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BRIEF NOTE

THE CLAY-COLORED SPARROW IN OHIO: A THIRD STATE COLLECTION¹

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The clay-colored sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) has historically been known to nest in the northern great plains of the United States and Canada and to winter in Mexico (Bent 1968). In recent years the species has undergone an extension of its breeding range into eastern Ontario (Godfrey 1966), and locally into New York (Rosche 1971, 1972). A corresponding change in the migration corridor and the wintering

range is also indicated (Teulings 1974, Kale 1974, Scott and Cutler 1974).

The first record of a clay-colored sparrow in Ohio is that of a male collected by Walker (1941) 12 May 1940 on South Bass Island, Ottawa County. A 2nd individual was banded by Beery (Blincoe 1964) 9 December 1961 in Pleasant Hill, Miami County. The bird was subsequently re-trapped by Beery 26 December 1961. Since the initial specimen was collected, 7 documented sight records have been listed for this species in Ohio. All but one of these records were in the spring (25 April-

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16 May) and in the general area of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Ottawa County with a single observation from the Oak Openings in Lucas County (E.C. Pierce, pers. comm., Bartlett 1979, Campbell 1968). The 7th sighting was obtained near Kent, Portage County, and is noteworthy as the only observation obtained for the autumn (Bartlett 1980).

On 1 May 1981 we mist-netted an adult clay-colored sparrow in Peffer Park on the Miami University campus, Oxford, Butler County. We banded the bird with USFWS band #1560-70837 and subsequently released it. No incubation patch or cloacal protuberance was evident and the individual's sex was undetermined. Although clay-colored sparrows show a sexual dimorphism in wing chord length, measurements placed this bird into the overlap range (Knapton 1978). The bird weighed 12.4 gm and had a wing chord length of 61 mm. It was in adult nuptial plumage characterized by the dark crown with a light median stripe, a broad, gray collar, and the buffy, or clay-colored triangular face patch (Roberts 1955). Documentation photographs were taken and copies have been deposited in the Robert A. Hefner Zoology Museum, Miami University (Museum #1359). The mist net was placed in an old field which was characterized by a very thick growth of honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii* and *L. xylosteum*) and briars (*Rubus* sp.). The net was placed perpendicular to, and about 3 m from an open, recently burned, prairie plot.

This capture of a clay-colored sparrow is significant in that it is the first documented capture for Ohio in 20 years. It is only the 2nd state record away from the region bordering Lake Erie (sightings in Ottawa, Lucas and Portage Counties). Considering the recent expansion in both the breeding and wintering areas, an increase in the number of sightings of this species in Ohio may be expected.

The clay-colored sparrow is known to nest in brushy fields and pastures (Bent 1968, Knapton 1979). In the course of its

recent range expansion it also appears to be utilizing pines within conifer plantations (Godfrey 1966, Rosche 1971, 1972). The golden-crowned kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*) and the prairie warbler (*Dendroica discolor*) have undergone similar range expansions by utilizing coniferous plantings (Andrle 1971, Nolan 1978). Considering the increase in fallow fields and Christmas tree plantings in Ohio (Laub et al. 1979), it is quite possible that the clay-colored sparrow could extend its breeding range into Ohio.

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