

contains an abundance of pastures and fields. I concentrated on listening for Savannah Sparrows, Henslow's Sparrows (*Ammodramus henslowii*), and Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*). Though I suspect that Bobolinks nest somewhere in the county, because abundant habitat seems present, I found neither of the last two species. However, I did find singing Savannah Sparrows at three locations. The first was at the community of Hooker, 5.3 miles E of Sparta. The second was along SR 1426, 2.7 miles E of Sparta. The third location was 2.0 miles SE of downtown Sparta on SR 1121. The elevations at these sites range from 2750 to 2900 feet (900 to 935 m).

All three individuals were first noted by their songs, and two were subsequently seen, singing from either posts or wires of fences. The habitats were basically similar—ungrazed or lightly grazed pastures in a moderately hilly setting. These pastures contained only grasses, with no forbs or saplings of any kind; grasses were approximately knee-height (0.3 m). The main associates of the Savannahs in these pastures were Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*) and Grasshopper Sparrows (*A. savannarum*); other associates were Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) and Vesper Sparrows (*Poocetes gramineus*).

The Savannah Sparrows were obviously on territory, but I was unable to detect further evidence of nesting. Nevertheless, it seems certain that the species is now established in the breeding season in the county, and other Savannahs may well occur there, as suitable habitat is widespread. Observers should look for additional sites for the species in the northwestern corner of the state, especially in the western half of Alleghany County and in eastern Ashe County. It is expected that conclusive evidence of breeding will be found shortly.

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Additional Information on a Historical Breeding Record of the Lark Sparrow in North Carolina

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Lark Sparrows (*Chondestes grammacus*) are rare to uncommon and erratic breeding birds in the most easterly portions of their range (Baeppler 1968, Peterson 1980). The A.O.U. *Check-list* (1957) and Baeppler (1968) state the Lark Sparrow breeds in western and central North Carolina (Cranberry, rarely to Raleigh). I have been unable to find a published record of Lark Sparrows breeding at Cranberry, which is in central Avery County. *Birds of North*

Carolina (Pearson et al. 1942) lists but one breeding record, that of a deserted nest with four eggs found by H.H. Brimley at Raleigh, Wake County, on 24 July 1890. I have located this latter record at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, where it is listed as Lark Sparrow egg set No. 6658. The only other substantiated breeding record in North Carolina is for Richmond County (McNair 1982).

The following label, handwritten by H.H. Brimley, accompanied the egg set and is quoted here in its entirety:

"1/4 Lark Sparrow (?). July 24, 1890. Raleigh, N.C. Nest on ground, in depression, among small bunch of weeds in open, on high ground. The field where found is used as a pasture and growth is kept cropped close, scattering weeds being left standing in places. Field bounded by pines, mixed woods, vineyard and a small stream. Eggs dry and hard, apparently deserted at least a week, probably more. Incubation seemed to have commenced but if commenced, only quite slight. Nest taken on above date by negro fieldhand who gave me foregoing information regarding where found. I know the field well, it being less than a mile from here.

"Previous record of Lark Sparrow at Raleigh, one taken and another one seen, Aug. 19/1889, one-half mile from where above nest was taken."

The four eggs were placed in a cup-shaped nest. The outer nest material was composed of grasses and weed stems. The nest lining was composed of fine grasses and rootlets. The four eggs were ovate and creamy white, lightly scrawled with chocolate and gray on the wide end plus a few brown spots. Three of the four eggs measured 22.5 x 16.5 mm; the other egg measured 22.0 x 16.5.

The breeding habitat, nest placement, nest construction, and eggs (shape, size, color, and markings) of this Lark Sparrow nest record are in agreement with Baepler (1968). Because of the aforementioned characteristics, there is only one other species breeding in North Carolina whose nest and eggs may be confused with Lark Sparrow, that is the Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*). The Vesper Sparrow breeds in the mountains of northwest North Carolina and may have nested "accidentally" at Greensboro, Rocky Mount, and Wilmington, N.C., though documentation is lacking (Potter et al. 1980).

The largest eggs measured by Berger (1968) for Vesper Sparrows were 22.9 x 16.3 mm, 22.4 x 15.8 mm, and 21.8 x 16.8 mm. The four Lark Sparrow eggs collected in Raleigh were larger in at least one dimension (length or width) than any of the above Vesper Sparrow eggs. Thus, it is highly unlikely that these eggs collected at Raleigh are Vesper Sparrow eggs, based on egg size. Additionally, there are differences in the color and marking of the eggs and nest construction between these two species. R. A. Paynter Jr., Curator of Ornithology at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, stated he believes the identity of Brimley's Lark Sparrow egg set is correct. Sally B. McNair compared this Lark Sparrow egg set with a small series of egg sets of other Lark Sparrows, Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*), and Rufous-sided Towhees (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) and stated that Lark Sparrow egg set No. 6658 unquestionably resembled other Lark Sparrow egg sets and not those of the other three species.

The above information provides additional support for the validity of the 1890 breeding record of the Lark Sparrow at Raleigh. Without documentation of the collected nest and eggs, the information accompanying this egg set could not be validated and several

lines of reasoning could argue against the authenticity of this nesting record. The value of specimen documentation is once again demonstrated.

I thank R.A. Paynter Jr., Curator of Ornithology at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, and Sally B. McNair for their assistance.

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CBC ROUNDTABLE

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supplied by McCallum and LeGrand, while welcome and helpful, does not change the basic premise of the Lee and Irvin paper, which is that full details of tropicbird sightings from the Carolinas need to be published until the seasonal occurrence and relative abundance for the two species have been established.—EFP

Piping Plover Records Needed

Piping Plovers are a shorebird species threatened throughout their North American range. Increased development of their specialized, unvegetated beach habitat may cause more populations to disappear, unnoticed. In an effort to determine the current status and distribution of Piping Plovers, the World Wildlife Fund (Canada), Delta Waterfowl Research Station, and Manitoba Department of Natural Resources are soliciting help in locating birds on breeding, migration, or wintering areas. Please support this project by reporting past or present sightings of Piping Plovers (include date, location, number of birds and color bands, if any). Send information to: **Susan Haig, Delta Waterfowl Research Station, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba R1N 3A1, Canada.**