

# Fuertes print series begins with longspurs

**I**N THE YEAR 1904, the magazine *Bird-Lore*, from which *American Birds* is directly descended, began the publication of a series of paintings by the then 30 year-old artist, Louis Agassiz Fuertes. Editor Frank M. Chapman was already well acquainted with Fuertes and his work, and his admiration for the art and accuracy Fuertes brought to his bird paintings was unbounded. In fact, on January 16, 1903, Chapman had written to Fuertes words of high praise indeed: "You are well known to stand in the front rank of contemporary bird artists! . . . unless I have been singularly misled by the few Audubon originals I have seen, that man could never approach the excellence of your pictures. This would shock many folks, no doubt, this opinion, but times shall change (and between you and me, Louis, I know better about these things than anybody else in the country.)"

The series was destined to continue for the rest of Fuertes' life — the last, of western woodpeckers, appeared in the same issue with the announcement of Fuertes' accidental death in August, 1927. By then, and until today, Fuertes was and is the most revered and respected painter of birds of this century.

Since these paintings were commissioned by, and painted for, the National Audubon Society, most of them are still in our possession. Numbers of them are framed and grace the walls and halls of our headquarters in New York City. The originals

like this one from our own office wall, are mostly 9-3/4 by 13-1/2 inches in dimensions, and are painted in water colors. The size of their original (and only) publication was about 5 by 7 inches. We present them now in larger, brighter, and clearer form. This first print, of two longspur species, was first published in the issue of November-December, 1910, Vol. XII, No. 6. Since our full bleed page size is 8 x 11 inches, these will be more than twice as large in area as the original reproductions.

We do not know the history of this particular painting. It was probably painted early in 1910, when Fuertes was 36 years old.

We do know that as late as 1919 *Bird-Lore* was paying Fuertes \$3 per figure for his paintings; at that rate he received \$18 for this splendid painting! We know, too, that although the longspurs are 69 years-old this year, no one has ever painted these two species better. The life and veracity that Fuertes brought to painted birds lives on today in his pupil George Miksch Sutton, and in the many younger and now successful artists Sutton has taught, coached, or guided. All of whom, we feel certain, would be proud to have it said that "he paints like a young Fuertes."

We reprint in full the original accompanying text by Frank M. Chapman.

## Notes on the plumage of North American longspurs

by Frank M. Chapman

**Chestnut-collared Longspur** (Figs. 1-3). This species has the four outer tail feathers largely white, in which respect it differs from the Lapland and Smith's Longspurs and agrees with McCown's Longspur. From the latter, aside from other characters, it differs in having the two outer tail-feathers white to the tip, while McCown's Longspur has all but the outer feather conspicuous tipped with blackish. The character seems slight, but is readily obvious in life.

Fuertes suggests the name V-tail for the Chestnut-collared, and T-tail for the McCown's Longspur, and his colored drawings for this and the next issues of *Bird-Lore* contain small figures of the birds in the air in which these tail markings are shown.

In juvenal plumage, the Chestnut-collared Longspur has the feathers of the back terminally margined with whitish, producing not a streaked, but *ringed* appearance. The bird, indeed, is surprisingly like a juvenal Grasshopper Sparrow, in this respect. The underparts are buffy, more or less heavily streaked with blackish, the throat being whiter.

The first winter plumage is acquired by molt, which appears to be restricted to the body plumage, the wing and tail feathers being retained. The bird now resembles the adult in winter plumage, but, as a rule, has less black on the underparts. The lesser wing-coverts resemble the greater coverts in color, and are not black bordered with white as in the adult, and the chestnut of the nape is less evident.

The prenuptial, or spring molt, is very limited, being apparently restricted to the anter-

ior portions of the head, the change from the brownish winter to the striking breeding plumage being accomplished chiefly by a wearing away of the brownish tips and margins of the feathers.

First nuptial resembles adult nuptial plumage, but the chestnut nape is paler, and the lesser wing-coverts are brownish as in winter.

The adult male, at the postnuptial molt, acquires a winter plumage (Fig. 2), which, as has just been said, resembles that of the young bird, but has the lesser wing-coverts black and more black on the underparts. Nuptial plumage is acquired, as in the young bird, partly by molt but chiefly by abrasion.

The female (Fig. 3) presents no striking seasonal changes in plumage. In worn summer plumage the underparts become more or less streaked, and the basal chestnut or blackish marking on some, doubtless old specimens, then become partly revealed.

**Lapland Longspur** (Figs. 4-6). The longspurs, as a group, may be known by the length of the hind toe-nail. While this may not be regarded as an easily observed field character, it might at least serve in distinguishing the tracks of these birds from those of certain sparrows which they resemble in plumage.

The Lapland Longspur differs from the Chestnut-collared Longspur, as the plate shows, in many respects, but in life, even at a distance, they could be readily identified by the difference in the amount of white in their tail-feathers, the former having only the two outer feathers with white, the latter the outer four. Indeed female, and some winter male, Lapland Longspurs more nearly resemble, superficially, Vesper Sparrows than they do birds of their own group.

In juvenal plumage the Lapland Longspur is very sparrow-like in appearance, with the forebreast and sides streaked with dusky and

buff. Late in July or early in August, this plumage is exchanged for the first winter plumage (Fig. 6), which is acquired by molt of the body feathers and most of the wing coverts, the tail feathers and wing-quills of the juvenal plumage being retained. The young bird is now essentially like the adult in winter plumage.

The first nuptial plumage, according to Dwight, is acquired by a partial spring molt of the feathers of the anterior parts of the head, chin and throat, which now become black and whitish; but the chestnut nape, and more distinctly marked back, are due to a wearing off of the brownish edges of the feathers of the winter plumage (Fig. 6).

The adult male, after the usual complete postnuptial molt, resembles the young male in its first winter plumage, and their subsequent plumage changes are the same.

The female, in juvenal plumage, resembles the male in the same plumage, but in the first winter plumage, which is acquired by molt, as in the young male, she has less, and sometimes no black, on the throat and less rufous on the nape. The nuptial plumage is acquired partly by molt and in part by wear.

The Alaskan Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus alascensis*) resembles the form from north-eastern America, but has had the margins to the feathers of the back much paler, brownish gray or buffy, the nape, in winter, being more buffy.

Chestnut-collared Longspur,  
*Calcarius ornatus*

winter ♂                      ♀

Lapland Longspur,  
*Calcarius lapponicus*

♂ ♀                      ♂ winter