

Juvenile Clay-colors molting into first basic plumage show a buffy upper breast with a paler buffy flank and sometimes vestiges of the juvenile ventral streaking. The pale malar region between the dark whisker and dark brown outline of the ear coverts is conspicuous. The gray nape is now more noticeable against the buffy sides of the head and upper breast.

### DEFINITIVE BASIC

A definitive basic (winter adult) Clay-colored Sparrow (see Figure 2) is similar to one in alternate plumage except that the median crown stripe is less conspicuous because it is veiled with black streaks. All streaks on the crown are narrower.

The overall plumage is more

tinged with buffy, especially the upper breast and flanks. The culmen may also be dark.

I'll be out this fall scouting out Clay-colored Sparrows -- particularly looking for traces of juvenile plumages and noting to what degree the adult Clay-colors have achieved their basic plumages before migrating south for the winter.

I would like to thank Laurence C. Binford for reviewing this article. ■

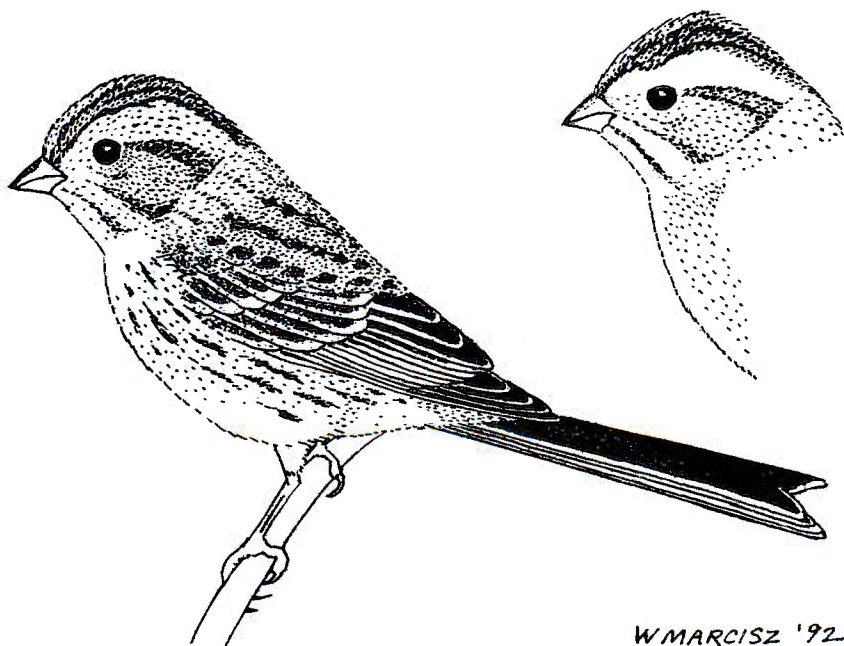
### LITERATURE CITED

Bent, A.C. 1968. *Life Histories of North American Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Buntings, Towhees, Finches, Sparrows, and Allies*. Smithsonian Institution Press. Washington D.C.

Pucelik, T. and P. 1984. "The Discovery of Illinois' First Nesting Clay-colored Sparrows." *Illinois Audubon Bulletin* No. 208:27-28.

David B. Johnson is Assistant Chief Editor of *Meadowlark*.  
- 504 Crown Point Drive,  
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089.

*Editor's Note: In the next issue, David B. Johnson will compare Chipping and Clay-colored Sparrows, the two most confusing Spizellas seen in Illinois. We'll also feature photographs of museum tray skins of these species that he examined at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History with the help of David E. Willard.*



WMARCISZ '92

1. Juvenile Clay-colored Sparrow. 2. (inset) Definitive basic Clay-colored Sparrow.