



PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

2469 Hammertown Road

Narvon, PA 17555

September 26, 1997

Ron French
3469 Limekiln Pike
Chalfont, PA 18914

Dear Ron,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the Clay-colored Sparrow you saw that was present at Peace Valley County Park 1 January-28 April 1996 to P.O.R.C. After careful review, of this interesting and challenging report, we regret that we are unable to accept this record. The committee was concerned that both the description and photograph provided show characteristics of a possible hybrid Clay-colored Sparrow and Chipping Sparrow. Some members felt uncomfortable accepting this record because even though it molted in spring into what appeared to be a Clay-colored Sparrow, the rump color remained gray, a characteristic of Chipping Sparrow. The committee decided to err on the side of caution rather than accept this report.

This of course, does not mean the bird was not a Clay-colored Sparrow, merely, that the record is not beyond reasonable doubt for acceptance

We hope that this does not discourage you from submitting documentation on any rare birds you find in the future. Please be encouraged to send as much detail as possible when submitting a report.

Sincerely,

Nick Pulcinella
Chairman

Record # 814-03-1996

814-03-1996

Mystery Sparrow at Peace Valley Nature Center, Bucks Co., PA

A sparrow first seen at Peace Valley Nature Center at the feeders the first week of January 1996 was baffling since although it appeared to be a Clay-colored Sparrow, it had a gray rump. The bird was the smallest bird at the feeders, about the size of a Chipping Sparrow. The bird's eye stripe did not extend in front of the eye., nor did it have a darkly outlined cheek patch. It did seem very light for a Chipping Sparrow. The tail also seemed long for a Chipping Sparrow. The median crown stripe was a light gray (almost whitish). This bird has been at the feeders at Peace Valley all winter and has been observed by many seasoned birders. Some feel it may be a Hybrid but others are convinced it is indeed a Clay-colored Sparrow.

As spring approached this bird has shown more characteristics of a Clay-colored Sparrow, and I believe that is what it is. The crown median patch is a very light gray, the cheek patch has become much more defined with a dark border, and the overall appearance of the bird is very light in color, a sort of frosty look. There is no sign of it molting into an adult Chipping Sparrow. Indeed I believe it was an immature Clay-colored Sparrow that is now a first-year adult. It does, however, still have a gray rump. Since I have no experience with hybrids nor do I know if there is a subspecies of *spizella pallida* which has a rump more gray than brown, I will have to bow to the experts on this detail. The eye stripe still does not extend in front of the eye, only behind it.

The bird is still present as of April 20th.

A picture taken by Alan Brady of this bird during the winter accompanies this report.

Submitted by

Ron French

April 20, 1996

Encl.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*)

Date of Sighting: 1 January 1996 to 28 April 1996

Location: PEACE VALLEY COUNTY PARK

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Ron French

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Ron French

Written Description: YES Photo: YES Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

| Member | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV | Class V | | | Abstain |
|---------------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|---------|---|---|--------------|
| | | | | | A | B | C | |
| F. Haas | | | | | | | | X |
| N. Pulcinella | X | | | | | | | |
| E. Kwater | | | | | | | | X |
| R. Ickes | X | | | | | | | |
| G. McWilliams | | | | X | | | | |
| P. Schwalbe | | | | | | X | | |
| S. Feldstein | | | | | | | | X |
| TOTALS | 2 | | | 1 | | 1 | | 2 |
| DECISION | | | | X | | | | |

Comments:

Probably a Hybrid.

Signature (Secretary):

R C Haas

Date:

10-5-96