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Birds of the Rocky Mountains -- Paul A. Johnsgard

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***Birds of the Rocky Mountains*—Species Accounts, pages
354–392: Tanagers, Grosbeaks, & Sparrows**

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Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*)

Identification: Males of this species are unmistakable; they are a brilliant red except for black wings and tail. Females are mostly yellow below and yellow-green above, without the wing-bars typical of female western tanagers. They cannot be separated readily from female hepatic tanagers. The male's song is a series of about 6 or 7 hoarse and robin-like phrases.

Status: An accidental vagrant or rare migrant in the region; there is 1 Montana record, 4 from Wyoming, and records from 12 Colorado latilongs. The nearest breeding areas are in the western Dakotas and Nebraska.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding typically occurs in mature hardwood forests growing in river valleys, slopes, and bottomlands. Less often it occurs in coniferous forests and in city parks or orchards.

Seasonality: The available regional sight or specimen records extend from May 8 to October 15. There are no regional breeding records, but in North Dakota active nests have been found between mid-June and mid-July.

Comments: Although this is one of the most spectacularly colorful of all North American birds, it rarely can be observed close to ground level, as it is a canopy-zone forager that nests very high in tall trees, sometimes as high as 75 feet above ground. By comparison the western tanager is much easier to observe closely.

Suggested Reading: Bent, 1958; Prescott, 1965.

LATILONG STATUS

	V	
	V	

		V
		V



Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

Identification: The male of this species is the only regional bird that is mostly lemon yellow, with black wings and tail, and with a reddish head, at least during the spring and summer. The female is much duller, and mostly yellow below, with a greenish yellow back and a black tail and wings, the latter crossed by broad white wing-bars. The male's song is robin-like but more hoarse, consisting of two- and three-syllable notes.

LATILONG STATUS

S	S	S	
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	s

S	S	S	s
s	S	S	M
s	S	s	S

S	M	s	s
M	s	S	S
S	S	s	S

Status: A summer resident in coniferous forests throughout the region, including all the montane parks, where it is variably common and probably a breeder in all. Status uncertain in the Cypress Hills of Alberta, where singing males have been observed.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding occurs in various habitats, including riparian woodlands, aspen groves, ponderosa pine forests, and occasionally in Douglas fir forests and pinyon-juniper or oak-mountain mahogany woodlands. It is usually found in areas having a predominance of coniferous trees, preferably those that are fairly open, but occasionally extending into fairly dense forests.

Seasonality: Records in Colorado mainly extend from May 6 to November 27, with a few winter stragglers. In Wyoming the records are from May 13 to October 12, while in Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from mid-May to early or mid-September. Active nests in Colorado have been seen from June 18 to July 7, and in Wyoming and Montana egg records extend from June 1 to July 4.

Comments: This splendid bird is one of the jewels of the Rocky Mountain forest region, and outside of the breeding season can often be found in suburbs or other areas well away from their breeding sites, at times even appearing at bird feeders.

Suggested Reading: Bent, 1958.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheuticus ludovicianus*)

Identification: Males are easily recognized by their black upperparts and white underparts, the two areas separated by a rose-red breast. There is also a large white wing-patch and pink under wing linings, both evident in flying males. Females have a strongly spotted and striped brown and white pattern, much like a large sparrow or female red-winged black-bird. The male's song is robin-like, but uttered more rapidly.

Status: A local summer resident in the extreme northern portion of the region (Red Deer and Rocky Mountain House area, possibly south to Bottrel and the Porcupine Hills), and a rare to occasional migrant farther southeast of the mountains, with vagrants occurring in the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species is found in relatively deciduous areas or the deciduous portions of mixed forests on floodplains, slopes, and bluffs. Forests where the undergrowth is tall but not too dense are apparently preferred, although a variety of undergrowth conditions are utilized.

Seasonality: Colorado records are from April 27 to October 3. Alberta records extend from May 8 to September 1. There are no regional egg records, but in North Dakota egg records are from May 31 to June 27.

Comments: This eastern North American species replaces the black-headed grosbeak east of the Rocky Mountains, and overlaps to some degree with it on the western plains, where a limited degree of hybridization occurs. The ecology and behavior of these two species are very similar, and probably the male plumage pattern differences are important in reducing the rate of hybridization.

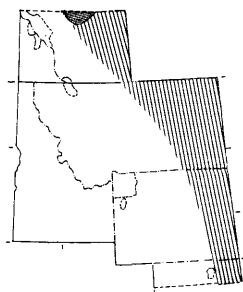
Suggested Reading: Dunham, 1966; West, 1962; Kroodsmas, 1970, 1974.

LATILONG STATUS

			M
	M		M

M	M		M
		M	
	M	M	

		M	
M			M
M		M	M



Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

Identification: Males of this species are distinctively patterned with orange-yellow underparts, and with a black head, wings, and tail; the wings and tail are variously spotted or striped with white. It might be confused with the evening grosbeak, but that species is more brightly yellow on the back and underparts, and has a bright yellow forehead. The female is a chunky sparrow-like bird, with heavy dark cheek markings and a yellowish tinge on the underwing area and belly. The male's song is very similar to that of the rare rose-breasted grosbeak, sounding much like an American robin in having a series of fluty, slurred whistles.

LATILONG STATUS

s	S	s	s
s	S	s	S
s	S	S	s

s	S	s	S
s	s	M	S
M	S	s	S

S	s	s	s
	S	s	M
S	s	M	S

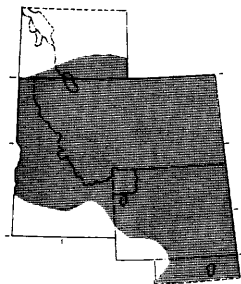
Status: A summer resident over most of the region in wooded areas excepting the northernmost parts in Alberta, where only a vagrant. A variably common breeder in all the U.S. montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species is associated with open deciduous woodlands having fairly well developed shrubby understories, and usually on floodplains or upland areas. It extends into wooded coulees and riparian forests of cottonwoods and similar vegetation in the plains, and sometimes also nests in orchards, oak-mountain mahogany woodlands, and aspen groves.

Seasonality: Colorado records extend from April 26 to October 10, and Wyoming records are from May 12 to October 2. In Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from mid- or late May to the end of August or early September. Colorado egg records are from May 24 to June 28, and Wyoming and Montana active nests have been noted from June 5 until the latter part of July.

Comments: These are highly territorial and vocal birds, and like the rose-breasted grosbeak, males sometimes even sing while sitting on eggs.

Suggested Reading: Kroodsman, 1970, 1974; Weston, 1947.



Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*)

Identification: Males of this species are the only dark blue birds with a short and sparrow-like beak and brownish wing-bars. Male indigo buntings are smaller, much rarer, and lack brown wing-bars, and male mountain bluebirds are paler, especially on the underparts. Females look very much like large house sparrows, but have distinctive buffy-brown wing bars. The male's song is an extended series of warbling phrases that variably rise and fall in pitch.

Status: A local summer resident in the southeastern corner of the region, reaching almost to Rocky Mountain N.P. and possibly breeding in Dinosaur N.M. Breeding has been reported from one Wyoming latilong, and there is local breeding in Elmore County, Idaho (Glenns Ferry).

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season these birds are found in brushy and weedy pastures, old fields with scattered saplings, forest edges, hedgerows, and streamside thickets. The presence of large seeds, such as sunflowers, seems to favor its occurrence, and the birds are also often found near water.

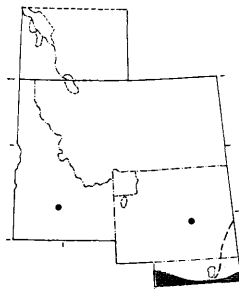
Seasonality: Colorado records are from May 17 to September 18, and active nests in that state have been reported from June 5 to August 14. In Idaho the birds have been observed with juveniles in mid-August.

Comments: Although somewhat larger, this species is a fairly close relative of the indigo and lazuli buntings, and like these species is associated with edge habitats rather than forests. Double-brooding is apparently common in this species.

Suggested Reading: Stabler, 1959; Bent, 1968.

LATILONG STATUS

		S
	M	
S	M	S



Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*)

Identification: Males of this species have bright blue heads and upper-parts, an orange-brown breast, and white to buffy wing-bars. The females are rather nondescript, with unspotted tan breasts, darker brown upper-parts, and two conspicuous whitish wing-bars. The male's song is a loud warbling that toward the end includes many rapid rising and falling *tree-tree* or *trit-a-tree* phrases and has a few scratchy or buzzy notes.

LATILONG STATUS

s	S	s	s
s	S	s	s
S	S	S	s

s	S	S	s
s	S	S	S
M	S	s	S

s	s	s	s
M	s	M	s
s	s	s	S

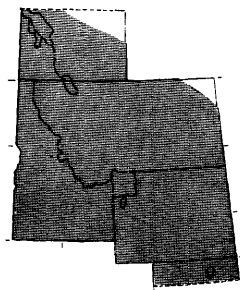
Status: A summer resident in suitable habitats nearly throughout the region, but becoming rarer eastwardly and northwardly; reported in all the montane parks except Banff/Jasper, and probably breeding in most.

Habitats and Ecology: In the mountain areas these birds breed along the edges of deciduous forests on gentle valley slopes, such as aspen groves, or thickets of willow or alder, while on the foothills and plains the birds are usually found in riparian woodlands supporting a mixture of shrubs, low trees, and herbaceous vegetation. Plant diversity and discontinuity of cover seem to be important habitat characteristics for this species.

Seasonality: Colorado records extend from April 25 to October 3, and Wyoming records are from May 5 to September 15. In Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from mid-May to early September. Colorado egg records are from June 6 to July 9, and Wyoming egg records extend from June 1 to August 2, a span that also encompasses available Montana records.

Comments: This species is the western replacement form of the indigo bunting, and has very similar habitat characteristics and behavior patterns to that species.

Suggested Reading: Emlen et al., 1975; Bent, 1968.



Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)

Identification: Males of this species are the only small and sparrow-like birds that are almost entirely dark blue; the more common lazuli bunting has a brownish breast and the larger blue grosbeak has brown wing-bars. The mountain bluebird is much paler underneath and has a much more pointed bill. Females cannot be separated easily from female lazuli buntings but have less conspicuous wing-bars and more definite breast streaking. The male's song is a long series of whistled phrases that consists mostly of paired phrases.

Status: A local summer resident primarily east of the major mountain ranges, but extending west locally to the upper Missouri drainage, the Big-horn Mountains of Wyoming, and central Colorado. A vagrant in the southern montane parks, and with the nearest known breeding in the Fort Colorado latilong.

Habitats and Ecology: This species typically breeds in relatively open hardwood forests on floodplains or uplands. Open woodlands, with a high density of shrubs and an open canopy, are favored, and thus forest edges, second-growth areas, orchards, overgrown pastures, and similar habitats are typically utilized.

Seasonality: Colorado records are from May 7 to September 14, with nesting records extending from July 26 to August 8.

Comments: This species rather often hybridizes with the lazuli bunting at the western edge of the Great Plains, where the two forms overlap considerably. Male song types may be important in such areas for proper species recognition and maintenance of reproductive isolation.

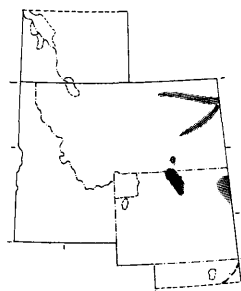
Suggested Reading: Bradley, 1948; Emlen et al., 1975.

LATILONG STATUS

	M		
			s
V		M	

M	M		s
		M	
	M	M	

M		M	M
	M	M	
M			S



Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*)

Identification: Males resemble miniature meadowlarks, with yellow breasts and a black "bib." Females look much like typical sparrows, but have rufous markings on the anterior wings, a yellowish stripe above the eye, and a yellow tinge on the breast. The male's song is a distinctive *Dick, dick, dick, sissssssss-sss-sss*.

LATILONG STATUS

		M

		M
		M
s		

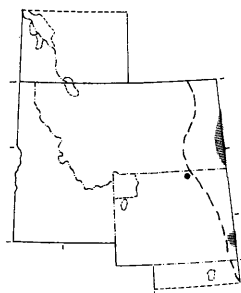
Status: A local summer resident in the plains area east of the mountains, breeding in extreme eastern Montana and very locally in eastern Wyoming (Fort Laramie and Buffalo latilongs), and more extensively in eastern Colorado. A vagrant in montane areas, and not yet reported from any of the montane parks, but possibly breeds near Dinosaur N.M. in the Craig latilong.

Habitats and Ecology: This is a prairie-adapted species that breeds in grasslands having a combination of tall forbs, grasses, and shrubs, or in grassy meadows having nearby hedges or brushy fencerows.

Seasonality: Colorado records extend from May 1 to October 4, and active nests have been noted there from July 3 (eggs) to August 15 (nestlings). The breeding season is generally long in the Great Plains, and suggestive of double-brooding.

Comments: This is one of the Great Plains endemic species that reaches the western edge of its range in the Rocky Mountain region, much like the lark bunting and several other grassland sparrows.

Suggested Reading: Harmeson, 1974; Zimmerman, 1966.



Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*)

Identification: Adults of this species are mostly grayish to greenish gray, with a contrasting chestnut crown, and with a black-bordered white throat. Young birds also have a black-bordered whitish throat, but are otherwise mostly a streaked brownish. The male's song consists of two or three whistled *sweet-to* notes, followed by a series of buzzy trills, and the call is a distinctive cat-like mewing note. Usually seen on or near the ground in shrubby vegetation.

Status: A local summer resident in the southern parts of the region, breeding north to central Montana (White Sulfur Springs latilong, possibly to Lewiston), and a variably common summer resident in the montane parks north to Yellowstone N.P.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species occurs in brushy foothills areas dominated by sagebrush, scrub oaks, saltbush, and greasewood flats, scrubby riparian woodlands, and similar open and semi-arid habitats. Forested areas are avoided, but scattered trees in brushlands are used as singing posts. Spreading shrubs that allow for easy movement and foraging on the ground surface below are favored vegetation types.

Seasonality: Colorado records primarily extend from April 10 to November 24, with occasional wintering individuals. Wyoming records are from May 2 to October 12. In Montana the birds are usually present from mid-May to early September. Colorado egg records are from May 19 to June 30, and in Wyoming and Montana there are egg records from May 27 to June 18.

Comments: This is one of the most arid-adapted of the North American towhees, but like the others it is a ground-forager, which typically retreats into heavy cover rather than flushing when faced with danger.

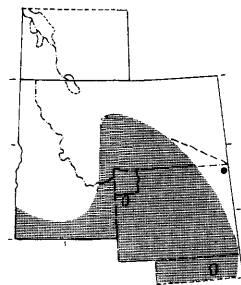
Suggested Reading: Grinnell & Storer, 1924; Bent, 1968.

LATILONG STATUS

		V	
		?	s

S	S	s	s
s	S	S	s
S	S	S	S

s	S	S	s
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	S



Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalma*)

Identification: Males of this species are easily identified by their black heads and breasts, white-spotted black backs, and white-cornered black tails, together with chestnut flanks. In the female, the black areas are replaced by brown, but both sexes have bright red eyes. The male's song is a distinctive *Drink your teeeee*, and his call in the western states is a nasal and cat-like *wheeee* note.

LATILONG STATUS

s	s	s	s
S	S	s	M
S	S	S	s

S	s	S	s
s	S	M	s
	M	M	S

s		s	
	s	M	S
S	S	s	R

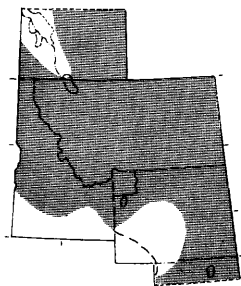
Status: A summer resident over most of the region, becoming rarer in the Canadian mountains and also in the more arid southwestern areas. Common in Dinosaur N.M., but otherwise uncommon to rare in the montane parks, but probably breeding in several.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding occurs in brushy fields, thickets, woodland openings or edges, second-growth forests, city parks, and well-planted suburbs. Habitats that have a good accumulation of litter and humus, and a protective screen of shrubby foliage above the ground, are highly favored by these birds.

Seasonality: In parts of southern Colorado these birds are resident, but in Wyoming the records extend from April 9 to October 29, with migration peaks in May and September. In Montana and southern Alberta the birds arrive in late April or early May, and usually are gone by the end of September or early October. Egg records in Colorado are from May 17 to July, and in Wyoming from May 25 to July 24. Alberta egg records extend from June 10 to 22. In at least some areas double-brooding is apparently common.

Comments: Rufous-sided towhees in the Rocky Mountain area may appear unusual to persons from eastern North America, as males are heavily spotted with white on their upperparts. These types were once considered different species, but are now known to be only racially separated.

Suggested Reading: Sibley & West, 1959; Baumann, 1959; Davis, 1960.



Brown Towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*)

Identification: This is the duller of the towhees in the region, and appears almost uniformly brownish, with paler underparts and a buffy striped throat. Young birds are more heavily striped and distinctly sparrow-like, but the ground-foraging feeding method is characteristic. The song consists of a series of two-syllable *chili* notes followed by a variable ending. The usual call is a loud *shut-up*.

Status: Probably only an accidental vagrant in the region, with no Montana records, only one (Jackson latilong) for Wyoming, and only a few for northern Colorado. The nearest known breeding area is in southern Colorado (north to the Canon City latilong), but reported as "rare" at Dinosaur N.M. and a potential breeder there.

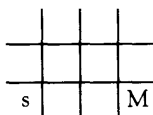
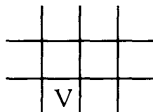
Habitats and Ecology: Breeding occurs in dry shrubby areas such as sagebrush, desert scrub with cholla cactus, and pinyon-juniper habitats; Colorado nestings most often occur in junipers. Flat areas in the vicinity of dense scrubby thickets, and open ground that is closely adjacent to brushy cover, and suitable foraging areas of ground under such shrubbery, seem to be important habitat components.

Seasonality: A resident in southern Colorado, and with egg records extending from May 14 to 31. The extralimital Wyoming record is for early June.

Comments: This species should be looked for in Dinosaur National Monument, where breeding might well occur rarely, even though that is north of the species' known northern range limits in Colorado.

Suggested Reading: Tvrđik, 1978; Davis, 1961; Marshall, 1960.

LATILONG STATUS



American Tree Sparrow (*Spizella arborea*)

Identification: This winter sparrow is readily recognized by its clear grayish breast with a black "stickpin" spot in the middle, as well as a rufous crown and somewhat rufous wing markings set off by two white wing-bars. During winter the male's song is unlikely to be heard, but the musical call-note, a *teedle-deet* is quite distinctive. Generally found in small groups rather than single birds while in this region.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	M	
	M	M	M
W	W	W	W

W	W		W
M	W	W	W
	W	W	

W		W	W
	W	W	W
W	W	W	W

Status: An overwintering migrant virtually throughout the entire region, including both montane areas and plains, but rarer in mountains farther north, and unreported from Kootenay N.P. The nearest breeding areas are in northeastern Saskatchewan.

Habitats and Ecology: While in the Rocky Mountain region this species occupies brushy prairie areas, roadside thickets, farmsteads, old orchards, overgrown and weedy pastures, and similar relatively open habitats. They often occur in company with juncos and other gregarious and hardy sparrows, and feed about on the ground or snow surface, industriously searching out small seeds. During the breeding season they are associated with arctic timberline habitats.

Seasonality: In Colorado the records extend from October 26 to May 21, and in Wyoming from September 28 to May 1, with migration peaks in October and April. In Montana they are present from about mid-September to mid-April, and in southern or central Alberta they typically pass through in September, wintering occasionally in the extreme southwest, and again move north in late March.

Comments: Tree sparrows are extremely hardy and charming birds that are likely to be seen on winter bird walks when few other birds are to be seen, and occasionally coming into feeding trays to supplement the foods that they somehow manage to locate in snow-covered areas.

Suggested Reading: Weedon, 1965; Heydweiller, 1935.



Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*)

Identification: Chipping sparrows are easily identified by their rusty brown crowns, which are bounded below first by a white line and then by a black eye-streak, and by their clear, unmarked gray breast. Tree sparrows are similar, but have blackish breast spots, and no white on the head. The male's song is an extended trill of notes all on the same pitch, sounding something like a sewing machine in its monotonous uniformity.

Status: A widespread and common summer resident throughout the region in all wooded areas; possibly the most common breeding sparrow in the montane parks, and very probably breeding in all of them.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding in this species is done in open deciduous or mixed forests, the margins of forest clearings, the edges of muskegs, in timberline scrub, riparian woodlands, pinyon-juniper or oak-mountain mahogany woodlands, and similar diverse habitats. Generally scattered trees, an unshaded forest floor, and a sparse ground covering of herbaceous plants seem to be the kinds of habitat considerations that are important.

Seasonality: Resident in parts of Colorado, but in Wyoming the birds are present from late March to late October, with migration peaks in April and September. In Montana and southern Alberta they are usually present from mid- or late April to about the end of September. Colorado nest records are from June 19 (nestlings) to June 27, and in Wyoming there are egg records from June 3 to July 14. Alberta and Montana egg records are from May 30 to June 20.

Comments: This widely distributed sparrow survives well in disturbed, successional habitats, and as such probably benefits from human activities such as lumbering and other deforestation activities. It breeds virtually everywhere in North America except in tundra regions and extreme deserts.

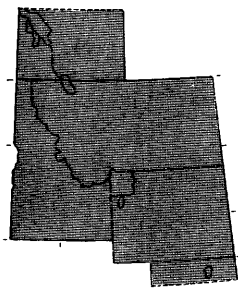
Suggested Reading: Hebrand, 1974; Tate, 1973; Walkinshaw, 1944.

LATILONG STATUS

S	S	S	s
S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S

S	S	S	S
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	S

s	s	S	s
s	S	s	S
S	S	s	S



Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*)

Identification: This is a dull-colored sparrow that has a grayish nape, a brownish cheek patch that is outlined by gray or whitish, and a pale buffy stripe through the middle of the crown. The back is also heavily striped with buff and blackish streaks, but the breast is uniformly whitish gray. The male's song is a series of up to five low-pitched buzzing sounds sounding more like an insect than a bird.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	s	s
	S		s
V	s		s

s	s	M	s
		M	
	?		

		M	s
		M	M
		s	M

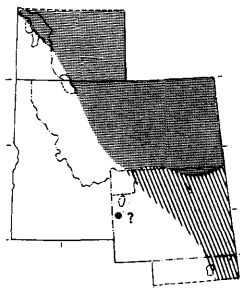
Status: A local summer resident in the northern part of the region, mainly east of the mountains and also north of Wyoming, but locally breeding in Banff and Jasper N.P., and probably in extreme northern Wyoming (Burgess Junction and Buffalo latilongs). Also reported as breeding in the Jackson latilong (Oakleaf et al., 1982), but without specific documentation.

Habitats and Ecology: Favored breeding habitats consist of brushy thickets in prairies, fenceline shrubbery along pastures or meadows, mixed-grass prairies with scattered shrubs or low trees, brushy woodland margins, early successional stages of forests following logging or fires, and retired croplands. Nesting sometimes also occurs in city parks or residential areas.

Seasonality: In Colorado the records extend from March 29 to October 21, and in Wyoming from April 29 to October 20. They usually arrive in Alberta by late April or early May, and remain until about the end of September. There are no available nesting dates for Wyoming or Montana, but egg records for Alberta extend from June 5 to July 7.

Comments: This is another prairie endemic, that is most common in the prairie provinces of Canada, and does not extend south into the central Great Plains. To the southwest it tends to be replaced by the Brewer's sparrow, and to the east by the field sparrow, all of which have somewhat similar ecological requirements.

Suggested Reading: Knapton, 1979; Salt, 1966.



Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*)

Identification: This small sparrow is nearly identical in appearance to its close relative the clay-colored sparrow, but lacks a buffy crown-stripe, has a less definite grayish nape, and its brown ear-patch is not so distinctly set off from the rest of the head and nape striping. The male's song is much more elaborate than that of the clay-colored sparrow, and consists of an extended series of complex and musical or buzzy trills. Usually found in semi-desert scrub habitats, but also at alpine timberline in the Rockies.

Status: A summer resident in nearly the entire region, except for the plains of Alberta, where replaced by the clay-colored sparrow. Variably common in most and probably all of the montane parks, and known to breed in several.

Habitats and Ecology: In the Rocky Mountain region this species breeds in two very different habitats. The first is in short-grass prairies with sage or other semi-arid shrubs present in varying densities. In Colorado, mountain mahogany or currants growing in brushy hillsides or mesa edges are sometimes used, while in Idaho the birds have been found breeding on sagebrush flats as well as in serviceberry-covered slopes of mountain ridges. In southern Alberta the birds breed on short-grass plains with scattered sage and cacti, as well as along timberline in Banff and Jasper parks, in stunted spruces, firs, willows, and alders.

Seasonality: Colorado records are from April 25 to October 25, while Wyoming records are from April 22 to October 3. In Montana and Alberta the birds usually arrive in early May, and remain until late September. Colorado nesting records are from June 15 to July 13, and egg records for Wyoming and Montana are from May 24 to June 16, with nestlings observed into late July. Eggs in Jasper N.P. have been noted from June 25 to July 14.

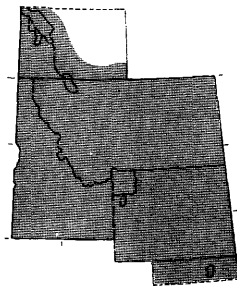
Suggested Reading: Bent, 1968; Best, 1972.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	S	
	S		s
S	s	s	s

S	S	s	S
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	S

s	S	S	S
S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S



Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*)

Identification: Field sparrows rather closely resemble American tree sparrows, but lack the dark breast patch, and have pink beaks rather than black upper and yellow lower mandibles. The breast is clear gray, except in young birds which have somewhat streaked breasts. The male's song is easily recognized; it is a sweet series of whistled notes that speed toward the end, like a ping-pong ball coming to a stop on a tabletop.

LATILONG STATUS

	M		
			?

			?

		M	
			M

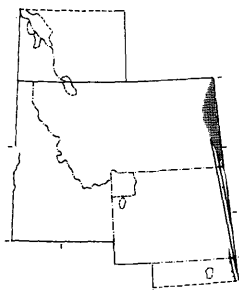
Status: A very local summer resident in extreme eastern Montana (Glendive and Baker latilongs, possibly others), and a local migrant farther south. Only a vagrant in the montane parks; reported once in Glacier N.P. Possibly also breeds in extreme eastern Wyoming and the eastern counties of Colorado.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding occurs in brushy, open woodlands, brushy ravines or coulees, sagebrush flats, abandoned hayfields, forest clearings, and similar habitats having a combination of low grassy areas and scattered shrubs or trees. Very similar habitats are used by the chipping sparrow, but that species tolerates a greater tree density and a later successional stage.

Seasonality: Colorado dates extend from March 29 to November 24; no specific breeding records are available. Montana records extend from May 11 to August 12, but there are no specific breeding dates available. Available egg dates for North Dakota are for June.

Comments: The field sparrow is extremely common and widespread from the Great Plains eastward, and it is interesting that its range terminates at about the point where that of the Brewer's sparrow begins, suggesting that competitive exclusion may be occurring.

Suggested Reading: Best, 1977, 1978; Crook, 1948.



Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*)

Identification: This is a plain-colored grassland sparrow which has only white outer tail feathers as a distinctive fieldmark. Otherwise it has a chestnut patch at the bend of the wing (often invisible), a pale whitish eye-ring, and a weakly spotted whitish breast. Its song is musical and somewhat like that of a song sparrow, but usually with two pairs of preliminary slurred notes followed by a descending trill: "Here, here; where-where; all together down the hill."

Status: A summer resident throughout the region in grassland areas; variably common in all the montane parks and probably breeding in all.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species is found in overgrown fields, prairie edges, grasslands with scattered shrubs and small trees, sagebrush areas where the plants are scattered and stunted, and similar open habitats, but not extending to mountain meadows or tundra zones.

Seasonality: Most Colorado records are from February 26 to October 5, with rare overwintering, while Wyoming records are from April 12 to October 9. In Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from late April to late September. Colorado egg records are from May 21 to July 4, and Wyoming egg records extend from May 15 to August 4. In Alberta there are egg records from May 20 to June 7. Double-brooding is regular over most of the species' range.

Comments: This is one of the more widely distributed and abundant species of grassland sparrows, ranging from coast to coast and from Mexico almost to Alaska. Like several other grassland species (meadowlarks, longspurs, etc.) they have conspicuous white tail feathers that probably are effective visual signals in flight, but can be easily hidden when on the ground.

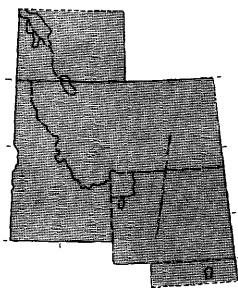
Suggested Reading: Best, 1972; Bent, 1968.

LATILONG STATUS

s	S	S	s
S	S	S	S
S	S	S	s

S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S

s	S	S	S
S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S



Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Identification: This grassland sparrow has conspicuous white corners on its tail feathers (most evident in flight) and a contrasting head pattern with bright chestnut ear-patches, a chestnut stripe over the eye, and various white and black markings, as well as a small blackish spot on the otherwise uniformly gray breast. The song is a complex mixture of buzzy notes and trills, but typically begins with two loud and clear introductory notes.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	s	
	s	M	s
V	S	s	S

S	s	S	S
s	S	s	S
M	M	M	S

M	M	S	s
s	M	s	S
S	s	S	S

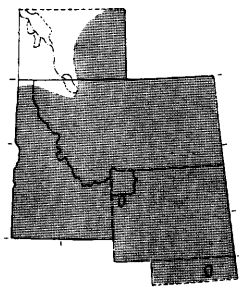
Status: A summer resident over most of the region in grassland habitats, but rarer northwardly and absent from the montane areas of Alberta. Rare to occasional in the montane parks farther south.

Habitats and Ecology: This species favors grasslands that have scattered trees, shrubs, large forbs, or adjoin such vegetation; thus weedy fencerows near grasslands, open brushland on slopes, sagebrush flats, scrubby and open oak woodlands, orchards, and similar habitats are all suitable. Mountain meadows and alpine areas are not used.

Seasonality: Colorado records extend from April 19 to September 23, and Wyoming records are from May 1 to September 25. In Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from early May to mid-September. Colorado egg records are from June 2 to July 19, and Wyoming egg records are from May 20 to June 14. Montana egg records are from June 17 to July 10. Double brooding may occur in some more southern areas.

Comments: This is one of the most attractive of the grassland sparrows, and one of the easiest to watch in courtship and territorial display, during which the white tail feathers are exposed by tail-spreading.

Suggested Reading: Tramontano, 1971; Newman, 1970.



Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza lineata*)

Identification: This sparrow is very easily identified by its generally grayish color, with a black bib, white "mustache" and eye-stripes, and an otherwise gray to blackish head. The outer tail feathers are also whitish. The male's song is mostly of high-pitched bell-like notes, usually opening with two clear notes and followed by a trill.

Status: A local summer resident in the southwestern part of the region, mainly in Idaho south of the Snake River, and possibly also in southwestern Wyoming and adjacent Colorado. Breeding status at Dinosaur N.M. is uncertain, but known to breed in the adjoining latilong to the south.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding habitats consist of thinly grassed pastures with scattered cactus, yucca, or mesquite. Desert uplands with much exposed ground, but with hiding places in thick and woody twig growth or cactus plants, are especially favored. Nests are also often placed in cactus or dense shrub growth.

Seasonality: A few Idaho records are from May 6 to August 10, and a similar small number of Colorado records are from April 23 to late July. However, wintering occurs as far north as southern New Mexico, so the absence of fall dates is misleading. Eggs have been noted in Colorado on May 19, and young observed in late July.

Comments: This is perhaps the most arid-adapted of the North American sparrows, and one that is notable for its ability to survive in the absence of drinking water, obtaining fluids from the foods that it eats.

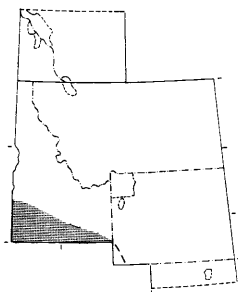
Suggested Reading: Heckenlively, 1970; Bent, 1968.

LATILONG STATUS

	V		

	V		

V		V	V
M			V



Sage Sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*)

Identification: This rather pallid-colored sparrow is somewhat grayish brown, with white underparts that are marked with a dark central breast spot and some dark spotting on the sides of the breast and anterior flanks. The face is grayish, with a whitish eye-ring, a white "mustache" stripe, and a white spot between the eye and beak. The song consists of 4 to 7 thin and high notes, with the third note the highest and loudest.

LATILONG STATUS

	V	
	V	

	s	s	
	s	M	S
	M	s	S

s	s	s	
S	S	M	s
S	S	S	S

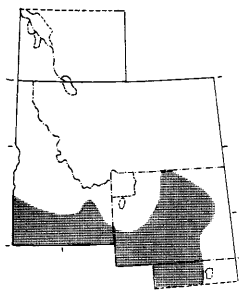
Status: A summer resident in sage areas in the southern parts of the region, north to the Snake River in Idaho and north-central Wyoming. Generally rare or absent from the montane parks, but occasional at Dinosaur N.M., and a probable breeder there.

Habitats and Ecology: The species is closely associated with fairly dense to sparse and scrubby sagebrush vegetation during the breeding season, but also breeds at times in similar semi-desert vegetation types, such as in saltbush. Foraging is done on rather bare ground areas of gravel or alkali soil around the bushes, and escapes are made by fleeing into the shrubbery.

Seasonality: Colorado records are from February 11 to September 30, and Wyoming records are from April 2 to October 25. Colorado egg records are from May 20 to June 25, and there is an egg record from Idaho for July 7.

Comments: Nesting in this species is usually in sagebrush, but at times the birds also place their nests under the bushes. They are often associated with such sage-adapted species as sage grouse, sage thrashers, and Brewer's sparrows.

Suggested Reading: Sumner & Dixon, 1953; Moldenhauer & Wiens, 1970.



Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*)

Identification: Males are immediately identifiable by their mostly black plumage except for large white wing-patches, which are evident both in perching and especially in flying birds. Females are very similar to vesper sparrows but also have white wing markings and also white corners on their tails. Males utter a song-flight while hovering that is a varied mixture of harsher notes, whistles, and trills. Closely associated with grasslands, and usually seen in groups, even during the breeding season.

Status: A summer resident in the eastern half of the region, mainly on plains and foothill grasslands; a rare migrant or vagrant in the montane parks, probably not breeding in any.

Habitats and Ecology: This species favors mixed-grass prairies for nesting, but also can be found in short-grass and tall-grass prairies, as well as sage grasslands, retired croplands, alfalfa fields, and stubble fields. Areas with abundant shrubs are avoided, but fence posts or scattered trees may be used as song posts.

Seasonality: Most Colorado records are from April 19 to October 1, with a few later reports of stragglers; Wyoming records are from April 30 to September 11. In Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from early May until late August. Egg records in Colorado are from May 22 to July 25, and in Wyoming from May 21 to July 8. Alberta and Montana records are from May 15 to August 10.

Comments: This species is of special interest because of the somewhat colonial nesting behavior it exhibits, with nests often placed only 10 to 15 yards apart, and males often singing from adjacent fenceposts.

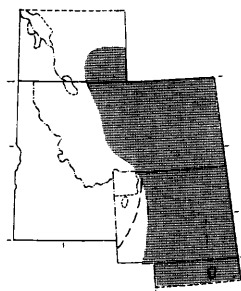
Suggested Reading: Bent, 1968; Butterfield, 1969.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	M	s
M	M		S
V	M	M	M

S	M	s	S
M	M	s	S
s	M	S	S

S	s	S	S
s	S	s	S
s	s	S	S



Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

Identification: This is a drab grassland sparrow without white on the tail, bright colors on the head, or patterned wings. It has a variably yellowish and white (the yellow portion in front of the eye) stripe above the eye, a pale crown stripe, a fairly heavily streaked (but not blotched) breast, and a rather short tail. The male's song is usually begun with two or three *chip* notes, followed by two buzzy trills, and dropping at the end. The birds most resemble vesper sparrows, but lack white outer tail feathers, and also resemble pale song sparrows but have shorter tails and lack a central breast spot.

LATILONG STATUS

s	S	S	s
	S	S	S
S	s	S	s

S	s	s	s
S	S	s	s
S	S	M	S

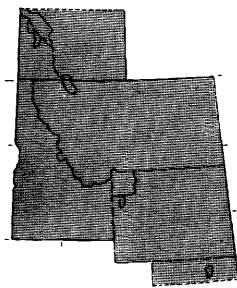
	s	S	M
s	s	s	S
S	S	S	S

Status: A summer resident throughout the region, mainly at lower altitudes, but occurring commonly in all the montane parks and probably breeding in all.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species is closely associated with moist but low-stature prairies, the wet meadow zones around marshes or other wetlands, and the moist and open areas of mountain meadows. A growth of dense ground cover, preferably only a few inches tall, with scattered bushes or clumps of taller vegetation for song perches, are typical aspects of nesting habitats. Nests are placed on the ground, under thick herbaceous cover of grasses or sedges, and are usually hidden from above by overhanging leaves.

Seasonality: Colorado records are from March 23 to November 11. In Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from mid- or late April until late September or early October. Colorado egg records are from June 7 to July 12, and in Wyoming and Montana the records extend from June 1 to July 18, with hatched young observed as early as June 9.

Suggested Reading: Dixon, 1978; Wiens, 1973; Welsh, 1975; Potter, 1972.



Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*)

Identification: This grassland sparrow rather closely resembles the savannah sparrow, especially in its short tail, spotted breast, and pale-striped crown, but the breast spotting is more restricted and necklace-like, the crown is distinctly tinted with golden buff, and the stripe above the eye is also distinctly buffy throughout rather than yellowish in front and white posteriorly. The male's song consists of about three preliminary notes that are followed by a lower pitched trill.

Status: A summer resident in grasslands of eastern Alberta and northeastern Montana, and a migrant east of the mountains farther south. Reported in the montane parks only as a vagrant.

Habitats and Ecology: Closely associated during the breeding season with native prairie areas, including ungrazed or lightly grazed mixed-grass prairies, wet meadows, and various disturbance habitats such as hayfields, stubble fields, and retired croplands. A dense but low vegetation over the soil and a few scattered shrubs for singing posts seem to be desirable aspects of the habitat.

Seasonality: Colorado records extend from April 29 to May 20, and from August 23 to December 26. In Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from the middle of May until early September. Egg records from Montana and Alberta extend from June 9 to July 22. Single-brooded.

Comments: This is one of the prairie endemics associated with the northern grasslands of North America, with a somewhat similar breeding range as those of the LeConte's sparrow and sharp-tailed sparrow, both of which are more associated with wetter habitats.

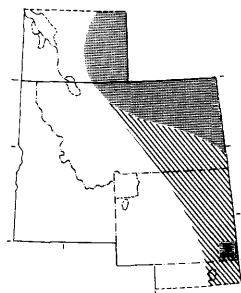
Suggested Reading: Cartwright et al., 1937; Bent, 1968.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	s	s
			s
V	M		

			?
		M	M

			s
			M



Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*)

Identification: Grasshopper sparrows are among the smallest and plainest of the grassland sparrows, with plain buffy breasts (somewhat striped in juveniles), a pale crown stripe, a short and unmarked tail, and a pale, somewhat yellowish face with a contrasting and "beady" dark eye. The male's "song" is a grasshopper-like buzzy trill, sometimes preceded by two or more tick notes.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	s	
	S	?	M
S			

s		s	s
?	S	M	M
	M	M	S

		S	s
			M
V	s	M	M

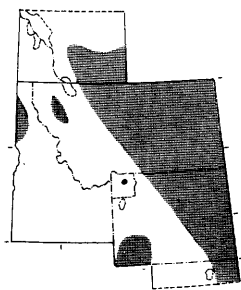
Status: A local summer resident, mainly at lower altitudes, in grasslands throughout the region. Generally absent from the montane parks except as a vagrant, but reported as a rare breeder at Yellowstone N.P.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species is mostly associated with mixed-grass prairies, but also occurs in short-grass and tall-grass areas, as well as on sage grasslands and disturbed grasslands such as hayfields, stubble fields, and retired croplands. Mountain meadows are not used, nor are grassland areas that have largely grown up to shrubs.

Seasonality: Colorado records extend from April 21 to November 30. In Wyoming the records are from May 18 to September 17, while in Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from early May to early September. Records of active nests in Colorado are from late June to July 28, while in Montana there are nesting records from June 10 to July 27.

Comments: Except when males are actively singing, grasshopper sparrows are unlikely to be seen, as they are prone to hide in grassy cover rather than flush, and when flushed fly but a short distance before landing in the grasses again.

Suggested Reading: Tromantano, 1971; Wiens, 1973; Smith, 1963.



LeConte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

Identification: This grassland sparrow has the same small size, short tail, and rather flat-headed shape of the grasshopper sparrow, but has a slightly streaked and buffy-yellow breast, a more nearly whitish central crown stripe, and especially a more golden-yellow head except from grayish ear coverts, making it the most distinctly yellow-faced of the regional sparrows. The male's song is an insect-like, buzzy two- or three-parted hissing similar to that of a grasshopper sparrow.

Status: A local summer resident in southeastern Alberta east of the mountains. Known breeding in Montana is limited to the Kalispell latilong (Camas Creek, Flathead County), but may also occur in the Browning latilong and perhaps others. Rare during summer in Glacier N.P. and breeding there is unproven, as is also true of Watertown Lakes N.P.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding in this species is largely limited to hummocky bogs with alder or willows present, but it also nests in the wet meadows around prairie ponds or marshes, in moist tall-grass prairies, and in moist hayfields or retired croplands. A favorite nesting cover is cordgrass (*Spartina*); usually the nest is on a dry hummock surrounded by dense grass or a shrub.

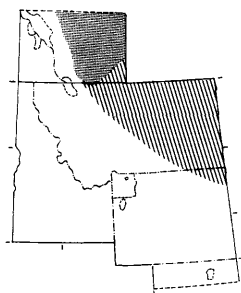
Seasonality: In Montana these birds are usually present from at least early June (probably earlier) until early October. In Alberta they normally arrive about the middle of May, and migrate south in early September. Egg records for Montana and Alberta extend from June 6 to July 15, and in Saskatchewan and Manitoba there are egg records from June 4 to 21.

Comments: This attractive but elusive wetlands sparrow is best located by its "song," which is easily confused with that of a grasshopper sparrow but is even briefer, weaker, and more buzzy.

Suggested Reading: Murray, 1969; Bent, 1968.

LATILONG STATUS

	S	s	
V	M		
			V



Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*)

Identification: This is a fairly large and long-tailed sparrow that closely resembles a song sparrow, but has a more rusty-brown tint to its tail and wings, a less heavily streaked and more grayish head coloration, and (in our region at least) a more uniformly brownish to grayish upper back, without blackish streaking. The male's song is highly melodious, and usually begins with a single introductory whistled note, followed by a series of trills and slurs.

LATILONG STATUS

s	S	S	
?	s	S	s
S	s	s	s

s	s		M
s	S	s	M
S	S	M	

		M	
M	s	M	M
	s	s	S

Status: A summer resident in wooded areas almost throughout the region; present and variably common in all the montane parks, and probably breeding in all.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season dense brushy thickets, and the brushy margins of thick forests, are the favored habitats. Riparian thickets of willows or alders, alder clumps on mountain slopes, and the twisted and stunted conifers near timberline all serve to attract this species. Thickets that provide sufficient space underneath for ground foraging, and have a carpet of leaves and litter for scratching towhee-like for food, are particularly favored.

Seasonality: In Colorado the species is locally resident throughout the year. In Montana the birds are usually present from early April to mid-October. In Idaho it has been reported from March 8 to October 8, and in Alberta it is usually present from mid-April until late October. In Colorado there are egg records from June 8 to 28, and in Idaho young out of the nest have been noted as early as mid-May.

Comments: The fox sparrows of the Rocky Mountains are a good deal less rusty brown than their eastern counterparts, and might easily be taken for a different species by persons unfamiliar with these variations.

Suggested Reading: Linsdale, 1928; Threlfall & Blacquiére, 1982.



Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)

Identification: This abundant sparrow is recognized by its heavily streaked brown and white breast; the streaks form a large central spot in the middle of the breast, and by the long tail that is pumped up and down while the bird is in flight. The head is marked with dark brown, grayish, and white, and the upper back is also streaked with blackish brown. Young birds are less heavily streaked on the breast and lack a definite breast spot. The male's song begins with three introductory whistles, which are followed by a musical trilled series of notes that tend to drop in pitch.

Status: A summer or permanent resident in suitable habitats throughout the region; present in all the montane parks and probably breeding in all.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding habitats include such woodland edge types as the brushy margins of forest openings, the edges of ponds or lakes, shelterbelts, farmsteads, coulees on prairies, aspen groves, and the like. Foraging occurs mostly on the ground, both in open areas and leaf-covered ones, where the birds scratch to expose foods.

Seasonality: Resident in Colorado, and also largely resident in Wyoming, although migration peaks are evident in March and October. Some wintering also occurs in Montana, while in central Alberta the birds are seasonal, arriving in mid-April and usually not remaining past mid-October. Colorado egg records are from May 24 to July 2, and in Montana and Wyoming there are egg records from June 1 to 22. Alberta egg records extend from May 18 to July 28, with a peak in late May and early June.

Comments: Early studies by M. M. Nice on territoriality and life history of this species provided some of the best information available even today on the biology of any North American songbird; her classic studies are models of careful observation.

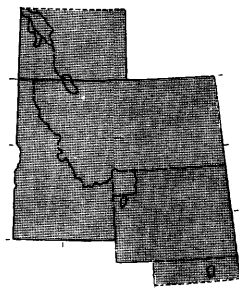
Suggested Reading: Nice, 1937, 1943; Knapton, 1974.

LATILONG STATUS

R	R	R	s
s	R	R	s
R	R	R	R

r	R	r	R
s	R	M	r
S	R	r	R

r	r	R	r
M	r	R	R
S	R	R	R



Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolnii*)

Identification: This sparrow somewhat resembles an immature song sparrow, with a lightly streaked breast, a long tail, and somewhat grayish cheeks. However, it is distinctive in that the upper breast is buffy rather than white, the central crown stripe, "eyebrow" stripe, and sides of the neck are more extensively and uniformly gray, and the entire plumage seems more grayish in tone. The birds are typically much more furtive than are song sparrows, and pump their tails in flight less strongly.

LATILONG STATUS

s	S	s	
	M	s	s
S	S	s	M

s	s	s	s
s	S	s	S
s	S	S	S

S	S	s	s
M	S	S	S
M	M	S	S

Status: A summer resident in wooded areas almost throughout the region, from lowland bogs to alpine timberline. Present in all the montane parks, and probably breeding in all of them.

Habitats and Ecology: In Alberta this species is mainly associated with marshes and bogs having extensive growths of willows and alders. Willow thickets along slow-moving streams are also utilized, as are the brushy borders of muskeg pools. In mountainous areas the birds favor boggy mountain meadows, especially those fringed with willow thickets and supporting a fairly tall growth of grasses, sedges, and herbs.

Seasonality: In Colorado this species is locally resident. In Wyoming the records extend from April 8 to October 20, with peaks in May and September. In Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from early or mid-May to the end of September. Active nests in Colorado have been observed from June 15 to July 1, and in Montana and Wyoming there are egg records from June 16 to 22, and young reported from June 20 to July 15. Alberta egg records are from May 27 to June 28.

Suggested Reading: Grinnell & Storer, 1924; Bent, 1968.



Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*)

Identification: This is one of the few sparrows likely to be seen in swamps and marshy areas; it has a similar color pattern to the chipping sparrow, with a bright rusty crown patch and a dark eye-stripe, but the "eyebrow" is gray rather than white, and the relatively short tail and wings are distinctly chestnut-brown in tone. The male sings from cattails or other marsh vegetation, and its song is a loud series of metallic *weet* notes.

Status: A local summer resident in Alberta east of the mountains and south to the vicinity of Red Deer. Generally absent from the montane parks, but a rare visitor (May, June, September) to Banff N.P.

Habitats and Ecology: This species is strongly associated with wetlands during the breeding season, especially areas that are well grown with cattails, phragmites, shrubs, or small trees. In Alberta muskeg-like woodland swamps that have willows, alders, birches, and sometimes black spruces are favored areas, but the birds also nest in dense shrubbery along woodland streams or pools.

Seasonality: In Colorado this is a locally wintering migrant, with records from August 22 to May 19. In Montana it has been noted as an early spring (February) and fall (August to November) migrant. In Alberta it usually arrives in late April or early May, and remains until late September. Specific breeding records are not available for the region.

Comments: Swamp sparrows build their nests among the stalks of cattails or sometimes in flooded bushes, often in water up to two feet deep, and in company with marsh wrens and similar water-loving species.

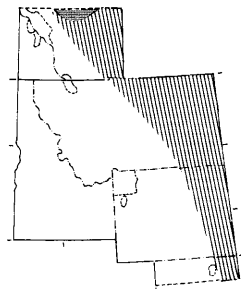
Suggested Reading: Bent, 1968.

LATILONG STATUS

	?		
	V	V	V

			?
	V		V

	V	V	
			M



White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)

Identification: These are rather large sparrows with white throats, white crown and "eyebrow" stripes that are separated by a black line, and a somewhat golden tinge to the area between the eye and the beak. Immature and fall-plumaged birds have far less defined head markings, but the throat is white even in fairly young birds. Males have a distinctive song that (in the Rocky Mountain area) can be transcribed as, "Oh Canada, sweet, sweet Canada."

LATILONG STATUS

M	W		
	M		?
V	M	W	M

W	W		W
	M		M
	M	M	

M		M	M
		M	M
M			W

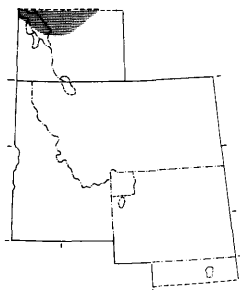
Status: A local summer resident in northern and central Alberta south as far as Banff N.P. and the area west of Calgary. Elsewhere a migrant or overwintering visitor throughout the region, but rarer in the mountains and generally only a vagrant in the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: In Alberta this species nests in deciduous and mixed woodlands, particularly woodland edge habitats such as lake shores, river banks, old burned areas, logged areas, and roadsides. Outside the breeding season the birds are often observed foraging on the ground in somewhat brushy situations.

Seasonality: In Colorado these birds are wintering migrants, with records from September 23 to May 19. In Wyoming and Montana the records extend from May 6 to mid-June, and from August to mid-November. In Alberta the birds usually arrive in early May, and remain until well into October. Alberta egg records are from June 1 to 19.

Comments: This species often occurs in company with other "crowned sparrows" while on migration and on wintering areas, and the male's song can often be heard well before the birds arrive on their northern breeding grounds.

Suggested Reading: Fisher & Gills, 1946; Wythe, 1938; Rees, 1973.



Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*)

Identification: This large member of the sparrow group has a unique black and gold crown (the gold surrounded by black), and an otherwise rather uniformly gray face, throat, and breast. Immature birds have less colorful head patterns and closely resemble young white-throated sparrows, but lack white throats and never have breast streaking. The male's call is a clear whistled "Oh dear me," in a descending and rather mournful way.

Status: A local summer resident in the Alberta mountains south to Banff N.P., and a migrant from that area south to northern Idaho. Elsewhere in the region only a vagrant.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season these birds seek out low coniferous or deciduous growth at or even above tree line. Thickets of stunted willows, alders, and conifers growing in high meadows or on scree slopes provide the nesting habitats; the nests are placed in low woody vegetation or on the ground. While on migration and on wintering areas the birds prefer interrupted brushlands, where leafy litter provides for ground-foraging opportunities.

Seasonality: Idaho records extend from May 6 to October 6. In southern Alberta the birds usually arrive the second week of May, and they have been recorded as late as October 13. In Banff and Jasper parks nestlings have been noted from June 26 to July 15, and newly fledged young seen as late as August 4. British Columbia egg records extend from June 19 to July 28.

Comments: These birds are the only "crowned" sparrows that are restricted to the western slope of the Rocky Mountains, with a migration to and from the Pacific coast, rather than directly southward as in the other species of this group.

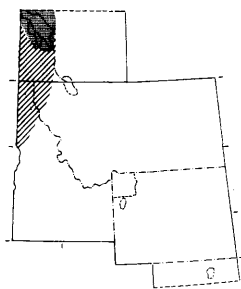
Suggested Reading: Davis, 1973; Robertson, 1957.

LATILONG STATUS

?		?	
?			
		V	

?			

			V



White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*)

Identification: Breeding adults of this species have strongly striped black and white crowns, with a grayish throat. Unlike the similar white-throated sparrow there is no yellow in front of the eye, and the beak is mostly pink to yellowish, rather than blackish, the latter trait being useful for separating the immatures of the two species, which are more similar than adults. The male's song begins with notes similar to those of the white-throated sparrow, but ends in buzzy trills of varying pitch and loudness.

LATILONG STATUS

s	s	S	s
s	s	s	s
S	s	s	s

S	S	S	s
S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S

S	s	S	s
M	S	S	S
S	R	R	R

Status: A summer or permanent resident in suitable habitats almost throughout the region, including the montane parks, where it is a common to abundant breeder in all.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species occurs in riparian brush, in coniferous forests with well developed wooded undergrowth, in aspen groves with a shrubby understory, in willow thickets around beaver ponds or marshes, and on mountain meadows with alders or similar low and thick shrubbery, often to timberline. Damp, grass-covered ground and nearby shrubbery seem to be important habitat components. On migration and during winter the birds are found in a variety of habitats that offer a combination of brushy cover and open ground for foraging.

Seasonality: In Colorado this species is locally a year-round resident. In Wyoming the records extend from April 18 to October 26, and in Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from late April to early or mid-October. Wyoming and Colorado egg records are from June 1 to July 19, and in Montana active nests have been seen from June 24 to August 8. Alberta egg records are from June 11 to July 6.

Suggested Reading: Blanchard, 1941; Blanchard & Erickson, 1949; Morton et al., 1972.



Harris' Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)

Identification: This is the largest of the sparrows, and the only sparrow that has an unbroken black breast, throat, anterior face, and crown, as well as a pinkish bill. During fall and winter the amount of black on the face, crown, and breast varies greatly, and at that time the pinkish bill, large size, and variably spotted or streaked sides serve to identify the species. The male's song is a series of from 2 to 4 long, spaced, and quavering whistles on the same or slightly different pitch.

Status: A seasonal or overwintering migrant over much of the region, but far more common on the plains east of the mountains, and rare or accidental in the montane parks. The nearest breeding areas are in eastern and northeastern Saskatchewan.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species is associated with the edges of the spruce forest adjoining arctic tundra, especially rather damp and open areas where the trees are low and scattered. Outside the breeding season the birds are much like the other "crowned" sparrows, foraging on the ground in areas close to thickets, which are used for protection. At that time hedgerows, orchards, farmsteads, riparian thickets, woodland edges, and even sagebrush and desert scrub habitats are often utilized.

Seasonality: Overwintering occurs in Colorado, with records extending from September 29 to May 23. In Wyoming the records extend from October 7 to May 14, with peaks in November and May. Montana and Alberta records are mainly for fall, from September to early November; the few spring records are mostly for May.

Comments: This is one of the last species of North American birds for which the nesting site was described; the first nests were discovered in 1931 near Churchill, Manitoba. The migration corridor is relatively narrow, and is centered on the Great Plains.

Suggested Reading: Semple & Sutton, 1932; Rowher et al. 1981

LATILONG STATUS

M	W	M	
	W	W	
V	W	W	M

W	W		W
M	W	W	
	W	W	

W		W	W
			W
W	W		W



Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*)

Identification: This rather variable sparrow ranges from being mostly grayish or "slate-colored" above to almost entirely black on the head and upper breast, with a more brownish back and sides, and generally white underparts. In all, however, the outer tail feathers are white and the central ones blackish. All of these forms occurring in the Rocky Mountains are now considered a single species. Males have a song that is a musical trill all on the same pitch, something like that of a chip-ping sparrow.

LATILONG STATUS

R	R	R	
r	R	R	S
R	R	R	R

R	R	r	s
S	R	R	M
M	R	R	R

r	R	R	R
M	R	R	R
R	r	R	R

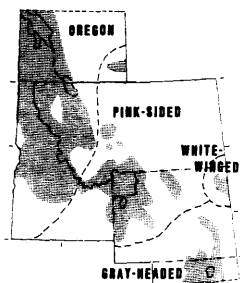
Status: A seasonal or permanent resident in wooded habitats throughout the region, including all the montane parks, where the species is a common to abundant breeder. Winters at lower altitudes, including the entire plains region.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding habitats include open coniferous forests, especially pinyon-juniper woodlands, ponderosa pine forests, mixed forests, aspen woods, forest clearings, the edges of muskegs or jackpine-covered ridges, and similar habitats that offer ground-foraging and ground-nesting opportunities as well as tree or brush cover for escape.

Seasonality: A year-round resident almost throughout the entire region, although some seasonal movements do occur. Colorado nest records are from May 29 to August 1, while Wyoming egg records are from June 11 to July 27. Montana egg records are from late April to July 19, and Alberta egg records are from May 16 to July 10.

Comments: The juncos of this region include "white-winged" forms in the Black Hills region and surrounding areas, the "Oregon juncos" breeding east to northwestern Montana, the "pink-sided" forms breeding in the interior from Alberta to Wyoming, and the "gray-headed" forms occurring north to northern Colorado and adjacent western Wyoming.

Suggested Reading: Hostetter, 1961; Sabine, 1959; White, 1973; Williams, 1942.



McCown's Longspur (*Calcarius mccownii*)

Identification: Males of this short-grass plains sparrow have a pale grayish head and underparts, except for a black breast-band and crown, and a tail that is mostly white, with a T-shaped black pattern produced by central and terminal banding. Females are much more sparrow-like, but also have a white tail with a black T-shaped pattern along the middle and tip. Males have a flight song uttered during a parachuting, slow descent. In the winter the male is less colorful and more female-like, with the black breast and crown markings partially obscured.

Status: A summer resident on the plains east of the mountains from southern Alberta southward through the region. A rare migrant in the mountains, and only a vagrant in the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species is mostly limited to short-grass prairies and grazed mixed-grass prairies, but also breeds to some degree on stubble fields or newly sprouting grainfields. While on migration and during the winter period the birds occur on open grasslands, low sage prairies, mountain meadows, and similar open habitats.

Seasonality: Colorado records are primarily from early March to mid-October, although a few birds often remain through the winter. Wyoming records are from April 6 to October 27, and in Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from early or mid-April to middle or late October. Colorado egg records are from May 23 to July 11, and Wyoming egg records extend from May 17 to August 8. Montana egg records are from May 9 to July 28.

Comments: This is one of the two plains-nesting longspurs, and both sometimes occur on the same areas.

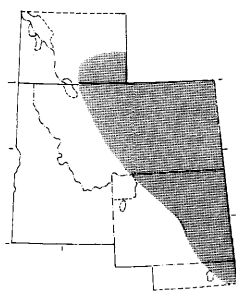
Suggested Reading: Mickey, 1943; Bent, 1968.

LATILONG STATUS

		s	s
			S

s		s	?
	M		s
	M		M

	S	s	M
M	M	s	S
M		M	M



Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*)

Identification: Males of this tundra- and grassland-adapted species are the only sparrows with a black breast, throat, and anterior face color, and with a chestnut nape. In the winter period, when the birds are most abundant in the region, males have much lighter underparts and only a grayish breastband similar to that of a McCown's longspur, and a less bright chestnut nape. However, both sexes have white only on their outer tail feathers, and this feature is most useful for recognizing females, which are nearly identical to those of other longspurs. A three-syllable rattling call is often uttered by migrating birds, especially in flight.

LATILONG STATUS

	W	M	
			M
	M	M	M

W	M	M	M
	W	W	W
	W		W

		W	W
			W
	V	W	W

Status: A seasonal or overwintering migrant over much of the region, primarily at lower altitudes and in grassland habitats. Generally rare to accidental in the montane parks. The nearest breeding area is in northeastern Manitoba, along the coast of Hudson Bay.

Habitats and Ecology: Associated during the breeding season with arctic tundra. While on migration and on wintering areas they are typically found on open habitats, such as snow-covered grasslands, mud flats, and the like. Shortly after their arrival in fall the birds often are found in the lower mountain parks, but as the weather becomes more severe the birds move to the foothills and plains, where they usually occur in fairly large flocks.

Seasonality: Colorado records extend from September 18 to April 1. In Wyoming the records range from October 7 to April 3. In Montana the birds are usually present from September to April, with variable abundance during winter. They usually arrive in southern Alberta about mid-September, and have usually passed southward by the end of October. They return in early April, and remain until about the first of May.

Suggested Reading: Sutton & Parmelee, 1955; Sensteadt & MacLean, 1979.



Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*)

Identification: During the breeding season males have a distinctive black breast and underparts, and a bright chestnut nape patch. At other seasons the black areas are obscured by gray, and the nape is only slightly chestnut-colored. At all seasons birds of both sexes can be identified by the mostly white tail with a black terminal triangle. Otherwise females are extremely similar to those of the other longspur species. The call is a two-syllable *kittle* repeated up to 5 times, and it also has a weak rattling call of 3 to 5 syllables. The flight song, given on the nesting grounds, is similar to that of a western meadowlark.

Status: A summer resident on the plains areas east of the mountains over most of the region, and a local migrant somewhat farther west of the breeding range, but generally uncommon to accidental in the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: Primary breeding habitats consist of grazed or hayed mixed-grass prairies, short-grass plains, the meadow zones of salt grass around alkaline ponds or lakes, mowed hayfields, heavily grazed pastures, and the like. Outside the breeding season the birds often are found in cultivated fields rich in weed seeds, especially of such species as amaranth.

Seasonality: In Colorado this species is occasionally resident, although most leave the state from mid-October until early April. Wyoming records extend from March 16 to early October. In Montana the birds are usually present from mid-April to late September. Colorado egg records are from May 21 to June 27, while in Montana active nests have been observed from May 6 to the end of July. Alberta egg records are from May 27 to June 11.

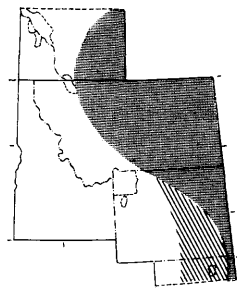
Suggested Reading: Bent, 1968; Moriarty, 1965.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	s	S
			S
V			

s		s	S
		M	M
		M	M

		M	M
		M	s
		M	M



Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)

Identification: Except during the breeding season, both sexes of this species are almost entirely white below and brownish white below, with extensive white patches on the wings and outer tail feathers. No other wintering sparrow of the region has so much white in the plumage as this one. Migrating birds utter a nearly constant twittering while in flight.

LATILONG STATUS

W	W	W	W
M	W	W	M
W	M	W	W

W	M	M	M
W	W	W	W
	W	W	W

W		W	W
	W	W	W
	W	W	W

Status: An overwintering migrant throughout the region, mainly at lower altitudes on grasslands. Generally uncommon to rare in the more southern montane parks, but fairly common in the Canadian parks. The nearest breeding areas are in northern Canada.

Habitats and Ecology: While in the Rocky Mountain region these birds are usually found along snow-free roads, in partially snow-free weedy fields, stubble fields, snow-free hilltops on cultivated lands, and similar areas where grain or weed seeds are likely to be found.

Seasonality: Colorado records are too few to estimate seasonality. In Wyoming the birds are usually present from early November until mid-March, and in Montana the range of dates is from October 26 to May 2, but the birds are mainly present from early November to mid-March. In Alberta they usually arrive in October and are mostly gone by the end of April, with a few stragglers remaining into May.

Comments: These are among the most northerly nesting of all land birds, and also among the most tolerant of winter cold of the small birds of the region.

Suggested Reading: Nethersole-Thompson, 1966; Tinbergen, 1939.

