
January 1979

Leconte's Sparrow at Flamingo, Everglades National Park

Florida Field Naturalist

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn>

Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1979) "Leconte's Sparrow at Flamingo, Everglades National Park," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 7 : Iss. 2 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol7/iss2/15>

This General Notes is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Field Naturalist by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

tional Park and one from Big Pine Key (Monroe Co.). I can find no prior record of a Pine Siskin in the Florida Keys.

During the winter of 1977-78 there were unprecedented numbers of siskins in south Florida, including the Florida Keys (Monroe Co.). The Keys records are here summarized.

The first observation was by Alexander Sprunt, IV, on Big Pine Key during the Lower Keys Christmas Bird Count on 20 December 1977. Perhaps alerted by this report, observers recorded siskins five times in the next week, both in Key West and in the Upper Keys. In all, I have learned of 24 reports of siskins by at least 14 observers, totalling about 192 birds. Five sightings were of 20 or more individuals (maximum of 30). Siskins were reported from Tavernier, Plantation Key, Islamorada, Big Pine Key, Sugarloaf Key and Key West over a 4-month period extending from 20 December to 24 April. Nearly all the siskins reported were found with American Goldfinches (*Carduelis tristis*). Usually they were seen feeding on the cones of Australian pines (*Casuarina equisetifolia*), but a few birds were seen in Spanish lime (*Melicoccus bijugatus*).

Three observations are so late as to deserve special description. On 9 April Thurlow Weed saw a flock of about 25 siskins in Key West, 16 days after his last sighting of goldfinches. The siskins were seen at a maximum distance of 20 m with 17 × 50 binoculars. All critical field marks were seen as the birds perched in Spanish lime trees: heavy streaking, small goldfinch-shaped body, notched tail, yellow flashes in wings and tail, short conical bill (T. Weed, pers. comm.). One week later, about 12 siskins were found on Sugarloaf Key by Margaret Brown, Page Brown and Barbara Dripps. They were feeding in characteristic fashion high in Australian pines, hanging from branch tips. The observers noted the notched tail, characteristic undulating flight and heavily streaked breast, but did not see the shape of the bill or the yellow flash in wings and tail. On 24 April, Weed saw two Pine Siskins with about 15 Cape May Warblers (*Dendroica tigrina*) on Stock Island. Though he failed to see yellow flashes in wings and tail, Weed did see the heavily streaked body and sharp conical bill typical of siskins and noted that the facial pattern typical of female Cape Mays was lacking. The birds appeared exhausted. Noting that a strong front had crossed Key West the night before, Weed speculated that the birds were migrants from farther south. Bond (1956, Check-list of birds of the West Indies, Philadelphia, Phila. Acad. Nat. Sci. and Supplements 1-21) lists no record of Pine Siskins in the West Indies.

I am grateful to H. W. Kale II, J. C. Ogden, W. B. Robertson, Jr., and Thurlow Weed for their comments on the manuscript.—RICHARD T. PAUL, *National Audubon Society Research Department, 115 Indian Mound Trail, Tavernier, Florida 33070.*

LeConte's Sparrow at Flamingo, Everglades National Park.—While birding with my family on 22 January 1979 at Flamingo, Everglades National Park (Dade Co.), Florida, I flushed a sparrow into tall weeds just west of the westernmost motel unit. Minutes later, the bird returned to the short grass where I watched it feed. Soon afterward, with two other birders, I watched the sparrow fly a short distance to another brushy edge where it was observed as close as 10 feet for a long time, either feeding on the ground or perched in a dead bush.

The following field marks enabled me to identify the bird as a LeConte's Sparrow (*Ammospiza leconteii*). It had a small bill, moderately conspicuous buffy eye stripe, noticeable white eye ring, conspicuous white crown stripe, finely dark-streaked sides, noticeable demarcation between the buffy breast and white belly, short narrow tail and a well marked back.

This sighting, my fifth and southernmost for Florida, is the second record for Everglades National Park. Howell (1932, Florida bird life, Tallahassee, Florida Dept. Game Fresh Water Fish), who considered this elusive bird to be a rare winter resident in Florida, collected a specimen from short grass on the coastal prairie of Cape Sable on 13 February 1918.—PAUL J. FELLERS, 1010 Ave. X N.W., Winter Haven, Florida 33880.