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THE WESTERN FIELD SPARROW (*SPIZELLA*  
*PUSILLA ARENACEA* CHADBOURNE).

BY CHARLES W. RICHMOND.

*Plate III.*

THE WESTERN FIELD SPARROW, illustrated in this number of 'The Auk,' was first brought to the attention of ornithologists in 1886<sup>1</sup> by Dr. Arthur P. Chadbourne, who characterized it from two late autumn specimens collected at Laredo, Texas. Nothing was then known of the breeding plumage or summer range of the bird, but two years later Dr. C. Hart Merriam described<sup>2</sup> three breeding specimens, all males, obtained by Mr. Vernon Bailey at Fort Pierre, South Dakota, and Valentine, Nebraska. These examples were found to be so unlike the eastern Field Sparrow that Dr. Merriam was led to consider the western form specifically distinct and designated it *Spizella arenacea* (Chadbourne). Subsequent material, however, proved it to be of only subspecific importance, and it has since held this rank in the 'Check-List.'

The differences between the Western Field Sparrow and the typical eastern bird are chiefly in the greater dimensions and

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<sup>1</sup> Auk, III, April, 1886, 248-249.

<sup>2</sup> Auk, V, Oct., 1888, 402-403.

uniformly paler color of the former, with broader gray streak on the crown and almost completely gray ear-coverts. The tail is much longer, and the wings usually so, although in some individuals of the eastern bird this measurement nearly equals that of *arenacea*. The bill, as a rule, is somewhat larger in the western form, but not invariably so. The measurements of a typical western specimen and of an average eastern bird are given below:

	Wing.	Tail.	Tarsus.	Culmen.
<i>Spizella pusilla</i> . . . .	2.45	2.35	.65	.33
<i>Spizella p. arenacea</i> . . .	2.70	2.90	.72	.34

Texan and Mississippi Valley specimens of the Field Sparrow have a tendency to longer wings and tails than the eastern birds, but frequently without any corresponding paleness of plumage. Some of the Texan birds are, however, appreciably paler, but not enough so, and also too small, to refer to *arenacea*.

Worthen's Sparrow differs from both forms of the Field Sparrow in the total absence of a mesial gray crown stripe and brown post-ocular stripe, as well as in some minor details. The wings and tail are shorter than in *arenacea*, but longer than in average *pusilla*.

The geographical range of the Western Field Sparrow as defined in the last edition of the A. O. U. 'Check-List' is "Great Plains, from Texas to Montana and Dakota. Casual at New Orleans, La." The Louisiana specimen was shot in the winter of 1890-91, and was reported by Mr. Chapman to be a typical one (Auk, 1891, 318). Notwithstanding the rather extensive distribution of this form, little appears to be known of its habits or nesting, although we may safely consider them to be quite like those of the Field Sparrow. Specimens of the bird itself are not by any means numerous in collections.

Mr. J. P. N [orris]. has described eggs from Texas purporting to be those of this form<sup>1</sup> as indistinguishable "in size and general appearance" from those of *Spizella pusilla*. This record formed the basis of Mr. Davie's reference in his 'Nests and Eggs.' It

<sup>1</sup> Ornithologist and Oölogist, XIII, Dec. 1888, 188.

is almost certain, however, that true *arenacea* does not breed in Texas, and the eggs mentioned by Mr. Norris were doubtless those of the common Field Sparrow or of the slightly paler but equally small bird resident in some portions of that State. The eggs of true *arenacea* will probably be found to average somewhat larger than those of the eastern bird.

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## NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF FORT SHERMAN, IDAHO.

BY J. C. MERRILL,

*Major and Surgeon, U. S. Army.*

FORT SHERMAN is situated in the northern part of the State of Idaho in latitude  $47^{\circ} 40'$ , longitude  $116^{\circ} 30'$ , and at an elevation of a little less than two thousand feet. The Idaho-Montana boundary line, formed here by the divide of the Bitterroot Mountains, is about seventy miles distant due east; that of Idaho-Washington is about eleven miles west, and that of British Columbia about ninety-five miles north.

The fort is on the northern shore of the northwestern arm of Lake Coeur d'Alène, in the angle between the lake shore and the head of Spokane River, which is the outlet of the lake and empties into the Columbia about seventy-five miles north of west from the lake. The latter is nearly twenty-four miles in length, comparatively narrow in most parts, and its general trend is north and south. The Coeur d'Alène Mountains, north and east of the lake, are a continuation of the Bitterroot range; in them arises the Coeur d'Alène River, flowing into the southern end of the lake, and, still further south, the St. Joseph River forms the other principal tributary. The hills—they can hardly be called mountains—that encircle the lake are covered to the shores with a thick growth of pines and firs of two or three species, with tamaracks scattered throughout. Where streams flow into the lake there are often flats of a few acres in extent, subject to overflow in the



Richmond, Charles Wallace. 1897. "The Western Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla arenacea* Chadbourne." *The Auk* 14, 345–347. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4068467>

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