

Ipswich Sparrow

Passerculus sandwichensis princeps

STATUS

Special Concern 

Vulnerable 

25



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Species Description

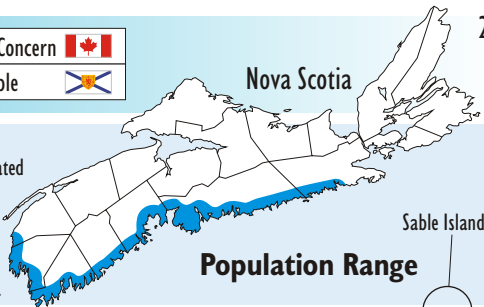
The Ipswich Sparrow is the *princeps* subspecies of the Savannah Sparrow. Males and females have pale grey plumage with grayish-brown upperparts, thin grey-brown breast streaks and whitish underparts. In the spring and summer, they have a yellow stripe near the front of their eye. Their tail is dusky and slightly notched.



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In the fall and winter, the yellow stripe above the eye becomes very faint.

Nests almost exclusively on Sable Island with an estimated population of 6000 individuals. Winters along the coast from mainland Nova Scotia to the southeastern United States.



Habitat

Breeds on Sable Island, 150 km from mainland Nova Scotia, in heath dominated vegetation or in dense marram grass on coastal dunes/beaches. Winters in outer dune beaches with grass cover and sheltered areas (valleys).



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Ipswich Sparrows are typically observed on Sable Island in the summer. Migrants are observed on mainland beaches during April and October, and a few stay over the winter.

Interesting Points

- The Ipswich sparrow is lighter in colour and larger than the *savanna* subspecies as an adaptation of living in coastal dune habitat.
- The two Savannah Sparrow subspecies are known to occasionally interbreed.
- Only songbird known to nest in large numbers on Sable Island.



Similar Species

The pale grayish plumage of the Ipswich sparrow is one of the key ways to distinguish it from other sparrow species. It is found along the ocean shoreline and is not observed inland.

Savannah Sparrow:

Savanna subspecies: smaller, darker coloured with darker, wider breast streaks.



Song Sparrow:

No yellow on face; triangular “moustache” stripes; pale central crown stripe.



Threats to Survival

- Suitable breeding areas on Sable Island are limited and may be threatened by erosion.
- Mortality during migration.
- Habitat loss and disturbance on wintering grounds.



Sable Island

How You Can Help

Learn to recognize rare birds and their songs and report sightings. Encourage the conservation of Sable Island and dune beach habitat along the Atlantic coast.



Research, Sable Island

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: Environment Canada (506) 364-5044 or www.ec.gc.ca

Info: www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or sightings@speciesatrisk.ca

Stewardship: Bird Studies Canada 1-888-448-2473, www.bsc-eoc.org