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12-2011

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Smith's Longspur in Knox County, Nebraska

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Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*) is considered to be an uncommon casual spring migrant and is limited in spring to the southeast corner of Nebraska (Sharpe et al. 2001). The following provides the only known record for Smith's Longspur for spring in northeast Nebraska.

At sunrise on 02 April 2011, I was standing outside my vehicle watching a group of Whooping Cranes (*Grus americana*) east of Creighton, Nebraska (.5 miles west of 871st Rd & 536 Ave). I brought along my iPod player (with iMainGo speakers) and was broadcasting the Stokes recording of Smith's Longspur. I had heard longspur rattles the evening before as I was watching the cranes and was hoping for a Smith's Longspur. The iPod was playing for about 10 minutes when I heard the rattle of a longspur approaching from the south. I turned and saw a bird coming towards my vehicle in response to the call. It flew within 10 yards of my truck and made about 5 circles around the vehicle, rattling several times.

It was difficult finding the bird in my binoculars as it circled the truck, but even with the naked eye I could see the buffy-orange underparts of a Smith's Longspur. The tail was black with white outer feathers, and the head looked dark with a bit of white. The wings from underneath appeared translucent. After about five times around the truck, the bird dropped quickly into a weedy fence row and I was unable to relocate it. The above-mentioned field marks and vocalizations led me to identify the bird as a male Smith's Longspur.

I believe this may be a great method for detecting migrating Smith's Longspurs in spring.

LITERATURE CITED:

Sharpe RS, Silcock WR, Jorgensen JG. 2001. Birds of Nebraska: their distribution and temporal occurrence. Lincoln (NE): The University of Nebraska Press.