

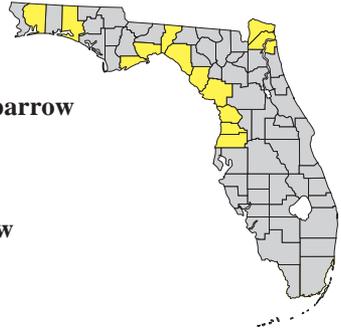
SEASIDE SPARROWS

Ammodramus maritimus

Atlantic coast – *A. m. macgillivraii*,
MacGillivray's seaside sparrow

East Gulf coast – *A. m. peninsulae*,
Scott's seaside sparrow

West Gulf coast – *A. m. fisheri*,
Louisiana seaside sparrow



Order: Passeriformes

Family: Emberizidae

FNAI Ranks: *A. m. m.*–G4T3/S2; *A. m. p.*–G4T3/S3, *A. m. f.*–G4T4/S1

U.S. Status: None

FL Status: *A. m. p.*–Species of Special Concern

U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act and state Wildlife Code prohibit take of birds, nests, or eggs.

Description: Large, dark sparrows with long bills and short, pointed tails. Plumage varies over range. Upperparts dark grayish (east coast), grayish-brown or grayish-olive (Gulf coast). Gray breast with streaking of varying distinctness and color (gray - east coast, browner - Gulf coast). Louisiana seaside has a buff wash on breast. Noticeable yellow streak in front of eye. White throat bordered by dark whisker streaks and white to buffy jaw-line; yellow at bend of wing less noticeable.



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Similar Species: Overlaps with marsh-dwelling sharp-tailed sparrows (saltmarsh - *Ammodramus caudacutus* and Nelson's - *A. nelsoni*) in winter and early breeding season. Sharp-tailed sparrows are smaller and have rich buff on face and breast.

Habitat: On Atlantic coast, inhabits tidal marshes dominated by smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) in Nassau County and by smooth cordgrass mixed with patches of black needlerush (*Juncus roemerianus*) in Duval County. Gulf coast habitat is dominated by extensive stands of black needlerush, with smooth cordgrass and scattered areas of saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*).

SEASIDE SPARROWS

Ammodramus maritimus

Seasonal Occurrence: Permanent residents. Individuals from migratory northeastern populations of *A. m. maritimus* probably winter within range of *A. m. macgillivrayi* on Florida's northeast coast.

Florida Distribution: MacGillivray's seaside sparrow occurs in expansive marshes along and west of the intracoastal waterway, north of the St. Johns River to the St. Mary's River/Cumberland Sound, in Duval and Nassau counties (formerly, its range extended to Volusia County). Recent extra-range reports from south Duval County and north Flagler County. On Gulf coast, Scott's seaside sparrow inhabits marshes from Pasco County (recent report from Pinellas County) to Wakulla County and scattered sites in Franklin County west to St. Vincent Island. A small disjunct population occurs in Hogtown Bayou, Choctawhatchee Bay in Walton County. Louisiana seaside sparrow breeds in upper Escambia Bay in Santa Rosa County (formerly also near Pensacola in Escambia County).

Range-wide Distribution: Range for Scott's seaside sparrow same as Florida distribution. MacGillivray's ranges north to Dare County, southeastern North Carolina; Louisiana seaside also occurs west to the south central Texas coast.

Conservation Status: Atlantic coast population appears stable, although disappearance from apparently suitable habitat south of the St. Johns River is cause for continued monitoring efforts. Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve and Pumpkin Hill Creek State Buffer Preserve encompass some sparrow habitat in Duval County. Nassau County, where the major portion of the Atlantic population resides, has very little marsh under state or federal ownership. Much of the Gulf coast within range of Scott's seaside sparrow is under state or federal ownership. The Florida population of Louisiana seaside sparrow is much more tenuous. Coastal wetlands are presumably protected from large-scale dredge and fill operations, although development of adjacent uplands may contribute to habitat degradation. Bridge and dock building have a more direct, albeit localized, deleterious effect. Sparrows are intolerant of significant invasion of woody vegetation into marsh habitat. The spread of mangroves into a large portion of the marshes of Volusia County is implicated in the disappearance of sparrows from this area.

Protection and Management: Protect significant uplands adjacent to marshes as buffers from development. Protect from pollution (e.g., oil spills, pesticides) and continue monitoring efforts, including the western panhandle where sparrows are not well documented.

Selected References: Poole and Gill (eds.) 1994, Quay et al. (eds.) 1983, Robertson and Woolfenden 1992, Rodgers et al. (eds.) 1996, Stevenson and Anderson 1994.