





820-01-1999

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Observers: Paul Rodewald (and many other observers)

Date: Discovered 10 May 1999 and present to at least 5 June 1999.

Location: Rock Springs, Pennsylvania State University property, Centre Co, PA.

This bird was seen repeatedly by many individual birders over the period. Bird was also photographed by at least several individuals; e.g. Frank Haas in Pennsylvania Birds Vol. 13 (1):93.

Plumage Description

Distinctive head pattern with white central crown stripe and two broad rufous stripes on sides of crown. Narrow black line separating these rufous stripes and broad tawny white supercilium. Narrow black line extending behind eye (postocular stripe) with rufous patch on auriculars, and narrow black line at lower border of auriculars with white stripe below that and black malar stripe. Also noted was a small white spot posterior to rufous auriculars.

Overall, mantle was gray-brown, with blackish streaking from lower nape to center of mantle (broader streaking on mantle). Wings were darker brown, with broad pale brown edges and tips to greater coverts (forming prominent lower wing bar) and reduced pale edging and tips on median coverts (forming a lighter upper wing bar). Rump was plain gray-brown. Tail relatively long and dark brown with pale outer edges to rectrices. The 2-3 outermost tail feathers were tipped whitish, with outermost pair having greatest amount of white. Underparts were unstreaked pale gray with small black central spot on breast.

Size and structure: A large sparrow, with body *roughly* 30% larger than nearby Chipping Sparrows. Legs pinkish.

Similar species: No other North American sparrow has combination of distinctive head pattern, white tail corners, and unstreaked underparts with central breast spot.

Behavior/Habitat: The bird sang infrequently during my visits. As a result, it seems quite likely the bird was a male. One or two observers mentioned to me that they saw the bird picking up a piece of nest material or two. This might suggest a female, but male Lark Sparrows are known to pick up pieces of nest material during courtship. In any case, no nest or second individual was ever noted to my knowledge, despite some effort. Bird foraged singly or with Chipping Sparrows in open grassy lawn with scattered spruce trees and a large walnut tree adjacent to a house at Rock Springs; also foraged on bare plowed agricultural field and in treerows adjacent to lawn. Frequently chased Chipping Sparrows.

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Ballot - Round One

Species: Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Date of Sighting: 10 May 1999 to 5 June 1999

Location: ROCK SPRINGS

County: CENTRE

Observer(s): Paul Rodewald, Frank Haas

Date of Submission: 1999

Submitted by: Paul Rodewald, Frank Haas

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead	X							
D. Couchman	X							
P. Hess	X							
R. Ickes	X							
B. Reid	X							
P. Rodewald	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

2/27/01