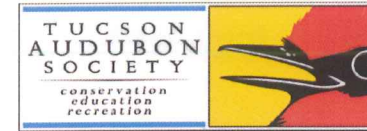


Identifying Sparrow-like Birds in grasslands of Southeastern Arizona

First, taking into account your **surrounding habitat** and **season**, you can often greatly limit the possibilities. Next, inspect the bird's **structure/appearance**, does it appear smaller, chunkier, are the tails and wings long? Along with **behaviors** which are often distinctive to group, this should all help to identify the bird to a genus at this point. Finally, careful inspection of the **plumage** combined with any **vocalizations**, should allow you to confirm its identification to a single species.

Status color codes: "**purple**" are permanent residents, "**red**" are summer breeders, and "**blue**" are winter visitors. Information was compiled from *Homer Hansen 2009* and *Sparrows of the US and Canada 2002* prepared by Tim Helentjaris for Tucson Audubon Society - 2013



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John Hoffman

Genus	Structure/Appearance	Group Behaviors	Preferred Habitats	Species - Common Name	SE AZ Status	Distinguishing Plumage	Vocalizations	Similar
Ammodramus	shorter tails & heavy bills - appear "flat-headed"	can sing from higher perch, but generally stays low & runs when alarmed, consequently very inconspicuous especially Baird's Sp	dry patchy grasslands with few or no shrubs	Grasshopper Sparrow	Com Perm Res	orange head patch & pale median, clear breast & belly with ochre tones	2-3 notes + buzz, insect-like	Sav Sp
			dense plains grasslands	Baird's Sparrow	Rare Win Visitor	warmer, buffy head & two dark ear spots, scaly back, streaks on breast	doesn't sing in winter	Sav Sp
Passerculus	medium size	pure flocks, feeds near ground but flies up when alarmed, conspicuous	open country avoiding denser woodlands	Savannah Sparrow	Com Win Visitor	streaked breast & belly, thin white crown stripe, face often with yellow	chip-like notes + trill	Vesp Sp
Poocetes	medium body but with slightly longer tail	small flocks, double-scratch, flies up when alarmed, dust-bath	grasslands and other open areas	Vesper Sparrow	Com Win Visitor	streaked breast, white outer tail & eye ring, rufous shoulder patch	2 long notes + flute-like trills	Sav Sp
Peucaea	medium-sized sparrows with longer tails Cassin's & Botteri's have heavier bills and appear "flat-headed"	tend to sit low in brush and are inconspicuous and very hard to flush, will drop or fly to low perch when alarmed, show dip when flying,	arid grassland with mesquite	Rufous-winged Sparrow	Com Perm Res	rusty crown/eye line on gray face, dark moustachial stripes, clear breast	2-4 notes + accel series, same tone	Ruf-cr Sp
			tall grass mixed with mesquite, oaks, ocotillo	Botteri's Sparrow	Unc Sum Res, Rare in Win	browner/warmer cast, plain breast/belly/flanks, streaked back	jumbi notes + "bouncing ball"	Cass Sp
			short grass with few low woody shrubs & trees	Cassin's Sparrow	Com Sum Res, Rare in Win	ladder tail, scaled back, streaked flanks on grayer background	trill + 2 short falling notes, "skylarks"	Bott Sp
Aimophila	heavier bill and long tail, appear even larger	sings from high perch but otherwise stays low, prefers to run, responds to pishing	dry rocky hillsides with grassy patches & shrubs	Rufous-crowned Sparrow	Com Perm Res	dark tones, rufous cap, gray face with white eye ring & dark malar stripe	quick gurgling notes, "deer-deer"	Gr-II Towh
Calamospiza	hefty body & bill	large flocks, fly up as group when alarmed	dry grasslands & desert scrub	Lark Bunting	Com Win Visitor	white wing patch, blackish lores in males, heavily streaked,	rich warbling notes + trills	Vesp Sp
Calcaricus	Longspurs have a hefty body with heavier bill esp in McCown's	small pure flocks with tumbling flight revealing distinctive white tail patterns, tend to crouch low when alarmed before flying	grasslands & fallow fields	Chestnut-collared Longspur	Com Win Visitor	black tinge breast/belly & shoulder, short wings, white vent	distinct flight "cheed-lup"	McC Long
			short grass pastures & bare dirt fields	McCown's Longspur	Uncom Win Visitor	white belly, chestnut coverts, black malar stripe	distinct flight "chip-purr-r-r"	Ch-col Long

Identifying Sparrows in **mixed habitats** of Southeastern Arizona

Genus	Structure/Appearance	Group Behaviors	Preferred Habitats	Species - Common Name	SE AZ Status	Distinguishing Plumage	Vocalizations	Similar
Spizella	slender sparrows with very short bills, all are clear-breasted as adults but may be streaked as subadults	generally forage lower or on ground but tend to fly up to higher perch when alarmed, flight is strong and direct tend to hop but do not run, all can be found in flocks in winter sometimes mixed with other species	grasslands with shrubs	Brewer's Sparrow	Com Win Visitor	bland face with white eye ring & light lores	complex - "canary-like"	Cl-col Sp
			mesquite/desert shrubs, weed patches, parks	Clay-colored Sparrow	Rare Win Visitor	brown ear coverts outlined in white, gray nape, brown rump	series of short insect-like buzzes	Br Sp
			dry, open woodlands in lower elev in winter	Chipping Sparrow	Com Win Visitor	rufous cap, black eye line, gray rump	long, fast rattle	Am Tree Sp
			arid brushland in rocky slopes of foothills	Black-chinned Sparrow	Unc Perm Res	black lores/chin, overall gray cast with brown wings, no white in tail	1-2 notes + series of slurred notes	Dk-eyed Ju
Junco	smaller bodied but with longer tail with white outer feathers	scratch-feeds low but can perch high, Dk-eyed Junco found in flocks in winter but not Ye-eyed Junco	brushy woodland edges	Dark-eyed Junco	Com Win Visitor	dark eye and light lores	metallic trill	Ye-eyed Ju
			montane conifer & pine-oak >6000 ft elev	Yellow-eyed Junco	Com Perm Res	yellow eye and dark lores	series of chips, trills, buzzes	Dk-eyed Ju
Zonotrichia	med size with longer tail	flocks, flies to high perch if alarmed	brush & woodland edges	White-crowned Sparrow	Com Win Visitor	white & black crown stripes	1-2 notes + trill	Hous Sp
			brush & woodland edges	White-throated Sparrow	Rare Win Visitor	white & black crown stripes with yellow lores & white throat	loud notes with 1-3 pitch changes	Hous Sp
Melospiza	medium with longer tails, all show rufous tinge to different degrees in cap, tail, and wings and have gray faces	tend not to flock, are often found closer to water and tend to be skulkers in the underbrush, will respond to pishing, flights are short, jerky, often with pumped tail	undergrowth near water	Song Sparrow	Com Perm Res	boldly streaked flanks & breast (central spot), rufous eyeline	2-4 notes + trills + buzzy notes	Linc Sp
			riparian	Lincoln's Sparrow	Com Win Visitor	ochre moustache, faint breast streaks	gurgling notes	Song Sp
			dense vegetation at edges of ponds or flooded fields	Swamp Sparrow	Rare Win Visitor	rufous cap & wings, brown eye stripe, faint breast streaks	loud, slow melodius trill	Linc Sp
Amphispiza	medium body but with somewhat larger bill and longer tail	usually paired or in family groups, tend to stay low in brush but will sing from higher perch, short hops & runs Sage Sp conspicuous when running with tail held high flashing prominent white vent	arid shrubby desert	Black-throated Sparrow	Com Perm Res	striking black throat & white face stripes, white belly	metallic tinkling, "tsp-tsp churr"	
			dense brush on steep hillsides (border canyons)	Five-striped Sparrow	Rare Loc Perm Res	dark gray with brown back & white belly, black & white face stripes	short, chipping phrases	
Artemisiospiza			salt/sagebrush, mesquite in winter	Sage Sparrow	Uncom Win Visitor	Brown back, gray head, white eye ring & supraloral spot, white vent	high-pitched note series, see-sawing	
Chondestes	large bills & long tails	winter flocks, often seen on ground	open woodlands	Lark Sparrow	Com Perm Res	face pattern, white outer tail tips	complex-musical	
Passerella	large body & long tail	do not flock, obvious perch, jerky flight	forest	Fox Sparrow	Rare Win Visitor	var with solid tones & streaking below	loud notes	Song Sp
Pipilo Melozone	towhees are large-bodied with a larger bill and longer tail, very stocky appearance	usually in pairs or small family groups, forages lower down in vegetation, perches higher to sing but then dives low when alarmed, generally hops and runs, flights are short and even clumsy with loud wingbeats	dry shrubby hillsides	Green-tailed Towhee	Com Win Visitor	greenish back & tail, rufous crown, black&white face pattern	raspy trills, nasal "meew"	
			dense brush in hillsides	Spotted Towhee	Com Perm Res	dark back & head, rufous belly	"drink your tea.."	
			upland desert & pine-oak	Canyon Towhee	Com Perm Res	drab brown with rufous crown & vent	6-7 dbl note trills	Ab Towh
			riparian woodlands	Abert's Towhee	Com Perm Res	cinnamon brown with rufous vent, black lores	trills, squeal duet	Cany Towh