

Noted in the New York Times

- *Lake Buena Vista, Florida, June 16, 1987*

Death claimed the last pure dusky seaside sparrow
today, whose coastal range was narrow,
as narrow as its two-part buzzy song.

From hummocks lost to Cape Canaveral
this mouselike skulker in the matted grass,
a six-inch bird, plain brown, once thousands strong,
sang toodle-raeee azhee, ending on a trill
before the air gave way to rocket blasts.

It laid its dull white eggs (brown specked) in small
neat cups of grass on plots of pickleweed,
bulrushes, or salt hay. It dined
on caterpillars, beetles, ticks, the seeds
of sedges. Unremarkable
the life it led with others of its kind.

Tomorrow we can put it on a stamp,
a first-day cover with Key Largo rat,
Schaus swallowtail, Florida swamp
crocodile, and fading Cotton mouse.
How simply symbols replace habitat!
The tower frames of Aerospace
quiver in the flush of another shot
where, once indigenous, the dusky sparrow
soared trilling twenty feet above its burrow.

Maxine Kumin