

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Animal Abstract

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CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE

NAME: *Aimophila ruficeps rupicola*

COMMON NAME: Yuma Rufous-crowned sparrow

SYNONYMS:

FAMILY: Emberizidae

AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION: *Aimophila ruficeps rupicola*, van Rossem, 1946.
Auk, 63, no. 4, October 1946, p. 562.

TYPE LOCALITY: North slope of Harquahala Mountains, Yuma County, Arizona.

TYPE SPECIMEN:

TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS: One of 6 species in genus; one of 5 Arizona species in genus; one of 17 subspecies; one of 2 subspecies in Arizona. This particular subspecies, *rupicola*, is in question. Most authorities believe it is a synonym for *A. r. scottii*. It has also been suggested that this subspecies is a northwestern extension of the Mexican subspecies *simulans*.

DESCRIPTION: *Aimophila ruficeps rupicola* is similar in size and proportions to *Aimophila ruficeps scottii*. The species measures around 6 inches (15 cm) in length. The Yuma rufous-crowned sparrow has deep grayish-olive dorsal edgings and rump. Its chest, sides and flanks are olive gray. The chin, throat, and median under parts are darker and grayer than in the *Aimophila ruficeps scottii*. The crown and reddish brown areas of the feathers of the upper parts are darker. The dorsal streaking is narrower with gray edgings correspondingly broader.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: The Yuma rufous-crowned sparrow is distinguished from other sparrows by its distinct rufous crown.

ILLUSTRATIONS:

Color drawing of species (National Geographic 1999:402).

TOTAL RANGE: Southwestern Arizona .

RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA: See "Total Range".

SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS

BIOLOGY: The species is non-migratory. The *Aimophila ruficeps rupicola*'s song is said to resemble Lazuli Bunting's. The song of the species is a rapid, bubbling series of *chip* notes, while the distinctive call is a sharp *dear*, usually given in a series (National Geographic, 1999). There is a squealing pair-reunion display given when the male and female meet within their territory. This is similar to the Brown Towhee display.

REPRODUCTION: Breeding males, are strongly territorial; they sing in and generally exclude conspecifics from contiguous, relatively fixed but non-overlapping areas of suitable habitat. Additionally, the male sings persistently in its' territory throughout the breeding season. Nesting for the species is on or near the ground, under a rock ledge, in a tuft of grass near a stream, at the foot of a sapling or built in low branches. The nest is a loosely constructed, bulky, thick-walled open cup composed almost entirely of coarse dried grasses and rootlets, sometimes with small twigs, bark strips and grasses; often lined with grasses and the hair of deer and horses. The clutch is produced between March and August. There are 2 to 5 eggs, usually 3 to 4 and they are white to pale blue-white and are unmarked. The female alone beginning with the last egg does the incubation. The nestlings are altricial and downy. Their skin is orange and the down is blackish. The young are tended by both parents, and leave the nest at about 9 days. They will accompany the parents for some time. Post breeding groups of up to 6 are seen.

FOOD HABITS: This species forages close to or on the ground in grass or under bushes. They eat beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, leafhoppers, olive scale, flies and caterpillars. They also eat seeds of grasses and weeds. They shift from seeds to insects in the spring.

HABITAT: The Yuma rufous-crowned sparrow's habitat is dry rocky slopes with scattered scrub and patches of grass and forbs. Shrub or tree cover usually short, fairly open and consisting of mixed species.

ELEVATION: 241 - 3000 m (792-2,438ft).

PLANT COMMUNITY: Open pine-oak woodland, desert scrub and chaparral.

POPULATION TRENDS:

SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:

None (USDI, FWS 1991)
[3C USDI, FWS 1985, 1989]

STATE STATUS:

None

OTHER STATUS:

Not Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS
Region 3 2007)

[Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region 3 1999)]

MANAGEMENT FACTORS: For the species *Aimophila ruficeps* the loss, degradation and fragmentation of suitable habitat is a main factor that affects the populations.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:

SUGGESTED PROJECTS: Taxonomic status of the subspecies are in need of a comprehensive study of morphological and biochemical characters to determine their validity and distinctiveness.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

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MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

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