

Sharp-tailed Sparrow at Highlands, N.C.

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On 15 May 1976, after a heavy two-day rain, I found a Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammospiza caudacuta*) on the shore of Lake Ravenal at the Highlands Biological Station, Highlands, N.C. I first saw it at 1500 for about 30 seconds with 7 x 35 binoculars at a distance of 5 m. Because the vegetation cover was sparse, I was able to get an excellent view of the bird. The orange triangle on the face was quite prominent; other field marks included a gray cap and shoulders, white stripes on the back, and light but distinct streaking on the sides. I found it again under similar conditions at 1900, leisurely observed it for some 5 minutes, and saw that the breast was buffy and lightly streaked. Following the admonitions of Hill (in Bent 1968) and Chamberlain (1975), I will not attempt to put the bird in a subspecies, particularly since at least three subspecies — *altera*, *diversa*, and *nelsoni* — could conceivably take this route from wintering to breeding grounds as listed in the A.O.U. Checklist (1957).

To my knowledge this is the first report of a Sharp-tailed Sparrow in the Appalachians south of Virginia. I have searched through *American Birds*, *Audubon Field Notes*, and the *Chat*; the Appalachian notes of Stupka (1963), Johnston (1964), and Simpson (1972); and regional bird lists of all neighboring states. I have been unable to search the *Oriole* or the *Migrant*. No specimens from the area have been placed in the N.C. State Museum since the last edition of Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley (1959), and the species is not on record in the biota cards of the Highlands Biological Station. I did find four pertinent spring sightings. One was by Frost, Hill, and Snavely at Winston-Salem, N.C., on 24 May 1973 (Teulings 1973); two by LeGrand (1974) in Anderson County, S.C., on 19 May 1974; and one by Howell in Blount County, Tenn., in May 1957 (Brooks 1957). No locality is given for the last, and since Blount County extends from Knoxville to the Great Smoky Mountains, this may be a mountain record. LeGrand's sightings were only 50 km SE of Highlands, but 915 m lower in elevation.

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