

emitted an unusual jumble of notes and buzzes while it was in midair! The warbler landed in trees on the other side of the clearing and was lost from view.

On 13 June I returned to the area and heard the bird singing about 10 times from trees along the edge of the clearing; however, I was unable to locate the bird. On 15 June the bird was heard singing about four times but could not be seen. I made several other trips to the area later in June but neither saw nor heard the warbler.

This is the first breeding season record for the Blue-winged Warbler in South Carolina. Even though the bird was on territory, the record should not be considered a breeding range extension because it most likely was an unmated male at least 50 miles to the east and southeast of the normal nesting range.

A Blue-winged Warbler Seen in Summer Near Fontana Village, N.C.

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The following report is submitted for publication at the suggestion of Harry E. LeGrand Jr., who recently completed an intensive study of wood warbler distribution in North Carolina. From 10 through 12 July 1964, I birded in the vicinity of Fontana Village, Graham County, N.C., while waiting for my husband to hike a section of the Appalachian Trail which passes across Fontana Dam. During these three days I hiked trails near the village (2,000 feet) and the dam (1,700 feet) and made one field trip the morning of 11 July without benefit of a trail. From a point on NC 28 about halfway between the village and the dam, I descended the gorge below the dam as far as seemed safe for me to proceed alone. Near the highway at the edge of a brushy clearing beneath power lines, I noted a male Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*) and a male Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*). About the time I decided to retrace my route, I saw an Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*) foraging beneath some laurels and rhododendrons growing near, but not immediately beside, a small stream. When I squeaked in an attempt to lure the Ovenbird closer to me, two brown birds emerged from a dense thicket to peer at me. One I readily identified as a Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorus*); and the other, after due consultation with my Peterson field guide, I determined to be a Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*). The birds were very tame, seeming to be more curious than afraid. Although the Swainson's and Worm-eating Warblers soon slipped again into the depths of the impenetrable thicket bordering the stream, the Ovenbird continued to forage without seeming to be aware of my presence. When I returned to the roadside, the Blue-winged and Black-throated Green Warblers were exactly where I had seen them earlier in the morning. My impression was that all these birds were on territory. Other wood warblers seen on my rambles around Fontana included the Black-and-white, Northern Parula, Yellow, Kentucky, and Hooded Warblers and the American Redstart.

Comments on the Field Identification of Sharp-tailed Sparrows

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LeGrand (*Chat*, 38:76) recently reported the occurrence of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammospiza caudacuta nelsoni*) in Anderson County, S.C. The subspecies identification was based upon field observations of two birds seen near Townville, 19 May 1974.

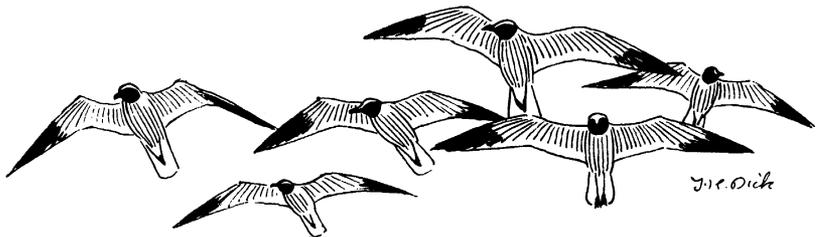
The A.O.U. *Check-list of North American Birds* (1957, 5th edition) lists the following races of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow: Eastern (*Ammospiza caudacuta caudacuta*), Acadian

(*A.c. subvirgata*), Southern (*A.c. diversa*), James Bay (*A.c. altera*), and Nelson's (*A.c. nelsoni*). The occurrence of all five races in South Carolina is documented by specimens in the Charleston Museum. To say that field identification of two or three of the races is questionable, is an understatement.

Among writers commenting on this difficult group, Peterson (1947, *A Field Guide to the Birds*, p. 272) notes the similarity of the Nelson's and James Bay races, and says that "Most of the migrants that were once called *nelsoni* in N.Y. and N.E. are probably of this race [James Bay]. Sight records cannot be accepted." Hill (*in Bent, Life Histories of North American Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Buntings, Towhees, Finches, Sparrows, and Allies*, 1968) states that "... without the specimen in hand, and without adequate skins for comparison, it is my opinion that *diversa* vs *caudacuta* are inseparable, as are *subvirgata* vs *altera*, *altera* vs *nelsoni*, and perhaps *nelsoni* vs *caudacuta*." Further, that "In the field, *altera* cannot be separated from *subvirgata* on one hand, or from *nelsoni* on the other; even with the specimen in hand the diagnosis is difficult and sometimes impossible."

During the preparation of the first edition of *South Carolina Birdlife* (1949), the late H.C. Oberholser examined critically the Charleston Museum's specimens of Sharp-tailed Sparrows, in addition to those of many other species. His opinions concerning the identification of Sharp-tailed Sparrow races are reflected in the paragraph above.

In view of the uncertainties involved, compilers and researchers cannot be expected to accept sight record identifications of Sharp-tailed Sparrow subspecies.



BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

Compiled by ROBERT P. TEULINGS
Route 2, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514

(Winter season, 1974-1975)

COMMON LOON: Inland, 22 were tallied at Roanoke Rapids Lake, Halifax County, N.C., on 4 January by Merrill Lynch.

RED-NECKED GREBE: One was a rare visitor on the South Carolina coast sighted in Charleston harbor on 9 March by Sidney Gauthreaux and Harry LeGrand.

HORNED GREBE: An impressive inland count of 196 was recorded by Merrill Lynch at Roanoke Rapids Lake, N.C., on 2 January.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT: Four were uncommon inland visitors at Lake Wheeler near Raleigh, N.C., observed on 30 March by James Mulholland.

LITTLE BLUE HERON: Three were noted on 24 March at Townville, S.C., by Harry LeGrand, a seasonally early occurrence for the species in that western piedmont locality.

CATTLE EGRET: Nine late lingerers were observed near Grandy in coastal Currituck