



Sunrise Birding LLC  
**HENSLOW'S  
SPARROW  
WEEKEND**

## TRIP REPORT

July 6 – 8, 2018

Leader: Frank Gallo

Photos & report by Frank Gallo



**Day 1:** Our group left Milford at 7:45 a.m., and stopped after 2.5 hours at the PA welcome center, just past DE Watergap. Everyone was impressed with its resemblance to a prison and for its lack of edibles. We drove to The Governor's Pub in Bellefonte, PA for lunch. Good food- fancy burgers and sandwiches and an order of Poutine for table. We were back on highway at 2:20.

At 4 p.m., we arrived at the Jefferson County (south) end of Sandy Ridge Road. We drove up to the top of the hill and stopped to scan the area. The habitat was grasslands mixed with shrubs, mostly autumn olive. It was quite windy, sunny and warm, with blue skies and scattered clouds. The wind kept the birds hunkered down, so we decided to drive further up the road about a quarter mile to the Clearfield County Area. We found our first Henslow's Sparrow near an oil well with a pink water tank on the left, that was in a bit of a lee. It sang fairly close to the road. We saw it briefly as it fluttered and landed in the grass not far from us. The ochre-green face, short tail, and fluttery flight, were obvious. There were a couple other Henslow's singing, one across the street and another farther down on the same side. At least one Grasshopper Sparrow was singing nearby. The "very thin" chip notes of the Henslow's Sparrow are similar to Grasshopper Sparrow.

We drove a bit farther down the road, stopped to listen and walk, periodically, and heard at least 4 more Henslow's and 3 Grasshopper Sparrows singing near the road. We saw a couple of Eastern Meadowlarks and had a great look at a couple of **Grasshopper Sparrows**. The Meadowlark was singing down the hill on a bush where it popped up in plain sight. When it flew it was joined by a second one. Red-winged blackbirds were singing in all the wet areas. We passed a few Brown Thrashers that crossed the road, and heard at least one Eastern Bluebird calling. The male Kestrel, seen when we first arrived, was seen several more times. It circled up to chase a Sharp-shinned Hawk passing over, then later circled up, screaming, and attacked a Cooper's Hawk that had a bird in its talons.





Road by 6:15 a.m.

We continued farther along the road; there was at least one other Eastern Meadowlark singing, and at least one more Henslow's Sparrow. We had a nice look at a perched male Indigo Bunting just as we were leaving the dirt road. Two adult Wild Turkeys, with at least a dozen young, crossed the road just after we left the dirt road on Sandy Ridge Road. We then drove to another area where we saw two more Wild Turkeys. It was a lovely day, with temperatures in the low 80s, very breezy, sunny, with scattered clouds and blue skies.

We left the Sandy Ridge Road at 6 p.m., and make a few stops on the drive out. It took us roughly 30 minutes to get back to the hotel from where it became paved. We arrived at the hotel at 6:45 p.m., checked in, and met for dinner at 7:05 p.m. We drove to Luigi's Ristorante less than 10 minutes away. We returned to the hotel about 9:15 p.m. plan to leave tomorrow at 5:30 a.m. to reach Sandy Ridge

**Day 2.** We met at 5:30 a.m. in the lobby, and left at 5:37 a.m. to drive to Sandy Ridge Road, 40 minutes away. At 6:10 a.m., we stopped at spot where I heard a Henslow's Sparrow and **Grasshopper Sparrow** singing at the roadside. The grass was low and the sparrows were sitting up on small shrubs and weedy stalks. We had great looks were had by all at a pair of Henslow's sitting in low weedy vegetation. We took video and photos. One Grasshopper sang repeatedly from a road sign on the left opposite the Henslow's. There were several Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows, and a couple of Field Sparrows, singing in the area. The grasses and bushes here were much shorter than at Sandy Ridge Road, so we had great looks at them in early morning light. We stayed 70 minutes then drove to Sandy Ridge Clearfield tract by 7:30 a.m.



It was much windier on Sandy Ridge Rd than at the Game Land. The Indigo Bunting was singing as we entered the dirt road, along with Field Sparrows on both sides of small crops of trees. Henslow's Sparrows were singing within first 30 yards into the Grasslands and all along road (8+). Many Grasshopper Sparrows singing on both sides of road (17 counted). A few sat up. Bobolinks (female sitting up) and Meadowlarks were in the valley opposite the pink oil tank, in the same area as yesterday. We drove to the Jefferson Co. side and back, stopping to look at a Henslow's singing low in a tiny shrub on the east side of road on the way out of the Clearfield side.

We left to drive back to Dubois at 9:03 a.m. Arrived at 9:48 a.m., and ate at Perkins Pancakes. We left Restaurant at 10:50 a.m. and headed for another spot to scout for more Henslow's and to look for Upland Sandpipers and other grassland birds.

We stopped at the roadside to watch Chimney Swifts going into a house chimney, where we also

saw an Eastern Meadowlark across the street. Driving up into the fields, we encountered our first Henslow's Sparrow and an Eastern Meadowlark on the road. A little further on, after the crest of the hill was a large grassland interspersed with shrubs that was terrific for both Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows. It was out of the wind, and there were plenty of perches for the sparrows to t-up on, which they did, even though it was 1:40 when we arrived.



We stayed at the bowl for about 10 minutes and at the main site, for 35 minutes or so, before continuing on. The habitat there was obscured by trees and not visible from the road so we drove through quickly.

Two Elk were glimpsed standing in dense pine woods just before we reached the overlook, but we were unable to stop on the roadside. It was sunny and warm at the lookout parking area. There were cliff swallows bathing or getting mud in a puddle near the entrance. We walked along the road listening and looking for Dickcissel (reported) and other birds. I spotted a Wild Boar down the hill from the overlook and called everyone over. A few folks had brief looks before it went into a copse of trees. Everyone walked down the hill to get a better look and eventually saw it.

While everyone was looking at the Boar, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo started calling in the valley, then another started behind us up the hill. Eventually, the Cuckoo flew across the valley below us, landed in the tree, sang, and flew back up the hill. We got great looks as it flew by below us. A Black-billed Cuckoo also sang from the copse of trees below us. While we were looking for it, a sow bear and her cub ran across the road and down the hill below us.

Further down the road, a Grasshopper Sparrow was singing on a post, and there were a couple of pairs of Eastern Bluebirds, meadowlarks, and swallows on the phone wire, both Barn and Cliff Swallows. Several Cliff Swallows we're also visiting a puddle near the parking lot and collecting mud. Eventually, we got the cars and drove down to the bottom to look for a cow, calf elk pair that had been seen. Although, we didn't see the elk, we did see a female American Kestrel perched in a tree, and heard a Spotted Sandpiper in the wetland below the overlook. We stopped briefly to look at an Indigo Bunting on the side of the road and a large raptor flew towards us from the wood lot and then across a small field. It was the size of a red tail and was flapping and gliding. As it went by later realized it had and blue back and was pale whitish below. When it landed in the tree, we could see the long tail with wide wavy dark and gray tail bands. The back appeared completely dark gray in the shadows with no markings on the shoulders. It was it was an adult Goshawk. It flushed an adult red tail out of the same area and they were nearly the same size. A few minutes later, 12 elk (4 were babies) came out of the woods and started grazing on the hillside across from the overlook! What a great close to a wonderful day.

**Day 3:** We had breakfast at 7 a.m. and left the Fairfield Inn at 7:45 a.m. We headed 45 minutes to a grassland on a hill top that was a former strip mine site. We arrived at 8:30 a.m. Wood Thrushes were singing in the forested area. We saw a Dead Porcupine on the road.

At our first stop, we had great views of singing Indigo Bunting, Grasshopper Sparrow, Field

Sparrows with babies, and Chipping Sparrows with young at the base of the hill or along the road.

Going up the hill, the second (and likely the first) side road on the left, with an open gate, lead to a flat hilltop that was great for Grasshopper and Savannah Sparrows, **Bobolinks**, Eastern Meadowlark, American Kestrel, Cliff Swallows. We met someone at the grassland who told us to check the Caladonia Pike for Elk.



We drove up to the top of the main hill and checked the extensive grasslands on the right, where we were treated to wonderful views of singing and cavorting Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, and Grasshopper Sparrows. One Grasshopper Sparrow sang from perch only a few feet from our car the entire time. This looks like a wonderful place to explore for other grassland specialties. Horned Lark breed in the gravelly area and Upland Sandpiper and Dickcissel have been reported. 4-wheel-drive or high clearance is needed to get by the deep puddles on the top. Nice views. The land has changed ownership, so we'll have to keep tabs on whether or not it remains open.

We left Tipple Road at 10:30 a.m. and arrived for lunch at Marley's Brewery and Grill, Bloomsburg at 12:25 p.m. The food and location were quite good. We had a wonderful server and manager, but they messed up our order, so we didn't get it for 50 minutes.

We left there at 2 p.m., gassed up, and were on the highway at 2:20 p.m. and back in Connecticut later in the afternoon.



Sunrise Birding LLC

[www.sunrisebirding.com](http://www.sunrisebirding.com)

## Henslow's Sparrow Weekend SPECIES LIST July 6 – 8, 2018

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Species	
1	Canada Goose - <i>Branta canadensis</i>
2	Mallard - <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
3	Wild Turkey - <i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>
4	Turkey Vulture - <i>Cathartes aura</i>
5	Northern Harrier - <i>Circus hudsonius</i>
6	Sharp-shinned Hawk - <i>Accipiter striatus</i>
7	Cooper's Hawk - <i>Accipiter cooperii</i>

8	Northern Goshawk - <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
9	Red-tailed Hawk - <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>
10	Killdeer - <i>Charadrius vociferus</i>
11	Spotted Sandpiper - <i>Actitis macularius</i>
12	Rock Pigeon - <i>Columba livia</i>
13	Mourning Dove - <i>Zenaida macroura</i>
14	Yellow-billed Cuckoo - <i>Coccyzus americanus</i>
15	Black-billed Cuckoo - <i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>
16	Chimney Swift - <i>Chaetura pelagica</i>
17	Belted Kingfisher - <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>
18	Hairy Woodpecker - <i>Picoides villosus</i>
19	Northern Flicker - <i>Colaptes auratus</i>
20	American Kestrel - <i>Falco sparverius</i>
21	Eastern Phoebe - <i>Sayornis phoebe</i>
22	Eastern Kingbird - <i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>
23	Red-eyed Vireo - <i>Vireo olivaceus</i>
24	Blue Jay - <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>
25	American Crow - <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>
26	Common Raven - <i>Corvus corax</i>
27	Northern Rough-winged Swallow - <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>
28	Tree Swallow - <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>
29	Barn Swallow - <i>Hirundo rustica</i>
30	Cliff Swallow - <i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>
31	Black-capped Chickadee - <i>Poecile atricapillus</i>
32	Tufted Titmouse - <i>Baeolophus bicolor</i>
33	House Wren - <i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
34	Eastern Bluebird - <i>Sialia sialis</i>
35	Wood Thrush - <i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>
36	American Robin - <i>Turdus migratorius</i>
37	Gray Catbird - <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>
38	Brown Thrasher - <i>Toxostoma rufum</i>
39	Northern Mockingbird - <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>
40	European Starling - <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>

41	Cedar Waxwing - <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>
42	Ovenbird - <i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>
43	Common Yellowthroat - <i>Geothlypis trichas</i>
44	Yellow Warbler - <i>Setophaga petechia</i>
45	Prairie Warbler - <i>Setophaga discolor</i>
46	Black-throated Green Warbler - <i>Setophaga virens</i>
47	Grasshopper Sparrow - <i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>
48	Henslow's Sparrow - <i>Ammodramus henslowii</i>
49	Chipping Sparrow - <i>Spizella passerina</i>
50	Field Sparrow - <i>Spizella pusilla</i>
51	Savannah Sparrow - <i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>
52	Song Sparrow - <i>Melospiza melodia</i>
53	Eastern Towhee - <i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>
54	Scarlet Tanager - <i>Piranga olivacea</i>
55	Northern Cardinal - <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>
56	Indigo Bunting - <i>Passerina cyanea</i>
57	Bobolink - <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>
58	Eastern Meadowlark - <i>Sturnella magna</i>
59	Baltimore Oriole - <i>Icterus galbula</i>
60	Red-winged Blackbird - <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>
61	Brown-headed Cowbird - <i>Molothrus ater</i>
62	Common Grackle - <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>
63	American Goldfinch - <i>Spinus tristis</i>
64	House Sparrow - <i>Passer domesticus</i>

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