

## Specimen Record of a Smith's Longspur from Chatham County, N.C.

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While searching a large field in eastern Chatham County, N.C., for Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*) on 11 January 1981, John Conners, Beth O'Neill, and Don Tarbet encountered a passerine species unfamiliar to them. The bird flew to an altitude of approximately 75 feet and dropped to the ground. It was noted that a conspicuous white shoulder patch and solid white outer tail feathers were present when the bird flushed. Metallic clicking notes were heard as the bird flew. While it perched in a small Sweet Gum (*Liquidamber styraciflua*), further field marks were seen: conical bill, buffy breast and abdomen, a dark cheek patch, and a light eye ring. After consulting field guides, the observers decided that the bird was a Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*). Fran and Wayne Irvin saw the bird 1½ hours later and agreed with the identification. The longspur was seen eating seed from one of the abundant plant species in the field, Three Awn Grass (*Aristida oligantha*).

The field had been subject to intensive agriculture for many years and was abandoned 4 years ago. It is now characterized by extensive erosion and typical old-field plant species: blackberry (*Rubus* sp.), Broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*), and Sweet Gum. Contiguous with this field is a vast prairie created 3 years ago by clearcutting an alluvial forest along the New Hope River in Chatham County. This is the unflooded site of the B. Everette Jordan Reservoir.

The bird was later collected by staff members of the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History and added to its collections (NCSM 7804). During preparation, Irvin noted several significant points: the cranium was completely ossified; the testes measured 1.4 x 1.7 mm and 1.0 x 1.7 mm; and the Bursa of Fabricius was atrophied. Thus no definite conclusions are possible regarding hatch year. Further, the distended crop was filled with seeds of Three Awn Grass, and the plumage was typical of an adult winter male. There was no evidence of ecto- or endoparasites; no molt was discernable. Additional relevant data include: weight, 28.4 gms; length, 155 mm; tarsus, 22 mm; wing chord, 90 mm; tail, 65 mm; wing span, 252 mm; eye color, dark brown; foot color, dark yellow and brown; upper mandible color, dark gray-brown throughout; lower mandible color, basal 2/3—horn, apical 1/3—as upper mandible.

Historically, Smith's Longspur has been seen infrequently in the East and Southeast. *Birds of the Carolinas* (1980, p. 393) indicates one published sight record of the species for North Carolina (Auk 65:456), and two published records for South Carolina. Loomis collected one in 1880 (Bull. Nuttall Orn. Club 6:115); he collected a second one in 1889 (Auk 8:167). There is one recent record for North Carolina. Marsh and Moffett saw a Smith's Longspur at Lake Surf in Moore County (Am. Birds 28:40), but details of the sighting remain unpublished. Other records for the East include one from Long Island, New York (Am. Birds 29:34), and two at Assateague Island, Maryland (Am. Birds 31:319).

With the publication of this note, Smith's Longspur is now formally recognized as occurring in North Carolina. Previously, it was on the Provisional List (Chat 44:59).

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