

STUTTGART MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

U.S. Highway 63, Stuttgart AR, Prairie County

Phone: (870) 673-2960

GPS: 34.597483, -91.57498



Smith's Longspur, photo, courtesy of Michael Linz

Site Description

Stuttgart Municipal Airport, located in the Grand Prairie region of eastern Arkansas, was built as an Air Force training facility during WWII. This site is primarily remnant prairie-shrub habitat, providing protection for the bird community. The old hangers have been torn down and are now grasslands of varying quality. The airport has a north-south and an east-west runway and several taxiways whose grassy borders are mowed periodically. The area is surrounded by agricultural fields.

Because of the large expanse of low-growing *Aristida* grass in an open landscape, Lapland and the highly sought-after SMITH'S LONGSPUR can be seen here during winter. Small numbers of American Bittern, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Harrier, Sedge Wren, Short-eared Owl and Rusty Blackbird regularly overwinter. Sprague's Pipit and Henslow's Sparrow are rarer winter visitors. A Barn Owl frequently uses a nest box inside the last hanger on the left, as you face the airfield. Small numbers of Bell's Vireo and Painted Bunting reliably breed here. Stuttgart Municipal Airport became an Important Bird Area in March 2006.

Birders are asked to visit with airport staff before birding inside the airport grounds. Staff have important FAA safety information and can direct birders to target species and areas. Be sure to sign the Audubon birder's register in the terminal when you arrive and list the birds you saw as you leave. Please take time to learn and observe all essential airport safety precautions. This courtesy helps maintain friendly relations between birders and the City of Stuttgart and thus maintains open access for birders.

Looking for Smith's Longspurs: The open landscape provides no shelter from the cold wind, so dress warm. Knee muck-type boots are essential as there may be standing water and the vegetation can be long and thorny. The longspurs prefer *Aristida* grasses, which generally are inside the landing area, across from the plane parking area. You can walk this grassy area to find the birds, but do not cross any active runway or interfere with any landing or take-off. Best to do this with several friends so you can cover a larger area as you walk. The area circled in red below indicates where the majority of *Aristida* grass (and therefore Smith's Longspurs) can be found here.

