

From: Birds Queensland Rarities Appraisal Committee (BQ RAC)

Date: 17 September 2018

Submission No 198 Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* submitted by Terry Reis

This case involves six Eurasian Tree Sparrows, *Passer montanus*, observed on the 17th September 2018 in the village area on Saibai Island (9° 22' 40.24" S; 142° 37' 16.08" E) in northern Torres Strait. This submission was supported by a photograph of one of the Eurasian Tree Sparrows. From the description and the photograph provided there is no doubt that the birds observed were Eurasian Tree Sparrows, because of the combination of dark patch on a larger white check patch, a chestnut brown crown and nape and a white collar around the back of the neck. These characters are sufficient to separate this species from the House Sparrow, *P. domesticus*, which has grey crown and lacks both a collar around the back of the neck and a white check patch.

Eurasian Tree Sparrows are known to occur throughout most of Europe and Asia south to the Philippines and eastern Indonesian (Menkhorst *et. al.* 2017), Pratt and Belcher (2015) stated that Eurasian Tree Sparrows became established from ship assisted birds in New Guinea only in the last few years. Although known from southeastern Australia for many decades, this species has only recently been reported in northern Australian in the last few years. Most of these reports have been in town with large port and the sparrows are thought to have been ship assessed (Higgins *et. al.* 2006).

Although these Eurasian Tree Sparrows may have arrived in northern Australian through natural dispersal, it has not been possible to rule out that these Eurasian Tree Sparrow and other recent records in Northern Queensland and Torres Strait (BQ RAC cases 196 and 197) are all ship assisted or descendants from ship assessed birds.

Even though it has not been possible to determine how the Eurasian Tree Sparrows arrived on Saibai Island, There is nothing in the current rules of Guidelines of the Birds Queensland Records Appraisal Committee ('Queensland Ornithological Society Inc. Guidelines of the Records Appraisal Committee' Document Anon, undated) that would preclude a ship assisted record from being assessed under the Committee's usual processes.

Record unanimously accepted

This is the third record of Eurasian Tree Sparrow to be assessed by the BQ RAC.

Even though it has not been possible to determine how the Eurasian Tree Sparrows arrived on Saibai Island, there is some evidence to suggest that most of these records of Eurasian Tree Sparrow in northern Queensland including the current record (BQ RAC case 198) are ship assisted birds. However, there is nothing in the current rules of Guidelines of the Birds Queensland Records Appraisal Committee ('Queensland Ornithological Society Inc. Guidelines of the Records Appraisal Committee' Document Anon, undated) that would preclude a ship assisted record from being assessed under the Committee's usual processes.

References

- Anon, undated. Queensland ornithological Inc.: Guideline of the Records Appraisal Committee. An unpublished Birds Queensland (QOSI Inc.) document.
- Higgins, P.J., Peter, J.M. and Cowling, S.J. (Eds) 2006. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 7: Boatbill to Starlings*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Menkhorst, P., Rogers, D., Clarke, R., Davies, J., Marsack, P. and Franklin, K. 2017. *The Australian Bird Guide*. CSIRO Publishing, Clayton South.

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