

A Brief Review of
our local Fringillidae.

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A Brief Review of our local Fringillidae:-

The family of birds known as the Fringillidae belongs to the highest order of birds, the Passeres. It is a family rich in number of species there being about five hundred. Representatives of the family are found in every country of the world except Australia. Such a wide distribution of a family is seldom found.

In general it is a polymorphic group.

The conical beak is one of the most distinguishing characters, though it varies much in size and strength:- the weakest being that of the Snowflake and strongest that of the Grosbeaks.

The color also varies much - many are plain colored, gray or brown, relieved with or streaked with dark colors especially black and dusky. Others are brilliantly colored as the Red-bird and the Blue Grosbeak.

Besides the usually strong conical beak the following may be given as distinguishing characters: the commis-

sure is strongly angulated at the base of the bill; the number of primaries is nine; "Tarsus scutellate anteriorly but the sides with two undivided plates meeting behind along the median line as a sharp edge."

The color of the eye is hazel or brown except in the Towhee where it is reddish or yellowish.

As to food habits the majority are seed eaters, in many cases also fruit, buds, insects and similar food.

It is the purpose of this paper to treat only of those forms found in the vicinity of Manhattan, Kansas.

The following is a list of the species found here.

1. *Cardinalis Cardinalis*
2. *Loxia curvirostra stricklandi*
3. *Passerina cyanea*
4. *Guiraca caerulea*
5. *Calcarius ornatus*
6. " *capponicus*
7. *Rhyncophanes rucconii*
8. *Plectrophenax nivalis*
9. *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*
10. " *maculatus arcticus*
11. *Spizella monticola*

12. *Spizella pusilla*
13. " *palida*
14. *Spiza americana*.
15. *Chondestes grammacus*
16. *Junco hyemalis*
17. " " *oregonus*
18. *Melospiza lincolni*
19. " *melodia*
20. *Habia ludoviciana*
21. *Spinus tristis*
22. " *pinus*
23. *Zonotrichia querula*
24. " *leucophrys*
25. *Passer domesticus*
26. *Coturniculus passerinus*
27. *Pooecetes gramineus*
28. *Passerculus savanna* or *Ammodramus sandwicensis savanna*
29. *Passerila ilica*
30. *Carpodacus purpureus*

The following Key has been devised for these particular species. Being based on color of plumage it cannot be relied upon too positively since the color changes more or less with

season and with age of the bird.

I Body streaked { A. Above, on sides and below
B. Above and on sides
C. Above only

II Body not streaked.

I. A. Streaked above on sides and below.

(a.) With yellow markings

1. With yellow under-tail-coverts
and on edges of primaries

Spinus pinus

Pine Siskin

2. With yellow median and
superciliary stripe

Ammodramus sandwichensis
savanna

Savanna sparrow.

(b.) Without yellow markings

1. Head ^{with} brown and black.

streaks and gray median
stripe

Melospiza lincolni

Lincolii sparrow

2. Below nearly pure black;
nape dark brown; chin
light brown. no median
stripe

Calcarurus ornatus
Chestnut collared long-
spur.

3. Spots below brown
chin white.

Passerella ilica
Fox sparrow.

4. Streaks below small;
less wing coverts brown
no median stripe.

Protes gramineus
Vesper sparrow.

B. Streaked above and on sides.

(a.) Nape brown

1. Median stripe grayish
Females with brown ob-
scure

Calcarius lapponicus
Lapland longspur

(b.) Nape not brown

1 Without median stripe
chin black in males, but
black more or less obscure
in females

Gonotrichia aeneola
Harris finch

2 No black on head; slight
rufous on breast; ends
tail feathers black

Rhyncophanus mccormici
McCormick's longspur

3 Streaks on back and
crown blackish;

Median stripe pale ashy
superciliary stripe ashy white.

Spizella palida
Clay-colored sparrow

4 Crown rufous
median stripe dull

Melospiza melodia
Song sparrow.

Q. Striped above only

(a.) With whitish median stripe.

1. Yellow at base of wing and
over eyes.

Coturniculus passerinus
Yellow-winged sparrow

2 Without yellow; brown
on each side of median
stripe.

Chondestes grammacus
Lark sparrow

3 Crown black
sides of head yellow

Zonotrichia leucophrys
White crowned sparrow

(b.) Without median stripe

1. Crown and a spot on
breast brown

Spizella monticola
Tree sparrow.

2 Crown same; breast
without brown spot.

Beak cinnamon red

Spizella pusilla

Field sparrow.

3. Crown lighter brown;
sides of neck tinged with
brown; under parts snow
white

Plectrophenax nivalis

Snow-flake

4 Crown, gray tinged with
yellow; chin white; black
spot on throat; breast
yellow. Females with
yellow suppressed.

Spiza americana

Deck chissel

5 Crown same as in 4.
With out yellow, chin
and throat black in males
The gray in females is
brownish.

Passer domesticus
European House sparrow or
English sparrow.

II Not Streaked

(a) Head crested

1. Color red; females with red suffused

Cardinalis cardinalis
Cardinal Red bird.

(b) Head not crested

1. Mandibles falcate; color red

Loxia curvirostra
Mexican crossbill.

2. Color red in males, with some streaks; females conspicuously streaked with base color of upper parts olive. (could also be classed under I. A.)

Carpodacus purpureus
Purple finch

3. Color Blue
Wings with two brown
stripes; bill very large
Guiraca caerulea
Blue grosbeak

4. Wings with out brown;
bill small. Color blue;
females brownish with
edges of quills blue.
Passerina cyanea
Indigo bunting

5. Color yellow; wings
black with white stripes
yellow suppressed in females
Spinus tristis
American Gold-finch.

6. Upper parts black; breast
and under wing coverts
crimson
Helia ludoviciana
Rose breasted
grosbeak.

7. Upper parts as in above; without crimson sides brown; length 8" 9" White spots on lesser wing coverts and on scapulars

Pipilo maculatus arcticus, Arctic Towhee

7' With out the white spots as in above.

Pipilo erythrophthalmus; Towhee

8. Upper parts ashy, breast and sides same (ashy).
Junco hyemalis.

8' Head, neck and breast darker; sides and scapulars tinged with brown
J. hyemalis oregonus
Oregon junco.

The following table is for only those species of the family under discussion, that are summer residents of this state.

Number of eggs in nest	Form egg	Size	Ground color	Spotted with	Blotched with	Mottled with	Name of bird.
4-5	oval	.94"x.71"	Grayish white				Towhee
3-5	"	.69"x.52	grayish to grayish white	reddish brown			Field sparrow
4	"	.71"x.53	grayish white	"	Reddish brown	pale purple	Chestnut colored long spur.
4-5	oval rounded	.80"x.63"	"	blackish brown + line of same			Dark sparrow
4-7		.86"x.62	Dull grayish white or light gray	dusky brown and purple gray	same as spots.		English sparrow
3-4	oval	.99"x.73	grayish white	lilac and reddish brown			Red bird
3-5	"	.75"x.58	Pale greenish white	various shades of red and purple brown			Vesper sparrow
4	"	.75"x.55	White with faint bluish haze				Indigo bunting
4-6	"	.65"x.50	Pale bluish white with rosy hue				American Gold finch
3-4	"	.85"x.66	Bluish white				Blue gros beak
4-5	"	.82"x.63	Uniform light blue				Dick chisel.

What is in the above table will not be repeated under "nesting habits" of the birds as it contains most of the best data at hand.

Trusting also that the foregoing key will be practically sufficient for the purpose of determining the species I will aim not to give minute or extended descriptions of such in the following pages; the genus however will be more carefully described. In each case the characters of the genus will be given first, followed with the name of the species and "a few" characters not given in the key; also the time of year when found here; food habits, nesting habits of those that breed in this vicinity; places frequented by the birds; habitat of each species.

The birds will be described in the order given in the list of species on pages 2 and 3.

Genus Cardinalis Bonaparte

" The crested head, thick bill; tarsus longer than middle toe; much graduated wing the first primary equal to sec-

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secondary quills; tail long and graduated and red" are some of the essential characters.

Species *Cardinalis cardinalis*

The red-bird is one of the largest of the family.

The feathers around base of bill are black.

In the female the red is duller, has a purplish hue and is confined to wings and tail.

This bird is a resident of this state, but is rare in the western part. It is rather a shy bird. Feeds on seeds berries and insects.

The nest is built in bushes and low trees. It is made of leaves grasses and vine like stems, lined with finer stuff.

Genus *Loxia* Linnaeus

Color reddish in the males.

"The mandibles are much elongated and attenuated." The falcate mandibles crossing each other is the most distinguishing character. The wings are narrow and long.

The species found here is

L. curvirostra stricklandii

Further characters hardly need be given to distinguish this bird.

Professor Dyche was the first to discover this bird in Kansas and report it. About forty specimens were taken by him at Lawrence in 1885. Since then it has been seen in various places. It is a winter sojourner.

Habitat: South western United States through the high-lands of Mexico.

Genus. *Geuraca* Swainson

Adult males plain blue or bluish-black with or without rufous on wings.

The bill is very large the depth of it at its base equals the length of head to the end of the beak.

The species found here is *G. carulea*. Has black at base of bill, gray wings darker tail; under tail coverts and tail feathers tipped with white; median and greater wing coverts tipped with brown. Length of bird about seven inches.

Comes in May and remains during the summer. Begins laying about the 1st of June. Leaves in September.

Its food is seeds and grains of various kinds. Their beak is adapted to crushing some grains. The nest consists of rather coarse material built in low trees and bushes. Along streams where there is not much timber and upland thickets are the places most frequented.

Habitat: The south half of the United States east of eastern Colorado and Texas.

Genus Passerina Virilot

The males are bright colored; blue predominating often combined with yellow, purple and green. The females and young are brownish above, lighter beneath.

Tail feathers broad, not acuminate. The lower mandible is deeper than the upper one.

P. cyanea is the species found here. The head is brighter colored than the body. Wings and tail darker.

The females are slightly smaller than males. Length (average) about five inches. A summer resident. More common in the eastern than in the western part of the state. Comes about the 1st

of May and leaves in September.

Its food is largely seeds.

The nest is found in shrubby brush.

Frequents open wood-lands, orchards and similar places.

Habitat; Eastern United States, north into Canada, south as far Cuba and Central America, Breeds throughout its range.

Genus, Calcarurus Bechstein.

The males with upper parts light brownish streaked with black or dusky. Nape deep rufous, top of head black outer tail feathers with some white.

Females similar but the black is wanting on the head as is the rufous on the neck. The lower parts are buff or whitish. Tail emarginate. hind toe very long.

There are two species found here.

Calcarurus ornatus

In addition to characters already given we may note; brown lores, chin and throat; white streak behind the eye.

The streaks in the females are dusky and general color brownish.

It is a common, summer resident in the middle and northern part of the state. Abundant throughout the state during winter.

The nest is of dry grass.

Frequents the plains.

Habitat: The Great Plains.

Breeds from Wyoming and Dakota, northward.

Calcarius capponicus.

Similar to *C. ornatus*, but black and brown not so distinct; the female has the rufous on neck and black on chest obscure; crown gray median stripe not prominent.

This species is here only during the winter. Comes in November and leaves in March.

Subsists on seeds.

Habitat: Circumpolar regions, south in winter as far as Kentucky, Illinois and Kansas.

Genus Phrynophanes Lawr.

There is only one species in this genus: -
R. maccabianus. It resembles in some

respects the female of *Calcarius capponicus* but differs in having a larger bill; white tail feathers (except middle pair) broadly tipped with black. General color of back grayish, streaked with dusky; throat white; breast tinged with buffy (in male in winter) black in summer.

Found in this vicinity only during winter. Frequents dry prairies, old trails and similar places.

Habitat: The Great Plains, south as far as Mexico, north in summer.

Genus. Plectrophenax Stejneger
 "Prevailing color white, inner web of tail feathers (except sometimes the two middle pairs) entirely so." Males in summer are entirely white except the scapulars which may be black.

During the winter the sides of the head upper parts and breast are washed with rusty. bill yellow in winter, black in summer; females, smaller than males upper parts entirely streaked lower parts white.

P. nivalis

Brown streak passing from eye to spot of same color behind it; beak yellow wings with much black; length 6"-7"

A rare winter visitor

Habitat; Northern part of the Western Hemisphere

Genus Pipilo Vieillot

There are a large number of species in this genus, two of which are found here.

The general characters are; varied color; brown or black usually prevails on upper parts, sometimes olive; under parts white or brown; no central streak on feathers; feet large, claws stout and compressed; hind claw longer than its digit tail feathers broad.

The most common genus here is P. erythrophthalmus.

The characters given in the Key and under the genus are sufficient for this bird. Except to say that it is from 8"-9" long; the females are similar to males, but winter brown takes place of black.

It is a resident in eastern Kansas, but rare in Western. More plentiful in summer than in winter.

Feeds on seeds and insects

The nest is placed in depressions in the ground in sheltered places. It is composed of rather coarse material and is rather bulky.

This bird frequents brush-piles, bushes and similar places.

Habitat: Eastern United States.

P. maculatus arcticus

The general appearance is that of towhee. See Key for further characters.

General habits same as Towhee.

Habitat: The Great Plains.

Genus Spizella Bonaparte.

"The prevailing color of back and scapulars is brownish, with black streaks; lower back, rump and upper tail coverts plain grayish or pale brownish; belly white greater wing coverts (and usually the middle ones) tipped with white or light brown". Tail emarginate.

There are three species in this vicinity.

S. monticola

Nape and rump ashy; wing longer than tail.

Found here only during winter.

Feeds mostly on seeds.

Habitat: Eastern North America.

S. pusilla

Smaller than the Tree Sparrow
color duller: white on the wings is not
so conspicuous; bill cinnamon red.
length of bird 5.5" - 6"

It is a summer resident.

Seeds constitute its main food.

The nest is built on the ground and
in low bushes; Made of shippings of
bark, grasses and weeds loosely woven
together; lined with finer material.

Frequents the edges of woodlands and
similar places.

Habitat: Eastern United States and South-
ern Canada.

S. palida

On carverts light buffy brown in mark-
ed contrast with the very distinct, broad
superciliary and malar stripes of dull
whitish, and ashy sides of the neck.

A common bird during migratory seasons. Arrives on its northern journey in May and returns in October.

Habitat: Interior of North America.

Genus *Spiza* Bonaparte.

The color of upper parts is brownish or grayish brown; back and scapulars streaked with black; crown, nape, sides of neck and ear coverts plain dull grayish or brownish gray; superciliary stripe, malar and chin white; tail feathers narrow, middle ones sometimes acuminate.

The species for our consideration is

S. americana

This bird is readily distinguished by the characters given in the Key.

It is a summer resident; more abundant in the eastern than in the western part of the state.

Feeds on berries, seeds and insects.

The nest is found on the ground and in low bushes. "It is rather compactly made of grass and lined with its fine wiry stem like branches."

This bird is most often seen in open

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fields and on prairies.

Habitat: Eastern United States, goes as far south as Northern South America, in winter.

Genus Chondestes Swainson

The upper parts are brownish or brownish gray tail feathers (except middle pair) broadly tipped with white; tail rounded and middle feathers broad and rounded at tips

Species C. grammacus

Fore part of head black passing into brown. The broad stripes of white and brown on the head are peculiar to this bird; black spot on breast; length 6" - 6.50"

It is a summer resident and very common. Arrives in April and leaves in October.

Nest usually placed in a depression in the ground, sometimes in low bushes. It is composed of weeds and fine grasses.

This bird does not frequent any place in particular.

Habitat: The Mississippi Valley.

Genus Junco Wagler

Color plain grayish on upper parts

(this may vary some howver), white in under parts. No streaks.

Species J. hyemalis

Grayish color extends all over except on belly, under tail coverts and under side of wings. Length about 6"

A Winter sojourner. This bird cares nothing apparently for winter storms.

Habitat: Northern United States also East during winter.

Species J. hyemalis oregonus

Readily distinguished by abrupt separation of black breast from brown sides.

Also a winter sojourner.

Habitat: Western United States Especially Pacific coast.

Genus Melospiza Baird.

Above grayish, brownish olive or rusty, more or less streaked; median stripe grayish or chestnut becoming black on forehead; wings and tail brown; tail double rounded; outer feathers shorter than middle pair.

Species M. lincolni

Grayish and brownish on upper parts;

belly lighter; chin white, lores separated from throat by a black streak.

Not a resident but common during migration, which is April and October.

Feeds on seeds, insects etc.

Habitat; North America at large

Genus Habia Reichenbach

"Adult males with head, neck, wings and tail black; two broad white bands across the wing; patch at base of quills terminal portion of inner web of outer tail feathers white". Females with wings and tail similar; but the black is duller and the white is restricted. First quill shorter than fourth.

Species H. ludoviciana

Bill very large; breast and under wing coverts red; length 7" - 7.50"

A rare summer resident.

Lives on seeds, berries, buds etc. arboreal in habits

Habitat; Eastern North America.

Genus Spinus Koch.

General color of body yellow; crown, throat wings and tail with black varied some-

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times with white; the females want the bright markings of the males.

Sometimes conspicuously streaked.

Species *S. tristis*.

Besides the characters already given, we may note: - fore head black, top of head gray, more or less gray on neck and scapulars: females grayish with light tinge of yellow on the breast and neck; length about 5"

This bird is a summer resident.

Feed on seeds. The thistle is a favorite with it; also seeds from hemlock and button balls.

The nest is placed in branches of trees and shrubs, especially apple and elm trees. It is made of heap like strappings from plants and cottony substances; fastened to the tree by the former. They begin laying late in June. This is late owing to the fact that ^{the} seeds on which they feed their young do not ripen till this time or a little later.

Habitat: - North America in general

Species *S. pinus*

No black on the head, length about 4"

This species is found here only during the winter and till late in the spring.

Habits are similar to *S. tristis*; perhaps frequenting evergreen forests more.

Habitat: Temperate North America.

Genus Zonotrichia Swainson

Back brownish streaked with black, lower back rump and upper tail coverts plain olive brownish or grayish brown wings with two white bands; tail without white; it is brownish or grayish.

Species *Z. querula*

Top of head black, edges of wings brown, passing into white, length about 8"

A winter sojourner abundant in eastern part of state, rare in the western.

Habitat: Central part of United States, extending into Manitoba.

Species *Z. leucophrys*

The median line as per Key and black lores are distinguishing characters.

Only seen here during migration.

Feeds on seeds, berries and similar food.

Habitat: Practically all of North America.

Genus Passer Brisson.

Brownish above; streaked with black on back; wings with two white bands; lower parts dull grayish, white or pale grayish; males with chin and throat black; lesser wing coverts chestnut.

Species P. domesticus

Males as per genus, females have the general color of wing brown, black wanting.

This bird is too well known to need much space in this treatise. It is found practically every place in the United States. Introduced into cities first.

It feeds chiefly on seeds and grains also on berries and fruit.

Its nests are built around houses and out buildings.

Introduced into this country from Europe.

Genus Coturniculus

Crown and back streaked with black upon an ashy, olive or chestnut ground; a light superciliary stripe; wings short and rounded; tail short and narrow, feathers of tail narrow and feather lanceolate.

and acute.

Species C. passerinus.

Superciliary stripe gray; lores with a brownish tinge.

Not a resident of this state.

Habitat: Eastern United States.

Genus Porreetus Baird

Entire body streaked with dusky; color of upper parts brownish or brownish gray; lesser wing coverts more or less rusty; outer tail feathers partly white.

Species P. gramineus

General color grayish lower parts whitish chin white; lesser wing coverts brown.

This bird is a summer resident but not very common, except during migration.

Feeds on seeds and insects.

The nest is placed in a cavity in the ground in an exposed place. It is loosely made of grasses and lined with hairs.

This bird is most generally seen in dry places as road sides, and pastures.

It is regardless, nearly, of man.

Habitat: Eastern United States.

Birds from Virginia, Kentucky, Kansas northward.

Genus Ammodramus Swainson

Upper parts conspicuously streaked, breast and sides streaked, in most species; some species with edge of wing and upper local streak yellow.

Species A. sandwichensis savanna

Crown dark brown. See Key.

It is only during migration that we find this bird in this vicinity. They are terrestrial in habits, even keeping close to the ground when flying.

Habitat: Eastern North America.

Genus Passerella Swainson.

Rufous or slaty colored; absolutely streaked or else uniform above; thickly spotted with triangular blotches beneath; wings long and pointed; second and third quills longest; first quill equal to fifth.

Species P. ilica.

Found here only during the winter.

Habitat: Eastern North America.

Genus Carpodacus. Kauf.

Colours red or red and brown; female with red replaced with brown; bill short

vaulted the culmen decurved towards the end; tarsus shorter than hind toe; wings long and pointed; tail shorter than wing and moderately forked.

Species *O. fuscus*

For characters see genus and the Key.
Habitat: Eastern United States.

This ends the list of the species of this family that may be found here. Occasionally there may be stragglers found.

In the descriptions of these birds considerable stress has been laid on color of plumage, but it is well to bear in mind that color characters are not so permanent as structural ones though more readily seen by the casual observer.

The character of nest may vary with locality and species.

From an economic stand point the family as a whole is of value, as weed seed, grass seed and insects form the bulk of their food.

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