

ACCEPTED

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD ~~X~~**Species:** Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*)**Date:** 6 January 2002 **Number seen:** one **Sex:** ? **Plumage:** Basic I**Locality:** across FF Rd from Wray Fish Hatchery **Elevation:** about 3520'**Nearest town:** Wray **County:** Yuma**Time observed:** ~10:30-10:55**Duration of observation:** I saw the bird thrice, for a total of ~6 minutes

Description: While birding in the Wray area with Joe Fontaine and Jason Beason, we visited the Wray Fish Hatchery. When we were leaving that site, I noted a flock of sparrows at the pond's edge in the State Wildlife Area (somebody's bridge SWA, unfortunately, I did not write the name down) east across FF Rd from the hatchery and started sorting through them; in the flock that was comprised mostly of White-crowns was a very plain-faced *Zonotrichia*. I identified it as an immature Golden-crowned and immediately got the other two on it.

The bird was a large sparrow that was basically brown above and grayish below. The crown was brownish with a small patch of yellowish just anterior to the forehead. The brown of the crown extended back onto the nape and then intermixed with the gray of the hind neck. The face was gray and there was virtually no eyeline other than a very thin line from the eye to the bill. The auriculars were the same medium gray as the rest of the face. The chin was slightly paler than was the face and was set off on either side by vague lateral throat stripes. The eyes were muddy brown and the bill was slightly bicolored, with a medium gray maxilla and a slightly paler gray mandible -- at any distance, the bill simply looked gray. There was black streaking on the warm brown back but without the white streaks typical of the Gambel's White-crowns in the flock. The rump was a medium gray. The underparts were mostly gray, but with a buffy wash to the lower sides and flanks and white undertail coverts and vent feathers. The tail was brown and the legs were pink. The wings were very much like those of the White-crowns present, brown with rusty tones and moderate white wing bars formed by white tips to both the median and greater coverts. The tertials were black with rusty fringes on the leading edges.

Similar species eliminated by description: The only real identification contender with an immature Golden-crowned Sparrow is an immature White-crowned Sparrow. The latter is easily eliminated by that species' different head pattern and bill color. White-crowned Sparrows (of all forms) have well-defined eyeline behind the eyes, a strong pattern of dark brown lateral crown stripes and tan central crown stripe, auriculars contrasting with the rest of the head, and a bright pink or yellow bill (depending upon the subspecies). Additionally, the back pattern of the latter species is (sometimes) subtly different, with often obvious white streaks. This bird was very easy to find among the 40 or so White-crowns with which it was running.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): The bird gave its flight call (high 'seeep') and contact note (loud 'think'), but I'm not confident that I could separate those calls from the similar calls of White-crowned.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have extensive experience with three races of White-crowned Sparrow and have seen at least 10 immature Golden-crowns.

Light conditions: The sun was behind and to the right of the bird (my left) for the initial sighting, though I did get to see it with the sun behind me on subsequent occasions.

Optical equipment used: Swarovski 8.5x42

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest distance at ~6 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Joe Fontaine and Jason Beason

Other observers who saw the bird independently: none, I believe - few will chase a bird in Wray

If photographed, type of equipment and film: I did not photograph

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

a) at time of observation: none **b) after observation:** none

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering **Signature:**

Address: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80603

Date report was written: 12 January 2003 from notes that I wrote ~6 hours after the sighting