

remarkable fact — perhaps a joke on us — that a bird which we have classed outside the ranks of the singers proper should deliver a song that judged by our own musical standards takes higher technical rank than any other known example of bird music.

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## THE STATUS OF *MELOSPIZA LINCOLNI STRIATA* BREWSTER.

BY JOSEPH GRINNELL.

### *Melospiza lincolni striata* Brewster.

*Melospiza lincolni striata* BREWSTER, Auk VI, April 1889, 89 (original description, based on September birds from Comox, B. C.). — CHAPMAN, Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist. III, 1890, 148 ("standing doubtful"). — RHOADS, Auk X, Jan. 1893, 21 (characters not considered good). — RHOADS, Proc. Ac. Nat. Sci. Phil., 1893, 51 (characters considered "slight and variable"). — MCGREGOR, Condor, II, March 1900, 35 (skins from Redwood City, San Geronimo, St. Helena, and Battle Creek, California). — GRINNELL, Pac. Coast Avif. No. 3, June 1902, 57 (winter visitant in California "south through the coast belt to the San Francisco Bay region"). — BREWSTER, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., XLI, Sept. 1902, 150 (specimen from Victoria Mountains, L. Cal.; "I see no reason why the existence of intermediate specimens, such as those to which Mr. Chapman calls attention, should be necessarily prejudicial to the recognition of the form as a subspecies, although its standing cannot perhaps be regarded as assured until its breeding-grounds are definitely known, and fully mature birds in summer plumage have been examined.").

*Melospiza lincolnii* GRINNELL, Auk, XV, April 1898, 128 (found breeding at Sitka, Alaska, and a juvenile one-third grown secured; Mr. Brewster comments on an adult bird submitted to him as follows: "Your Lincoln's Sparrow from Sitka, Alaska, agrees closely with my types of *M. c.* [sic] *striata* in respect to the streaking of the upper parts, but it is less olivaceous and the buffy is less rich and deep. Making due allowance for seasonal and individual variation, I should think it not improbable that it may represent the breeding plumage of *striata*, but it would be of course unsafe to assume this positively on the strength of a single specimen." [Mr. Brewster's wise but cautiously-made conjectures have proven correct]). — RIDGWAY, Bds. N. & Mid. Am. I, 1901, 382 (*striata* doubtfully synonymized under *Melospiza lincolnii*).



As shown by the above references, the validity of a Northwest Coast race of *Melospiza lincolni* has been as often doubted as affirmed. Ever since I began the systematic study of west-coast birds, this question has particularly interested me, and I have seldom neglected an opportunity to secure relevant specimens or information. As a result there is now at hand material which clearly demonstrates the existence of the form *striata*, as described fifteen years ago by Mr. Brewster.

It seems that heretofore breeding birds have been wanting; but fine specimens, now available, from Sitka and Wrangel show the summer habitat of *striata* to be the Sitkan District, of Nelson, in southeastern Alaska. A sharply defined winter habitat, also, is constituted by the humid coast belt of California (San Francisco Bay Region, Santa Cruz and Northern Humid Coast Districts, as mapped in Pacific Coast Avifauna Number 3). *Melospiza lincolni lincolni* occurs commonly in other parts of California in winter and especially during migration, and a few breed in the Sierras. But *Melospiza lincolni striata* seems to be the only form wintering in the above indicated habitat, and does not regularly move beyond its limits. These statements are drawn from about forty-five skins of both forms examined from California. Mr. McGregor has recorded a specimen of *striata* from Battle Creek, while Mr. Brewster refers a single skin from Lower California to the same form; but these may be considered exceptional. I may here remark that I have so far failed to find a really satisfactory "intermediate," though alleged cases have been recorded. Mr. Brewster's type was a male in fresh fall plumage (Comox, B. C., Sept. 8). His painstaking and detailed description applies precisely to a specimen (♂, No. 5016 Coll. J. G.; Pacific Grove, Monterey County, California; Dec. 26, 1901) which is selected as being representative of my winter series. The summer plumage of *striata* (♂ ad. No. 5341 Coll. J. G.; Wrangel, Alaska; June 25, 1902; collected by M. P. Anderson) differs from the winter plumage in greater conspicuousness of black markings, and in paleness and restriction of buffy suffusion, both evidently due to abrasion and slight fading. Compared with *lincolni* of equally worn plumage the upper parts of summer *striata* are much more broadly black-streaked, the olive edgings worn to such narrowness that the black predominates;



pectoral and lateral streaking also broader; central tail-feathers with much broader shaft-streaks. Briefly, color-differences are pronounced, and as far as present material goes, constant at all seasons.

The small size of *striata* is an especially good character, as shown by the accompanying table of measurements (in inches) made from selected specimens. Decreased wing and tail lengths seem to be an accompaniment of shorter yearly migration, here, as in *Hylocichla guttata verecunda*, *Regulus calendula grinnelli* and *Hesperocichla nœvia nœvia*, of corresponding summer and winter distribution.

*Melospiza lincolni striata.*

	No. Coll. J. G.			Wing	Tail
♂	4616	Palo Alto, Cal.	March 29, '01	2.25	2.25
♂	5016	Pacific Grove, Cal.	Dec. 26, '01	2.37	2.37
♂	5341	Wrangel, Alaska	June 25, '02	2.35	2.35
♀	4551	Palo Alto, Cal.	Jan. 19, '01	2.22	2.28
♀	4552	" " "	" " "	2.23	2.35
♀	4989	" " "	Dec. 20, '01	2.25	2.28
♀	3641	San Geronimo, Cal.	Sept. 15, '98	2.26	2.35
♀	1179	Sitka, Alaska	June 25, '96	2.22	2.22

*Melospiza lincolni lincolni.*

	Wing	Tail
Average of 7 ♂ ♂ from So. Cal. . . . .	2.50	2.52
Average of 5 ♀ ♀ from So. Cal. . . . .	2.40	2.42

## GENERAL NOTES.

**Holbøll's Grebe at Niagara Falls.**—While on a trip to Niagara Falls this past fall (Sept. 20, 1903) in company with Mr. Frederick C. Hubel, I picked up a fine specimen (ad. ♂) of Holbøll's Grebe (*Colymbus holbøllii*) on the Canadian side just opposite the American Falls. Upon questioning the proprietor of a curio shop, a few feet from the spot, he informed me that he shot the bird early that same morning swimming out in the



Grinnell, Joseph. 1904. "The Status of *Melospiza lincolni striata* Brewster." *The Auk* 21, 274–276. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4070051>.

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