

NOTES

FIRST RECORD FOR THE SWAMP SPARROW IN WASHINGTON STATE

On 25 February 1973 I discovered a Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*) at Lake Sammamish State Park, King County, Washington. The bird responded to "pishing" directed at a Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) which was singing from a shrubby line of willow (*Salix sp.*) and blackberry (*Rubus sp.*) bordering the parking lot at the park. A Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) was also present in the same bush. The bird responded well for several minutes providing four unobstructed views at eye level from a distance of fifteen feet (using 8x36 Bushnell binoculars).

The following description is abstracted from notes recorded immediately following the sighting:

Size and shape approximately that of a Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolni*), clearly smaller than the accompanying Song Sparrow; breast entirely dark gray with indistinct broad streaking, shading to whitish on the belly; flanks buffy; face gray; an elongated triangular post-ocular spot, reddish-brown, streaked and margined with black; a short white malar stripe edged with blackish; no obvious white throat patch; crown reddish-brown, streaked and margined with black, divided by a narrow whitish central crown stripe; bright reddish-brown shoulders; wings



Figure 1. A Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*) found at Lake Sammamish State Park, King County, Washington, on 8 April 1973.

Photo by Dennis Paulson

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without obvious wingbars; back and wings streaked reddish-brown and black; tail rounded, outer rectrices apparently reddish-brown; legs flesh-colored; bill small, darkish with a paler base, especially on the lower mandible.

Attempts at verification that day failed, and the bird could not be found later that week. On 8 April 1973 I observed what was presumably the same individual in the brushy understory of a Pacific Willow (*Salix lasiandra*) woodland 100 yards west of the site of the original observation. The bird was still in winter plumage apparently identical to that of the original sighting. A number of local birdwatchers observed the bird later that day confirming the identification, and several recognizable color photographs were obtained by Dennis Paulson, Department of Zoology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. A duplicate of one of these photographs (Figure 1) is on file at the San Diego Natural History Museum, San Diego, California. To my knowledge the bird was not seen subsequently.

This is apparently the first recorded occurrence of the species in the State of Washington. The two Oregon records are of single birds observed in late December 1968 near Eugene (Audubon Field Notes 23:513, 1969) and 5 April 1969 near Medford (Audubon Field Notes 23:619, 1969). The scarcity of records from the Northwest is perhaps due to a relative scarcity of observers, as the Swamp Sparrow has been recorded in California annually since about 1960 (Audubon Field Notes 21:456, 1967) in favored locations from San Diego to Humboldt County. Most California records are from the immediate vicinity of the coast between November and March, though records span the period from 2 October (Audubon Field Notes 20:90, 1966) to late April (McCaskie and De Benedictis, Annotated Field List: Birds of Northern California, 1966), and a scattering of records comes from the Central Valley, the eastern basin region, and the vicinity of the Salton Sea. The Swamp Sparrow may be expected as a rare but regular winter visitor coastwise in all the Pacific states. *Eugene Hunn, Department of Anthropology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98105.*