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HENSLOW'S SPARROW AND SEDGE WREN RESPONSE TO A DORMANT-SEASON PRESCRIBED BURN IN A PINE SAVANNA

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Upland *Ammodramus* sparrows are secretive and prefer open habitat with dense ground cover. Consequently, these sparrows are difficult to detect and census on their winter range. All Grasshopper (*A. savannarum*) and LeConte's (*A. leconteii*) sparrows flushed on their winter range in Oklahoma and Texas were alone (Grzybowski 1983a in Lowther 1996, Grzybowski 1983b). Most Henslow's Sparrows (*A. henslowii*) in their winter range in Florida are also flushed alone, but I have rarely observed groups of two or three (D. McNair pers. obs.).

In January 1997, I observed an unusual concentration of Henslow's Sparrows and Sedge Wrens (*Cistothorus platensis*) during a dormant-season prescribed burn in a pine savanna. On 22 January 1997, almost all of Compartment 71 of the Apalachicola Ranger District of the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF) was burned, including a 116-ha savanna (Stand 26) dominated by beakrush sedge (*Rhynchospora chapmanii*). After burning most of the savanna, the fire approached a narrow (<150 m; usually 50 to 75 m), 500-m long strip of open longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) forest that abutted a narrow titi (*Cyrtillaceae*) swamp. Two lines of fire converged to form a triangle of savanna with this strip of relatively wet longleaf pine forest at its base.

While walking within and behind this unburned triangle from 1500-1600 hr, I flushed as many as five Henslow's Sparrows at one time; most sparrows were located more than 75 m from the edge of the fire. I also flushed Sedge Wrens from locations that were usually closer to the leading edge of the fire; the Sedge Wrens flew shorter distances away from the fire than did the Henslow's Sparrows. Some individuals of both species may have escaped the encroaching fire by running through the ground cover.

At approximately 1600 hr, I sat down 3 m from several gallberry (*Ilex glabra*) clumps in the triangle to observe the birds' response to fire. During the next 30 min, I estimated that a total of 50 Henslow's Sparrows and 20 Sedge Wrens flew by me as the fire approached. I detected more individuals of both species when the fire intensified from a 1 m flame height to 2 to 3 m. During one of these episodes, nine Henslow's Sparrows flew by me at one time; three of which alighted in the gallberry clumps. A few Henslow's Sparrows flew back over the flames and landed in slight depressions at the base of shrubs on the burnt savanna at least 150 m away, but most birds sought shelter within or along the edge of the wetland forest. I rarely heard calls from any individual.

In contrast, I never observed Sedge Wrens fly over the flames or fly by in groups of greater than two individuals. Unfortunately, I cannot provide an estimate of the number of individuals of both species present in the entire savanna because of inadequate pre-burn observations.

After the triangle of savanna was burned, the encroaching fire advanced toward the narrow, wet longleaf pine forest strip, which provided refuge for both species. From 1630-1700 hr I flushed 30 Henslow's Sparrows (up to four at one time) in a portion of this strip of longleaf pine forest. Four days later, I flushed one Sedge Wren and no other species from this same area. On 18 February, during a 1-hr walk through the strip, I flushed five Sedge Wrens and four Henslow's Sparrows and no other species; I would consider the latter count typical for this habitat. The wrens preferred the wetter (6 to 10 cm standing water) and the sparrows the drier portions of this strip (Hyde 1939, D. McNair pers. obs.).

The differences between escape behaviors of Sedge Wrens and Henslow's Sparrows in response to fire are consistent with the differences in their escape behavior in response to flush attempts by rope-dragging. Sedge Wrens are rarely flushed into mist-nets by rope-dragging, which is a fairly efficient technique for catching Henslow's Sparrows in these savannas (D. McNair pers. obs.). The wrens are reluctant to escape and usually remain in dense ground cover as the rope passes overhead.

In summary, the disturbance caused by a dormant-season prescribed burn in a pine savanna induced unusual concentrations of Henslow's Sparrows and Sedge Wrens at one site, although the response of Sedge Wrens to fire was less obvious. The ground cover associated with a long, narrow, unburned strip of adjacent open longleaf pine forest provided temporary refuge for most of these birds.

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