

GENERAL NOTES

Reply in Rebuttal to Mr. Bergstrom's Comments. — I have read with great interest Mr. Bergstrom's "Further Thoughts on Pull-string Traps" (*Bird-Banding*, 33: xx), and am happy to have stimulated a discussion on the usages of various types of trap. I agree that different traps are best for different conditions, and intended my contribution to be a brief note promoting the use of pull-string traps in conjunction with color marking as the most effective method of studying certain seed eating birds, especially chickadees, under specific conditions.

I agree with Mr. Bergstrom that mist nets are not practical in this area in winter. I will not agree that mist nets are the most effective method of "taking old, wise chickadees," and would like to cite the following example, with figures to compare with those quoted by Mr. Bergstrom:

In November, 1961, I had a minor operation which kept me home for a week, and stained most of the local chickadees red. During December I tried an orange dye (which did not work as well.) On New Year's Day I did not rise early and had to make two trips of over an hour each to the hospital, but probably was able to spend three to four hours banding chickadees, finishing off with a few, while eating breakfast next morning. During this period I trapped 62 chickadees, shown below by season banded:

1953-54.....1	1958-59.....6
54-55.....1	59-60.....7
55-56.....2	60-61.....6
56-57.....1	61-62.....31
57-58.....1	New.....6

This table may be compared with Table I of the article on chickadees appearing elsewhere in this issue. Two weeks later I was able to pick up another nine birds, and at the end of that week-end practically all of the chickadees on my property were carrying red marks. Here, with either automatic traps or mist nets, I believe that if one caught 30 birds in the morning, and another 30 in the afternoon, the afternoon group would include approximately 15 of the same birds taken in the morning, and would still leave 15 birds unrecorded.

Mr. Bergstrom's discussion of feeding in automatic traps is valid, and in general I agree with him; however, he omits one point which to me seems important for the part-time amateur who may want to band for very short intervals of time. With automatic traps, fixed in the open position, if one looks out the window and sees an "old, wise chickadee" or other rare bird, one has to go out, set the trap, and scare the bird away. With pull-string traps, which can be left open day and night for weeks at a time, when that important bird shows up, with no other preparation, the string can be pulled, and the bird caught.

In respect to volume of birds per hour, I agree with Mr. Bergstrom; I have used a Peterson-type trap that will catch larger numbers of birds at once. The pull-string traps are of value in flocking birds, such as Redpolls and Evening Grosbeaks, where 15 or more birds can be taken at once. However, my chief point in the previous note was in selectivity; it is in this respect that I believe that pull-string traps have their greatest advantage. By combining this with a simple method of color marking, I believe that I have obtained more accurate statistics about the chickadee population at my home in Bedford, N. H., than could have been obtained in the same amount of time, either with mist nets or with any form of automatic trap with which I am familiar. — John H. Kennard, M.D., Box 150, RFD 2, Manchester, N. H.

Identification of the Juvenal Plumage of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammospiza caudacuta nelsoni*). — The interior race of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammospiza caudacuta nelsoni*) is locally a common nesting bird in the prairie sloughs of north-western Minnesota. However, to date the only description supposedly of the juvenal plumage of the prairie population is based on a young bird collected 16 miles northeast of Warren, Marshall Co., Minnesota, 22 June 1928 by T. S. Roberts, W. Kilgore and W. J. Breckenridge. The adults apparently feeding it were identified as Sharp-tailed Sparrows (Breckenridge 1930) but were not collected. Unfortunately with both Sharp-tailed and Le Conte's Sparrows (*Passerherbulus caudacutus*) feeding young in the same area, some mix-up may have occurred, and the specimen on reexamination, and comparison with known young of both species, proves to be a Le Conte's Sparrow. A stubby-tailed young of Le Conte's Sparrow was collected

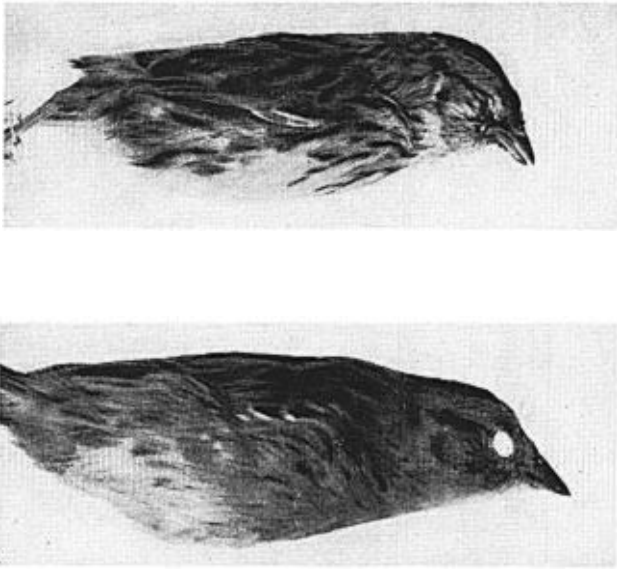


Fig. 1. Juvenile Le Conte's Sparrow (*Passerherbulus caudacutus*) TOP, and Sharp-tailed Sparrow (Nelson's Sparrow) (*Ammodramus caudacutus nelsoni*) BOTTOM. Upper specimen was originally identified as a Nelson's Sparrow.

17 miles northeast of Warren on the same date. Hence, a colored plate and detailed description, Breckenridge (1930) and Robert's key characters (1932a, 1932b and subsequent editions of both works) for the juvenal plumage of *nelsoni* are based on the comparison of two juvenile Le Conte's Sparrows! However, Walter Weber's illustration (Roberts 1932 Vol. 2, plate 83) correctly depicts the juvenal plumage of the two species!

Breckenridge's description (1930) based on young supposedly of each species, clearly distinguishes the two specimens of Le Conte's Sparrows which he illustrated; however, the pale belly and throat, buffy breast with fine streaking which broaden on the sides of the specimen supposedly representing *caudacuta* are not found in juvenile *caudacuta*. The color differences in the plate are somewhat stronger than those to be seen in the same specimens today. The character of black or dusky lores cited by Breckenridge (1930) and used as a key character to separate the young of the two species by Roberts (cited above) is due to the early stage of development, with the feathers of the area unopened.

Because of the confusion of the characters of the juveniles of Sharp-tailed and Le Conte's Sparrows, it may be well to summarize them briefly. The following comparison is based on four stubby-tailed and nine fully developed Le Conte's Sparrows in full juvenal plumage from Minnesota, contrasted with a stubby-tailed Sparrow from Emma Lake, Saskatchewan, collected 14 July 1939, and two fully grown juveniles from Rosser, Manitoba, 10 September 1936, and from three miles northeast of Upham, McHenry Co., South Dakota, 25 July 1953. Two juvenile *A.c. subvirgata* from near Wolfville, Nova Scotia, taken 5 August 1931, and 12 August 1933, are at hand for reference. Colors in italics are from Ridgway (1912).

Ammodramus caudacutus nelsoni

1. Underparts richly colored being between *Ochraceous Buff* and *Yellow Ocher* on breast, paling somewhat on chin and belly by wear in older juveniles. Underparts of *subvirgata* nearest *Cinnamon Buff*.

Passerherbulus caudacutus

1. Underparts pale, band across breast nearest *Cinnamon Buff*, much paler on chin and belly, fading to whitish in older juveniles.

2. Blackish streakings ventrally nearly obsolete, found only on the sides of the chest, and along the flanks. (Fig. 1).
3. Dorsal pattern very similar to comparable aged Le Conte's young, but color of superciliary line, nape and feather edges much richer, nearest *Sudan Brown*.
4. Tertials with less extensive black shaft-streak bordered uniformly by *Clay Color*.
5. Rectrices with indistinct black shaft-streak grading into olive grey of vane, which in turn pales towards feather edge.
2. Streakings of breast band fine, but usually well developed, comparable to the breast streakings in adult Henslow's Sparrows, occasionally nearly obsolete in the middle of the band; streakings on flanks heavier than those of breast.
3. Dorsally similar to Sharp-tailed young but much paler, nearer *Clay Color* but ranging between *Cinnamon Buff* and *Tawny Olive*.
4. Tertials with broader black shaft-streak bordered narrowly with rust and with pale buff or buffy white edges.
5. Rectrices with sharply demarked shaft-streak bordered by rust colored area paling outwardly to pale greyish brown feather edge.

LITERATURE CITED

- BRECKENRIDGE, W. J. 1930. Breeding of Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammospiza nelsoni*) with special reference to Minnesota. Occasional Papers No. 3, 29-38 (colored plate) Univ. of Minn. Mus. of Nat. Hist.
- RIDGWAY, ROBERT. 1912. Color standards and color nomenclature. Wash. D.C. 44 p. 53 plates.
- ROBERTS, T. S. 1932a. Birds of Minnesota. 2 vol. Univ. of Minn. Press.
- 1932b. Manual for the identification of the birds of Minnesota and neighboring states. Xiii + 459-378. Univ. of Minn. Press.
- Robert W. Dickerman, University of Minnesota Museum of Natural History, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

A partially blind White-throated Sparrow — On 24 March 1962 at Hillsboro, N. C. I banded a *Zonotrichia albicollis* that showed peculiar behavior. The bird was handled seven times in four days. Eventually I noticed that both eyes appeared slightly opalescent and that the pupil diameter was at least twice that of a normal bird in the same bright light. A lay diagnosis would be partial or developing cataract. When released from the hand the bird flew slowly with much fluttering and no more than about 20 feet before landing. On one occasion it rose steeply several feet above the release level, hovered two or three seconds, turned and descended to the ground about 15 feet away. More than once the bird showed difficulty in landing on a limb or twig, evidently because its aim was poor. There was no evidence of impairment of the power of flight. My conclusion was that the bird flew only to some landing place that it could see reasonably well and avoided rapid flight. — Charles H. Blake, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Mass.

An Unusual Sparrow Hawk Tail. — On 25 February 1962, Alexander C. Nagy and I caught an interesting adult male Sparrow Hawk (*Falco s. sparverius*) in a Bal-Chatri type trap. Examination of the bird revealed an unusual tail. The six left rectrices were normal in length but appeared worn. The six right rectrices, however, were about half the length of those on the left side. Evidently all six right rectrices had been pulled simultaneously and were growing back into place when we caught the bird.