

TIDAL MARSH SPARROWS

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During 1-5 January and 19-21 February, a concerted effort was made to study wintering *Ammodramus* sparrows in Georgia's coastal marshes. Biologists, conservation groups, and volunteers spent time at banding sites in St Catherines Sound, Wolf Island NWR, St Simons Sound and St Andrews Sound helping to capture, measure, and band the birds in an effort to better understand the relative abundance of the different subspecies of the "sharp-tailed" sparrows: Nelson's Sparrow and Saltmarsh Sparrow. In the process, other interesting data surfaced concerning habitat preference, subspecies segregation, and site fidelity (Tim Keyes, GA Department of Natural Resources; Fletcher Smith, Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA; Charlie Muise, Georgia Important Bird Areas program).

Out of 118 banded sharp-tailed sparrows, 72 were Nelson's and 46 were Saltmarsh. In addition, 176 Seaside Sparrows were banded. Interestingly, the results of this effort indicate that the local breeding subspecies of Seaside Sparrow (*Ammodramus maritimus macgillivraii*) appears to be strongly outnumbered by the wintering subspecies that breeds farther north (*A.m. maritimus*).

One banding station along U.S. Hwy 17 near Jekyll Island held an impressive concentration of all 3 species on 19-20 February, leaving volunteers and biologists alike in awe of the spectacle of scores of normally furtive and elusive birds "rolling" along through dense stands of black needle rush (*Juncus roemerianus*): 30+ Nelson's Sparrows, 15+ Saltmarsh Sparrows, and an incredible 250+ Seaside Sparrows.

FOX SPARROW - A good winter for this species statewide included several records from the Coastal Plain. A high count of 28 came from northern Greene Co. on 30 January (Paul Sykes).

LINCOLN'S SPARROW - Singles were found on U.S. Department of Agriculture property in Oconee Co. during the Athens CBC on 18 December (James Neves). Singles were also found at the Cobb Co. owl fields on 15 January (Larry Gridley) and at AWMA on 24 January (Paul Lehman, Lydia Thompson).