

## The California Sage Sparrow

BY JOSEPH GRINNELL

*Amphispiza belli canescens* new subspecies.

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS—Resembles *Amphispiza belli belli*, but size somewhat greater, and coloration throughout very much paler; resembles *Amphispiza belli nevadensis*, but size very much less, and coloration slightly darker.

TYPE—♂ adult; No. 5789, Coll. J. G.; Seymour Creek Meadow, 5500 feet elevation, Mount Pinos, Ventura County, California; June 27, 1904; collected by J. Grinnell.

DESCRIPTION—Lower surface white; sides, flanks and crissum faintly tinged with ochraceous buff, the former with narrow inconspicuous dusky shaft-streaks; sides of chest more distinctly streaked with slate; spot in middle of breast, submaxillary stripe, lores, region immediately beneath eyes, and extreme forehead, slate; spots above lores, one on forehead just back of culmen, eyelids, maxillary region and throat, pure white; rest of head, including auricular region, sides of neck and nape, clear gray; back and rump drab gray; middle of back with narrow dusky shaft-streaks; wings and tail blackish, strongly edged with pale clay color; outer web of outer tail-feather, and inner web of same for about 2 millimeters at tip, abruptly white.

## MEASUREMENTS—

<i>A. b. nevadensis</i>	{ Wing	Av. 80.2	Max. 82.5	Min. 78.
6 ♂ ♂	{ Tail	Av. 81.2	Max. 85.5	Min. 79.
<i>A. b. nevadensis</i>	{ Wing	Av. 74.1	Max. 75	Min. 73.5
4 ♀ ♀	{ Tail	Av. 76	Max. 76.5	Min. 75.
<i>A. b. canescens</i>	{ Wing	Av. 71	Max. 73	Min. 69.
10 ♂ ♂	{ Tail	Av. 77	Max. 79	Min. 74.5
<i>A. b. canescens</i>	{ Wing	Av. 67	Max. 68	Min. 65.
7 ♀ ♀	{ Tail	Av. 73	Max. 75	Min. 71.
<i>A. b. belli</i>	{ Wing	Av. 67.8	Max. 71	Min. 65.
12 ♂ ♂	{ Tail	Av. 74.2	Max. 77.5	Min. 70.
<i>A. b. belli</i>	{ Wing	Av. 64.7	Max. 66.5	Min. 63.
13 ♀ ♀	{ Tail	Av. 71	Max. 73	Min. 68.

RANGE—The elevated Upper Sonoran and Transition sage valleys of the southern Sierras of California, slightly migratory to lower levels in winter. Specimens examined from: Piute Mts., northeastern Kern Co.; lower Cuddy Canyon, southern Kern Co., near Tejon Pass; valleys in immediate vicinity of Mt. Pinos, Ventura Co.; near Pine Flats, head of Tujung Canyon, Sierra San Gabriel, Los Angeles Co.; San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles Co. (winter); Whitewater, Riverside Co. (winter).

REMARKS—This is the form which myself and others have repeatedly recorded from Los Angeles county as *nevadensis*. But that the two are altogether different is readily seen on comparison of the Los Angeles county specimens with true *nevadensis* from Nevada, Arizona, and the Colorado desert in southeastern California. (In the latter two localities *nevadensis* occurs only in winter.) Although *canescens* presents characters in the aggregate fairly intermediate between *belli* and *nevadensis*, the gap is so definite between *canescens* and *belli*, that were it not for current rulings being overwhelmingly against it, I should not hesitate to consider them specifically distinct. Each of the three forms occupies separate breeding areas. But in the mountains of Los Angeles county, as I have already noted (*Auk*, XV, Jan. 1898, p. 58), *canescens* (recorded as *nevadensis*) and *belli* doubtless breed within a very short distance of one another. This is also probable in Ventura county where Mr. O. W. Howard has taken several sets of eggs of the "sage sparrow" (*canescens*) in Lockwood Valley three to five miles southeast of Mt. Pinos. The fact that in the extensive series of *Amphispizæ* in the collection of the California Academy of Sciences, as well as among my own specimens, not a single intermediate is to be found between *canescens* and *belli* (or *canescens* and *nevadensis*, for that matter) argues for the distinctness of the forms. There is but one record that I can find of "intermediates" between *belli* and *nevadensis*. Dr. A. K. Fisher states in the Death Valley Report (N. Am. Fauna No. 7, May 1893, p. 98) that "the

specimens collected along the east slope of the Sierra Nevada [near Olancho, Inyo county] in Owens Valley are almost intermediate, both in size and color, between *Amphispiza belli* and *Amphispiza belli nevadensis*." Dr. Fisher cites the same instance later (*Auk*, XV, April 1898, p. 190) as an argument against my contention that *nevadensis* is a distinct species from *belli*. Through the courtesy of Dr. Fisher I have just been enabled to examine these specimens, and I find they are unquestionably referable to *canescens*, thus indicating the range of this form further northward. Their measurements are very slightly greater than those of my series of *canescens* previously presented, which points toward a possibility of inter-osculation between *canescens* and *nevadensis* still further north along the Sierras. But as I have already emphasized there is not yet the least evidence that *canescens* grades into *belli* geographically. This is the identical point of my contention in 1898, as above referred to; then I had specimens of *canescens* in hand, calling them *nevadensis* as labeled by an eastern authority. It is therefore only under protest that I use the combination *Amphispiza belli canescens*, instead of *Amphispiza nevadensis canescens*.

### Notes From Flathead, 1904

BY P. M. SILLOWAY

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

IT had been reported to me by reliable observers that the varied thrush was nesting in the Flathead region of Montana, but I did not succeed in establishing the fact for record until this season. In the summer of 1903 I took adult specimens of the varied thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) at Swan Lake, about eight miles from Flathead Lake, and in the same summer collected a young thrush at Flathead which evidently had been out of the nest about two weeks. In 1904, however, I succeeded in finding a nest of this thrush.

It came about in this way. Just across the Swan River from the University of Montana Biological Station there is a patch of undisturbed woodland used as a club ground for sportsmen. A road through this woodland is used daily by people who have settled in the neighborhood of the club grounds. Near the gate opening into the grounds is a by-path, along which I generally entered the grounds, as it is more shady and offered better facilities for collecting. Now on June 25, while passing along the woods road, I chanced upon a fledgling varied thrush which had left the nest but was yet unable to fly. I caught it with my hands as it hopped among the weeds at the edge of the woods. This event seemed quite singular to me, for the natives had told me that this thrush nests very early in the season; here was indisputable evidence, however, that the varied thrush was nesting in this particular piece of woods, and at a comparatively late time of the season. On July 5, I took another young varied thrush along the same road, near the place where I had taken the first specimen. This bird was flying about independently, though it was likely one of the brood to which the first belonged. Thinking that the varied thrush season for nesting had closed, I gave no time to looking for nests; and of course the nest was found by accident.

It was on July 12. On that day, instead of following the somber by-path, I entered the club grounds through the gate by the roadway. When scarcely