

## BIRD MEASUREMENTS

	Song Sparrow	White-throated Sparrow	Savannah Sparrow	Cow-bird	Chipping Sparrow	Robin	Chimney Swift
Extent of wings	21.05	20.80	22.00	32.60	21.70	38.50	29.70
Wing .....	6.50	6.93	6.70	11.05	7.02	12.50	12.50
Length .....	15.80	16.76	13.40	19.50	13.10	22.80	.....
Bill .....	1.26	1.13	1.00	1.60	0.84	2.00	0.50
Eye to bill .....	1.53	1.53	1.40	1.95	1.30	2.60	1.30
Nostril to bill ..	0.97	0.90	0.80	1.15	0.70	1.20	0.30
Diameter of eye	0.50	0.55	0.50	0.40	0.40	0.80	0.60
Tarsus to toe ..	4.40	4.63	4.00	3.35	3.26	6.50	1.80
Tail .....	6.66	7.00	4.90	8.15	6.02	10.50	3.50
Weight .....	.....	.....	.....	47.60	14.64	82.00	13.00
Temperature ..	104.72	107.40	102.00	105.75	106.35	111.00	.....
No. measured..	4	3	1	2	5	1	1

## CHAPMAN'S MEASUREMENTS (made from dried skins)

	Song Sparrow	White-throated Sparrow	Savannah Sparrow	Cow-bird	Chipping Sparrow	Robin	Chimney Swift
Length .....	16.00	17.10	14.40	20.10	13.60	25.40	13.79
Wing .....	6.40	7.34	6.65	10.77	6.96	12.60	12.50
Tail .....	6.66	7.26	5.30	7.70	5.80	9.80	4.80
Bill .....	1.24	1.11	1.00	1.70	0.90	2.10	0.38 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From nostril.

Easton, Maine, June, 1925

## NOTES ON SWAMP SPARROWS

BY EDWARD GOULD ROWLAND, M. D.

On August 13, 1924, I trapped in Belchertown, Mass., an immature and rain-soaked sparrow with a faintly striped breast, and I reported it as a Song Sparrow. During the next forty-two days it repeated six times. On one of these occasions, when it was more fully developed and dried off, I discovered it to be a Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza Georgiana*).

On September 1, 1924, I trapped and banded a partially-feathered sparrow of a species unknown to me, whose most noticeable markings were the shining silvery edgings of the bends of the wings. Plumage-development by the time of its

second and final repeat, eight days later, showed it to be a Swamp Sparrow. As already noted, the single August capture repeated six times in September.

In September thirty Swamp Sparrows were banded, of which number, ten repeated. In October, forty-one were banded, of which number, fifteen repeated. One bird repeated seven times; one bird repeated six times; one bird repeated four times; three birds repeated three times; eight birds repeated twice; and twelve birds repeated once only.

Of the September birds banded and repeating one stayed in the swamp nineteen days and another fifteen. In October the two most lengthy sojourns were fourteen and ten days respectively. The average length of sojourn of the banded birds which repeated was, in September  $7\frac{10}{11}$  days, and in October  $5\frac{14}{15}$  days. Several birds escaped from my hands unbanded, and others that were banded got out of the traps before the bands were read, but the foregoing statistics are approximately correct.

My outfit consisted of four automatic traps set along the edge of a cat-tail swamp having an area of approximately one acre, with a large bushy and wooded swamp adjoining it. For bait I used crumbled bread, cake, and weed seeds sifted from carloads of western corn. This spring I have had five traps in the same locality but instead of seventy-two birds, I have captured only ten, one of these a return. But of these ten, seven repeated, the eighth died without having a chance to repeat, and the ninth was released at night a long way from the swamp. The first bird of the season, banded March 27, 1925, was the only one having a fair chance that did not repeat. A few have escaped unbanded, or unread, that are left out of the reckoning.

Why so few birds this spring? Do they travel northward by a different route? Do they find food in spring that suits them better than my bait, or do they just travel faster?

Not one of these birds had a solid chestnut crown so stressed in many bird-book descriptions. Most of them had a median crown-stripe, and many had no chestnut at all in the crown. One had a faint dusky spot in the center of the breast like a Tree Sparrow. In two specimens the white throat was divided by two vertical delicate bands of grey, and several showed scarcely any white at all on the throat. Fledglings and juveniles had unmistakably streaked breasts. In all specimens, the predominating color of the back was chestnut, and the flanks were all more or less tinged with rufous. No Swamp Sparrow has been found with any claws lacking, as has been the case with some Song and Chipping Sparrows taken by me.

Several birds have shown a melanistic phase of plumage. In these, both the brown and black feathers are highly colored and show up in distinct contrast, the black predominating. Furthermore, in at least three birds the white throat has been surrounded by a delicate narrow necklace of shiny black feathers. These birds are beautiful to look at. I have not seen this plumage-variation described.

One bird had a yellowish head, and another was noticeably yellow in front of the eyes. This latter bird (A7811) was measured and found to be 5.25 inches in length, the approximate size of small females of this species. It was presumed to be a young-of-the-year. The former bird (No. 141056) was probably also a juvenile, perhaps a bird born in the near by swamp.

These birds are only locally common in these parts. Many observers have never seen one. I never was fortunate enough to see one until last fall. Mr. A. R. Cross, of Huntington, Mass., tells me he has never observed one in his town. Apparently they breed here in Belchertown, as two birds have repeated on the 17th and 20th of May respectively.

On April 2, 1924, I banded a dull-colored, sickly-looking bird and kept it one day for observation. It ate nothing during captivity and died peacefully. It suffered from a light pea-green diarrhoea. On April 21, 1925, I captured another one of the same appearance and with a similar diarrhoea, keeping it one day and releasing it in poor condition. It ate but little during its captivity. One other capture was similarly afflicted, but I did not record whether it was a Swamp Sparrow or a Song Sparrow. The plumage of these afflicted birds was so dull and faded that had I not been experienced in handling Swamp Sparrows I might not have been able to identify them with any certainty.

In the light of this experience, I have been pondering over the controversy between ornithologists as to the recognition to be allowed birds, having slight plumage variations, in our system of nomenclature, even wondering if subspecies had not been in some cases described on the basis of endemics of avian disease.

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## GOOD AND BAD PRACTICE AT BANDING STATIONS

In the nature of the case, banders operate under very diverse conditions in the matter of environment. At the present time there is also a great difference in the practice pursued at various