in their ecosystem and hence have suffered greatly from the increased concentration levels of pesticides at each level up the food chain. A dramatic recovery followed the banning of organochlorines in the early 1970s, with the population increasing in our area ten percent per year initially, and up to twenty percent during the mid-1980s. This recovery was enhanced by the instillation of artificial nesting platforms, particularly in the Westport and Martha's Vineyard areas. In parts of the Northeast the Osprey has now recovered to pre-DDT era levels and beyond. The Osprey adjusts well to the presence of man, and can become quite tame, as evidenced by nests on channel markers despite heavy boat traffic, and in one case in the parking lot of an amusement park!

W.E. Davis, Jr.

MEET OUR COVER ARTIST

Barry Van Dusen continues to contribute cover art to *Bird Observer*. Barry was the artist for *A Birder's Guide to Eastern Massachusetts*, a joint publication of the American Birding Association and Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts, Inc. Barry also illustrated *Birds of Massachusetts*. He can be reached at 13 Radford Road, Princeton, Massachusetts 01541.

M. Steele

AT A GLANCE *August 1994* _____ *Wayne R. Petersen*

August's mystery photo is unambiguously one of those sneaky, streaky, brown jobs—that is, a sparrow. Sparrows are always tough; sometimes because they are wary and hard to observe and sometimes because different species closely resemble one another. Because the sparrow in the photo is an adult at a nest, there is no need to worry about whether it is in juvenal plumage—a plumage that can confound even experts under certain circumstances.

Two of the most useful features that should be considered when identifying sparrows are the breast pattern and the head and facial pattern. Because the bird is an adult, the presence of obvious breast and flank strikes is noteworthy. If the age was unknown, then this feature would be less useful because many juvenile sparrows have streaked underparts. In addition to the streaked underparts, the presence of a broad, pale eyebrow stripe, a thin whitish eye ring, and the apparent absence of a prominent central breast spot are features to particularly notice.

Of the numerous sparrow species occurring in Massachusetts, the best candidates for consideration are Vesper, Savannah, Henslow's Sharp-tailed, Fox,

Song, and Lincoln's sparrows. The Fox Sparrow can be eliminated because the mystery sparrow is not nearly robust enough; the markings on the underparts are not heavy and arrow-shaped and do not converge into a central spot; and the nuchal collar (nape) is streaked, not clear gray. Sharp-tailed Sparrows possess a distinct gray cheek patch bounded not only by the eyebrow stripe above the cheek, but also by a buffy-orange crescent below it. In addition, Sharp-tailed and Henslow's sparrows have relatively stubby tails. The Henslow's Sparrow also has a large-billed and flat-headed appearance, an unmarked dark nape, and usually less extensive flank stripes. Although the Vesper Sparrow has an eye ring, it does not have the broad eyebrow stripe; it also has conspicuous white outer tail feathers.

With only Savannah, Song, and Lincoln's sparrows left as possibilities, identification becomes easier. Savannah Sparrows normally would give an indication of having an obvious white median crown stripe, a shorter notched tail, and no semblance of an eye ring. Thus, the choice becomes one between Song and Lincoln's sparrows. Again, the eye ring is a clue because Song Sparrows do not possess this feature; also, Song Sparrows have heavy malar (jaw) stripes, bold and blurry breast and flank streaks, and a conspicuous dark spot in the middle of the breast. Lincoln's Sparrow, on the other hand, typically exhibits fine breast and flank streaks overwashed with buffy; it often elevates it crown feathers when agitated.

While the pictured bird is not in an agitated condition, it is, nonetheless, a Lincoln's Sparrow *(Meloapiza lincolnii).*

Lincoln's Sparrow *Photo by Alfred M. Bailey Courtesy of MAS*

AT A GLANCE

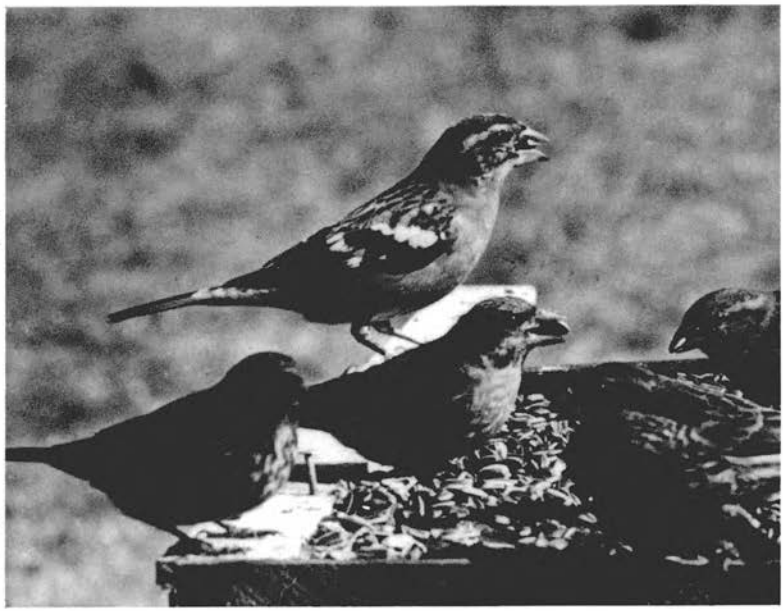

Photo by Lee J. Whittles Courtesy of MAS

Can you identify the birds in the photo?
Identification will be discussed in next issue's AT A GLANCE.