

## Subspecific Identification of Song Sparrows Collected at Raleigh, N.C., in Summer of 1967

PAUL W. SYKES JR.  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
P.O. Box 2077, Delray Beach, Florida 33444

ROXIE C. LAYBOURNE  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bird and Mammal Laboratories, Washington, D.C. 20560

18 December 1973

On 19 July 1967, three Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*) were collected along the edge of a small creek on the west side of the North Carolina State University campus in Raleigh. Gilbert S. Grant kindly prepared the skins which were then sent to the U.S. National Museum where they now bear U.S.N.M. numbers 531131, 531132, and 531133. We examined the specimens and identified them as *M. m. euphonia*. This is the race which, according to Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley (*Birds of North Carolina*, Wray and Davis 1959 Revision) and the *A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds* (1957, fifth edition), is the breeding form in the mountains of the State. Sykes reported the Song Sparrow breeding in the Raleigh area in 1965 (*Chat*, 30:39-42) and postulated at that time that the subspecies most likely was *euphonia*.

The three identified specimens were males in worn plumage. Their testes measured 7 x 5, 7 x 6, and 8 x 6 mm. Because of the late date in the nesting season when the birds were collected and the size of the testes, evidence is not conclusive enough to determine if these individuals actually bred in the Raleigh area or were postbreeding wanderers. Additional field work is needed to clarify the breeding range expansion of the Song Sparrow into the piedmont of North Carolina.

## Bird Observations After Heavy Snowfall at Wrightsville Beach, N.C.

J.H. CARTER III  
Zoology Department, North Carolina State University  
Raleigh, N.C. 27607

12 February 1974

On 9 and 10 February 1973 an intense winter storm struck the southeastern coast of the United States. Record and near-record snowfalls were recorded over much of southeastern North Carolina, eastern South Carolina, and northeastern Georgia. The temperature dropped steadily throughout 9 February at Wilmington, N.C. Snow began about 14:30, and the ground was quickly covered. The snowfall was very heavy and was being blown by strong, gusty winds. At nearby Wrightsville Beach visibility over water during the late afternoon was less than 50 yards. The snow continued through much of the night. On 10 February sleet and snow showers occurred throughout the day and into the night. The highest temperature was around freezing. The wind was blowing at a sustained velocity of 20 to 30 mph and gusting to about 50 mph from the north to northwest. Offshore, gusts of approximately 80 mph were recorded at Frying Pan Light Tower. By mid-afternoon on 10 February, the snow depth reached 11.7 inches in Wilmington. Considerable drifting had occurred. The snow was covered by at least an inch of sleet, forming a very hard crust. Temperatures remained very cold through 13 February. On the night of 12-13 February, the temperature dropped to 15 F.

Considerable debris was deposited on the beach by high tides associated with the storm. Finding their normal food sources covered by sleet and snow, many birds began to search the beach debris for food. On 10 February I observed several small passerines (mostly single individuals) flying over the ocean. They would turn and struggle against the wind, trying to reach shore. I saw none of these birds reach shore. Once a medium-sized gull chased a small bird over the ocean, but it escaped. Shortly afterwards, I saw a

Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) eat a small passerine on the beach. The gull may have found the bird dead, as it was dead and wet when I first saw the gull with it. Savannah Sparrows (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) feeding on the beach were almost oblivious to people walking around them. They moved sluggishly and flew with great reluctance. They were unable to fly into the wind for more than a few feet.

On 11 February I saw the following birds along the southern beach at Wrightsville Beach: American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)—1, Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*)—15, Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*)—2 or 3, Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)—2, Savannah Sparrow—50 to 60, Ipswich Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis princeps*)—2, Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*)—2, and Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*)—2. Most of these birds were feeding in debris along the beach. Some followed the waves like shore birds. Numbers gradually dissipated as the snow melted. A peak of three Ipswich Sparrows was found on 12 February by the author and James F. Parnell (photographs were secured).

Judging from other published reports, it is apparent that the storm triggered a heavy southward movement of birds along the coast of the Carolinas and Georgia, and that mortality was very heavy. At Wrightsville Beach, Frances Needham saw a Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) struggle with a Yellow-rumped Warbler and fly off with it in its beak. Ted Beckett noted heavy mortality of small land birds in the Charleston area. He also observed White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) feeding on dead members of their own species (*American Birds*, 27:601-603). Based on my observations at Wrightsville Beach, it is evident that many small land birds moving southward along the beach were displaced by the strong northwesterly winds and found themselves over the ocean. It is very likely that most of these birds perished.

## BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

Compiled by ROBERT P. TEULINGS  
Route 2, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514  
(All dates 1974)

- COMMON LOON: A late inland sighting was recorded near Seneca, S.C., on 18 May by Sidney Gauthreaux.
- SOOTY SHEARWATER: A flight of nearly 50 was seen moving northward close to shore off Cape Point, Hatteras Island, N.C., on the evening of 21 May by Joseph Hudick.
- WILSON'S STORM-PETREL: Two were seen during a cruise 25 miles off Morehead City on 8 March by Don McCrimmon, a very early sighting for North Carolina waters.
- DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT: Uncommon inland visitors were seen at Lake Julian near Asheville, N.C., on 13 April by Roland Sargent, and at Lake Hartwell near Clemson, S.C., on 11 May by Harry LeGrand. One was also found at Whispering Pines, N.C., 15 and 16 April, and another at Lake Surf near Vass, N.C., on 5 May, both observed by Jay Carter.
- EUROPEAN WIGEON: A male was seen at Pea Island N.W.R. on 14 April by Ricky Davis.
- COMMON EIDER: An individual in female plumage was seen in the surf off Carolina Beach, N.C., on 15 April by Ricky Davis.
- HOODED MERGANSER: A rare nesting attempt was recorded in Granville County,