



Sparrow Workshop – 2021

What to expect?

- The workshops will be given live via Zoom but will be recorded and you will have access to the s if you miss the live class.
- We will setup a private Facebook site (or similar) where we can share comments, ask questions, upload photos for discussion, and maybe even share some “wins” as your sparrow identification skills grow.
- We will cover North American Sparrows, and House Sparrows, with a nod to the longspurs and Old-World buntings. We will take a continent-wide perspective with a particular focus on the West Coast. Anyone anywhere in the US or Canada will find this workshop topical.
- More detail will be given to widespread species, less so to restricted range or less commonly seen species.

Workshop - Sparrow Identification and biology

Four one-hour classes. \$125.

Mon and Thurs for two weeks.

Dates: Mon Jan 18, Thurs Jan 21; Mon Jan 25, Jan 28, 2021. 6 pm Pacific time.

This workshop will be a basis to understand a bit about the biology, evolutionary history, migration and behavior of our sparrow fauna. However, the focus will be on field identification, with more time given to species groups that are trickier. Although this is not a bird sound workshop, we will dabble in the vocal aspects of sparrows, particularly those which are of use in identification or which are particularly interesting. Such as the recent song change that is racing through populations of White-throated Sparrows. Apart from the classic field guide, “field mark” approach to identification we will try to short-cut to wholistic ways to identify sparrows by looking at the entire bird, shapes, impression, and facial expression to aid in the identifications. We are lucky to have a really varied set of sparrows in North America, and that they remain with us through much of the winter or move south towards us during this season. Unlike the warblers where most of them are gone in winter, the sparrows are often more abundant and diverse in winter in many spots in the continent, save for the far north. Note that

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Topics we will cover include:

1. General aspects of songbird identification and how it pertains to sparrows in particular.
2. Habitat as a key to aiding in sparrow identification.
3. Evolution and taxonomy with attention to the juncos, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrows, and taxonomic changes that have occurred recently.
4. Migration and wintering biology.
5. Regional dialects, and the use of multiple song types by some species.
6. Structure, shapes and an appreciation of field impressions.
7. Species covered.
 - House Sparrow and Eurasian Tree Sparrow
 - Sparrow like birds that can trip you up – cowbirds, Bobolink, blackbirds etc.
 - *Zonotricha* Sparrows and American Tree Sparrow: White-crowned Sparrow; Golden-crowned Sparrow; Harris's Sparrow; White-throated Sparrow; American Tree Sparrow.
 - Juncos: Dark-eyed Junco; Yellow-eyed Junco
 - Song Sparrow and relatives, Fox and Savannah sparrows: Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow.
 - *Spizella* sparrows – The little skinny ones: Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Black-chinned Sparrow, Field Sparrow.
 - *Peucaea* sparrows: Botteri's Sparrow, Cassin's Sparrow, Bachman's Sparrow
 - Grassland and Marsh sparrows: Grasshopper Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, Saltmarsh Sparrow, Baird's Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Lark Bunting.
 - Desert and Sage sparrows: Rufous-winged Sparrow, Five-striped Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, Sagebrush Sparrow, Bell's Sparrow, Rufous-crowned Sparrow.
 - Brown Towhees and Olive Sparrow: Canyon Towhee, Abert's Towhee, California Towhee, Olive Sparrow.
 - True Towhees: Green-tailed Towhee, Spotted Towhee, Eastern Towhee
 - Longspurs and Snow Buntings (in less detail)
 - Old World Buntings (A cursory look at these vagrants).