

LARK SPARROW

820-01-2003

Location: Lemon Twp., Wyoming Co., PA

Date: Sept. 13, 2003

On Sept. 13, 2003, while birding in Lemon Twp. in Wyoming Co., I saw a number of small land birds feeding in the grass along the edge of the road. Most of them were goldfinches or chipping sparrows, and there was also one Savannah sparrow. In addition to these birds there was also a slightly larger sparrow in the flock. Looking at it and the others with 7x35 (and later 10x50) binoculars, I immediately saw that the larger sparrow had a large, black dot on its whitish underparts and also that it had a chestnut patch, along with the so-called "quail" pattern on its head. The bird was about 30' to 40' feet from me, and, although I did not see the white tail (because the bird was facing directly at me and its tail was hidden by its body and by the grass which was about 2" high), I immediately knew that the bird was an adult lark sparrow.

I continued trying to get a good angle on the tail for a couple of minutes, when a car came along and the birds flew off. Fortunately, the lark sparrow landed on the top of a post which was about 75' from me, and I could clearly see the white on the tip and sides of its dark tail.

Weather: clear, calm, sunny. Sun not a factor in seeing the bird.

Observation: about 10 minutes, at 30-40 feet, then at about 75 feet.

Similar species:

tree sparrow - has breast spot, but also red cap and different facial markings. No white on sides or end of tail.

Vesper sparrow - white on sides of tail only. Tail slightly forked, not rounded. Streaks, but no central breast spot.

song sparrow - breast spot is accompanied by streaking; no white in tail, different head pattern.

sage sparrow - central breast spot, but dark head, different facial markings, white only on side of tail.

Follow-up: The sparrow flew off from the post after 1-2 min., and landed in some taller grass. I saw it no more, and it could not be found again, despite several visits to the spot by others and by me in succeeding days.

~~previous-experience~~ I have seen lark sparrow a number of times in the west; but this is only the 2nd time that I've seen it east of the Mississippi R. Amazingly, the other time I saw it in the east was 6/22/99 when I saw one, also in Lemon Twp., about 2 miles from this bird.

SUBMITTED BY: William Reid, 73 W. Ross St., Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701 (570-822-8433) or 36 Maple Grove Rd., Tunkhannock PA, 18657 (570-836-2734).

## Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

### Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Date of Sighting: 13 September 2003 to 13 September 2003

Location: LEMON TOWNSHIP

County : WYOMING

Observer(s): Bill Reid

Date of Submission: 2003

Submitted by: Bill Reid

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Video: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut			X					
D. Heathcote			X					
P. Guris			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman			X					
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date: 9/16/04