

UPDATE ON SONG SPARROW RANGE EXTENSION INTO ALABAMA

Bill Summerour

The summer range extension of the Song Sparrow, Melospiza melodia, into northeast Alabama has been documented by Summerour in Alabama Birdlife in 1979, 1980 and 1983. Since these accounts, the species has been noted farther south each summer.

In August 1984, I heard and observed two singing male Song Sparrows in Talladega, 20 miles south of the leading edge of their previously recorded breeding range in Alabama. Also in 1984, Joe Meyers, Non-game Wildlife Coordinator for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, reported a singing male on 8 June just west of LaFayette on census stop number 37 of the Breeding Bird Survey.

In 1980 Erskine Ashbee of Mobile related to me that he had observed a singing male Song Sparrow in June at Still Waters resort on Lake Martin in Tallapoosa County, the southern-most summer record for the species in Alabama. Since Song Sparrows have apparently been at Lake Martin since at least 1980, it may be that the observers are just now catching up with the birds in Talladega and LaFayette rather than Song Sparrows having only recently extended their range into these areas.

Either way, the leading edge of the breeding range of the Song Sparrow in 1985 now extends from Talladega south to Lake Martin and northeast to LaFayette. I have checked likely habitats in Sylacauga, 20 miles south of Talladega, for the past two years but so far no pioneering males have turned up. This would be the next likely place the species could be expected if they continue to push southward.

At present the Song Sparrow is a common breeding resident as far south as Piedmont, fairly common in Jacksonville and occasional south to Anniston, Oxford, Talladega, Lake Martin and LaFayette.

LITERATURE CITED

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HOUSE FINCHES, CARPODACUS MEXICANUS, NESTING IN ANNISTON

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On 8 April 1985, while standing in downtown Anniston, AL., I noticed warbling coming from one of the ornamental trees on the main thoroughfare through town. An investigation revealed a pair of House Finches on territory and busily engaged in searching for a nesting site among the trees in front of the Federal Building.

Two days later, on 10 April, Patty Smith, an ornithology student at Jacksonville State University, searched the downtown area and found a half dozen singing males, including 1 pair that was building a nest under a metal awning. On 13 April, I found 3 more nests under construction, one in a crevice in a building, another under the metal braces supporting the insulators on top of a telephone pole, and another in a dense, ornamental cedar. I also noted about a dozen singing males.

On 16 April, Chris Nixon and John Chapman, also ornithology students at JSU, found a pair building a nest in a hanging fern bracket on the front porch of a house. The nest, which was composed of grasses and soft plant