above, without the usual rump/tail contrast of Hermit Thrush.

Similar species eliminated: The most similar species that need to be considered are Song Sparrow and Hermit Thrush. The latter is easily eliminated by the thick bill and overall color pattern. Song Sparrow, particularly some of the reddish races are a bit more problematic. However, that species can also be eliminated as all have grayish auriculars strongly outlined with a much darker color; the auriculars on the bird in question were distinctly rusty without outlining. Additionally, the pattern of the streaking underneath is different on the two species, being composed of chevrons or blobs on Fox Sparrow and by wide shaft streaks on Song Sparrow.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): no vocalizations heard

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen 100s of Red Fox Sparrows in eastern North America, 1000s of Song Sparrows of a variety of races, and 100s of Hermit Thrushes of a few races.

Light conditions: sun had set behind mountains on the 6th; sun was behind me or to my right on the 8th (depending on the position of the bird)

Optical equipment used: Swarovski 8x42

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest distance to eyes at 3-4m on the 6th, 12-15m on the 8th

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Rich Leivad, Doug Faulkner

Other observers who saw the bird independently: none

If photographed, type of equipment and film: not photographed

List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: none
subspecies

b) after observation: Sibley Guide to confirm the

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature: 

Address: Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Picadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: This report was written on 11 November 2000 from brief notes written shortly after the sighting on the 6th and from memory.

Literature Cited:

Sibley, D.A. 2000. The Sibley Guide to Birds. National Audubon Society, New York.