

FIRST RECORD OF THE CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (PASSERELLIDAE: *SPIZELLA PALLIDA*) FOR SOUTH AMERICA

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Abstract · The species of the genus *Spizella* breed in Canada and in the United States, and five of this six species are migrants. One of this migratory species is the Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) that is rarely observed south of Mexico and Guatemala. We present the first record of the Clay-colored Sparrow in South America. An individual of *S. pallida* collided with a window on 11 May 2016 in Santiago de Cali, Colombia. The specimen was an adult male that had abundant fat throughout the body and was deposited at the Icesi University zoological collection (ICZ-A0017). This is the first record for this species in South America.

Resumen · Primer registro del Arrocero Pálido (Paserellidae: *Spizella pallida*) para Sudamérica

Las especies del género *Spizella* se reproducen en Canadá y en los Estados Unidos y cinco de estas seis especies son migratorias. Una de estas especies migrantes es el Arrocero Pálido (*Spizella pallida*) el cual es raramente observado al sur de México y Guatemala. Aquí presentamos el primer registro del Arrocero Pálido en Sudamérica. Un individuo de *S. pallida* chocó con una ventana el 11 de mayo de 2016 en Santiago de Cali, Colombia. El espécimen correspondía a un macho adulto que poseía abundante grasa por todo el cuerpo y fue depositado en la colección zoológica de la Universidad Icesi (ICZ-A0017). Este es el primer registro de esta especie para el continente Sudamericano.

Key words: Colombian Andes · Migration overshoot · First record · Passerellidae

The genus *Spizella* comprises small and relatively slender sparrows that inhabit open country areas and open woodlands (Howell & Webb 1995). Currently, there are six species in this genus (Chesser et al. 2017), of which four (*S. passerina*, *S. atrogularis*, *S. pusilla*, and *S. breweri*) are partial migrants that form small flocks during the non-breeding season (Slager & Klicka 2014). Only *S. pallida* is fully migratory. During migration, the southernmost distributional limits of these species range from southern United States to Central America (approx. 18–30°N). Three of them have their southern ranges in Mexico: the Field Sparrow (*S. pusilla*) migrates to zones of the Gulf Coast and northeast Mexico (BirdLife International 2018), the Black-chinned Sparrow (*S. atrogularis*) occurs from the central Mexican plateau, Durango, south Coahuila and Nuevo León to Oaxaca (Jaramillo et al. 2011), and the Brewer's Sparrow (*S. breweri*) southernmost distribution corresponds to areas in Guanajuato and Jalisco (Jaramillo et al. 2011). There are no published or eBird (last search on April 2019) records for the genus *Spizella* in South America. Here we report the first record of this genus for South America based on a specimen of the Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) collected after a collision in Santiago de Cali, Colombia in 2016.

The Clay-colored Sparrow has a large breeding distribution from southwestern Canada across the Great Plains to the east of Great Lakes, and in the USA from Wisconsin to New York (Aguilar et al. 2013). In winter, it is commonly found in the southern United States in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas (Dunn & Alderfer 2006). In Mexico, it winters in Baja California, on the Pacific slope from central Sonora to Nayarit and in the interior from Chihuahua and Nuevo Leon to Oaxaca. It is irregular or uncommon along the Atlantic slope to Veracruz and in central Guatemala and has been reported as a vagrant at Caribbean coast in north of the Yucatan peninsula (Howell & Webb 1995). The southernmost records for this species corresponds to rare and opportunistic sightings throughout Central America. One was seen in Sacapulas, western Guatemala (AOU 1998, Jaramillo et al. 2011), and there are four independent photographic records in Costa Rica: Cartago on 9 February 2013 (Rodríguez Arias 2013, Aguilar et al. 2013), Rio Chiquito on 19 May 2017 (Robert 2017), Grano de Oro on 23 October 2017 (Elizondo 2017), and Guanacaste on 17 February 2018 (Fonseca 2018). Finally, the most southern record is from Panama at San Lorenzo Fort (9°19'41.2"N 79°59'36.6"W, 10 m a.s.l.) on 3 December 2011 (Osier 2011).

On 11 May 2016, SGD observed a bird that had collided with a window of an apartment in a residential complex in Santiago de Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia (03°28'23.57"N, 76°31'38.40"W, 979 m a.s.l.). The specimen was immediately collected and deposited at the Icesi University zoological collection in Santiago de Cali (voucher number ICZ-A0017). During the dissection

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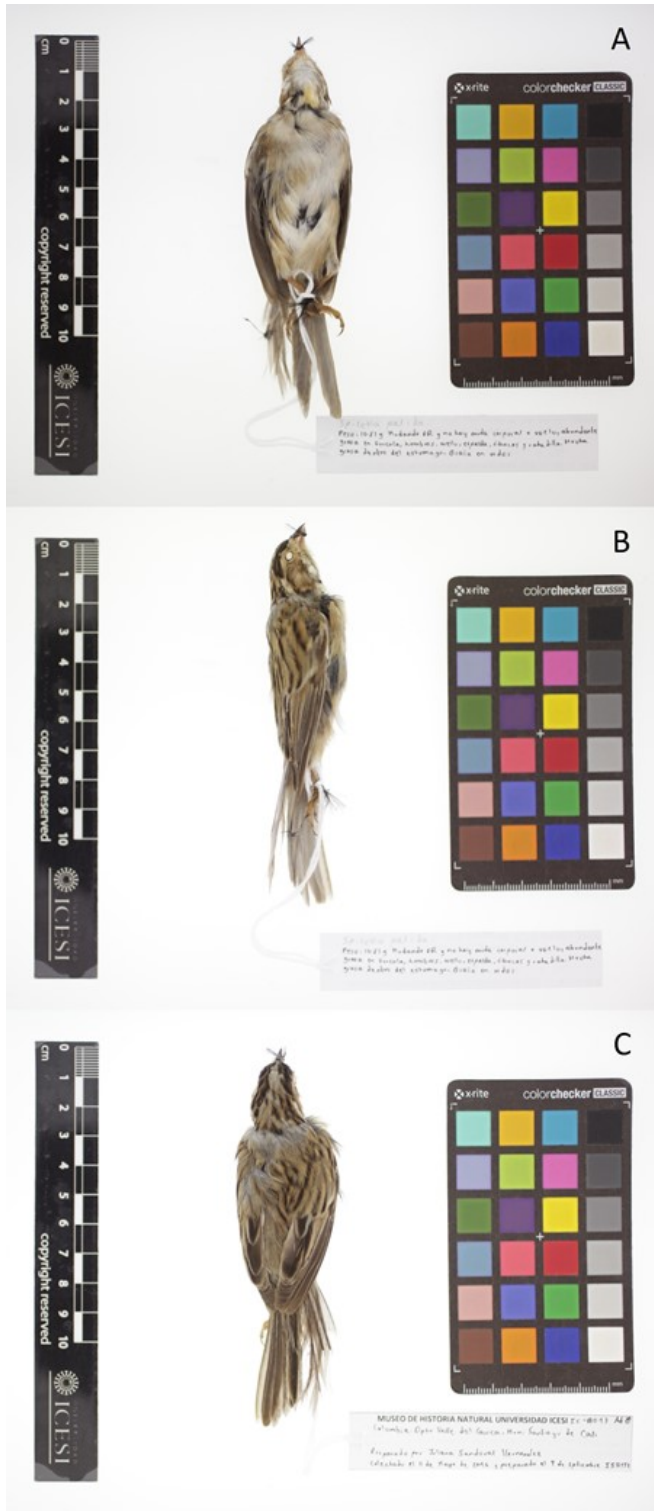


Figure 1. A) Ventral, B) lateral and C) dorsal photos of the Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) specimen deposited at zoological collection of Icesi University (ICZ-A0017), Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia, in May 2016. This individual was an adult male collected after it collides against a window in Santiago de Cali, Colombia.

process we observed that the specimen had abundant fat on neck, furcula, shoulders, back, flanks, rump, ears, and in the abdominal area, suggesting that it was a migrant returning to North America. The individual was an adult male with pink jaw, brown maxilla, dark brown eyes and pink legs (Figure 1A–C). Unfortunately, neither stomach content or gonad size were recorded during preparation. Following Peterson (2008), Clay-colored Sparrows have a dark eye-line, dirty grayish breast and gray rump, pale lores, a sharply outline ear patch, a contrasting gray nape, brownish rump, and

Table 1. Measurements taken of the male Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) (ICZ-A0017) collected on 11 May 2016 in Santiago de Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia. Published measurements were obtained from Godfrey (1966), Sibley (2000), and Dunning (2008)*.

Measurement	Specimen	Published
Mass (g)	10.81	11.2*; 12.0
Bill height (mm)	4.3	
Bill width (mm)	4.6	
Comissures (mm)	6.6	
Tarsus length (mm)	17.1	17.6–18.9
Hallux length (mm)	10.5	
Wing chord unflattened (mm)	59.5	62.7–67.8
External rectrix length (mm)	63.0	62.0–68.4
Central rectrix length (mm)	49.8	

white underparts. Our specimen has a faint dark eye-line, its breast is dirty grayish with some parts of dull brown, the rump is gray. Lores are pale yellow and it has a contrasting gray nape and browner underparts. It was molting the external rectrix number six, but there was no molt of flight or body feathers.

Measurements of the specimen are provided in Table 1. All measurements fall within the range of the ones reported for the species, but the mass and unflattened wing chord are 10 and 5 percent lower than average (Table 1; Godfrey 1966, Sibley 2000). These small differences in measurements are normal within bird populations (Dunning 2008).

There are two species in Colombia that could be misidentified with the Clay-colored Sparrow: females and nonbreeding males of Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), and Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*). The Bobolink is a migrant species that can be observed from September–October to March–May in the southern hemisphere. Female and nonbreeding male plumages have a rich buff-yellow streaked with dark brown on the back, flanks and crown, but are unstreaked on the nape of the neck, and its bill is sparrow-like of pinkish colour (Peterson 2008). They can be differentiated from the Clay-colored Sparrow by their marked black eyestripe, streaked plumage on their wings and flanks, and its warm buffy brown colour on breast. On the other hand, the Grasshopper Sparrow is a brown bird with relatively unstriped buffy breast, crown with a pale median stripe, yellow lores, whitish eye-ring, and often a yellow spot on the wing bend, which is hard to see (Peterson 2008). The yellow spots, and the strong black streaked plumage and eyestripe on the head, are key features to avoid misidentification with the Clay-colored Sparrow.

Our specimen provides the southernmost record for the Clay-colored Sparrow, ca. 750 km further south compared with the previous southernmost distribution (Osier 2011), and the first report of this species and genus for South America. Encountering this species for the first time in Colombia constitutes an unusual record, especially in May, when most individuals should be on their breeding grounds. Observations of North American vagrants commonly involve single individuals that presumably overshoot their normal wintering range (Aguilar et al. 2013). Our Clay-colored Sparrow was an individual that clearly migrated farther south (Colombia) of its common wintering grounds (Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas). Birds that overshoot their migration are almost al-

ways males in their first year of life, and occur relatively early in the year, arriving in their usual wintering areas at about the time they would have been expected in their normal breeding areas (Newton 2008). These observations match our record, helping to explain the unusual finding of this Clay-colored Sparrow in Colombia and South America for the first time.

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