

A WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW WITH THREE LEGS

ANJA M. SCHILLER, KEITH W. LARSON, and JOHN D. ALEXANDER. Klamath Bird Observatory, P. O. Box 758, Ashland, Oregon 97520; kwl@klamathbird.org

On 15 October 2004, while mist-netting at the Seven Mile Guard Station (elevation 1285 m; 42° 42' 18" N, 122° 4' 26" W) in the Klamath Ranger District of Winema National Forest, Oregon, we caught an immature Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) with three legs. On examination, we found that the third leg originated from the right side of the cloaca (Figure 1). The leg was divided into two sections, the upper part (tibia) being fleshy, thick, and pink, ending in yellow scar tissue (Figure 2). The lower section of the leg (tarsus) was much thinner with little tissue over the bone, brownish in color, and ending with two partially formed digits (without claws) representing the toes normally directed forward and one hallux (with a claw). The leg was nonfunctional, hanging below the bird when perched. The sparrow appeared healthy in all other respects and was released after examination.

Additional appendages have been reported in four other wild birds: an American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*; Shufeldt 1919), a House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*; Stoneman 1932), a Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*; Frankowiak 1962), and a Cattle Tyrant (*Machetornis rixosa*; Lopes et. al. 1981). All of these cases (except the House Sparrow) describe an additional leg originating from a tibiotarsus or immediately above a "normal" leg. Ours is the first known report of a third leg originating from the cloacal region. The House Sparrow possessed two extra limbs that were fused together and were associated with an extra cloaca. Additional legs can also be associated with an extra pelvis (Shufeldt 1919). We do not know whether our White-crowned Sparrow had a second pelvis.



Figure 1. Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow with third leg showing origin adjacent to cloaca.

NOTES



Figure 2. Close-up of third leg of Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow showing two clawless digits and one hallux with claw.

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