

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
210 Welcome Ave. Norwood, PA 19074

8 February 2001

Bruce and Barbara Kiester
468 Allendale Road
New Brighton, PA 15056

Dear Bruce and Barbara,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the Clay-colored Sparrow at Imperial on 17 May 1997, which was forwarded to us by Ted Floyd. After careful review, the committee regrets that it cannot accept this record. Four members voted to approve it, but three others felt that the description did not conclusively eliminate Brewer's Sparrow (very unlikely, but we're watching closely for the first state record). Acceptance requires six of the seven committee members, so this was a close call -- and in fact went two rounds of balloting.

The committee emphasizes that non-acceptance does not mean that the bird was not the species reported, but rather that the committee believes the documentation submitted does not support the identification with certainty.

We hope that this will not discourage you from submitting documentation on any rarities you may find in the future.

Finally, the committee apologizes for the unacceptably long delay before all members were able to vote on the record. Circumstances beyond our control caused the problem, and we believe that we are back on a timely track.

Sincerely,

For the Committee:
Paul Hess, Chairman

P.S. Beginning this year observers will receive postcards acknowledging that the committee has received their documentation. In addition, whereas observers formerly were notified only when reports were not accepted (in disappointing or irritating letters like this one), they will now receive cards announcing that their records *have* been accepted.

Record #814-04-1997

814-04-1997

Ted Floyd, 11:51 PM 5/21/97, CLAY-COLORED SPARROW - DETAILS

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Return-Path: <ted@dept.english.upenn.edu>
Delivered-To: pabirds@redrose.net
Date: Wed, 21 May 1997 23:51:09 -0400 (EDT)
From: Ted Floyd <ted@dept.english.upenn.edu>
Subject: CLAY-COLORED SPARROW - DETAILS
To: Frank & Barb Haas <pabirds@redrose.net>

Hi, Frank. Does PORC need written details for a pair of Clay-colored Sparrows seen out at Imperial? If so, here it is. The birds were seen by Bruce & Barb Kiester, and Pat & Rick Mason. The description was written by Bruce Kiester. The birds were seen on 17 May 1997.

As you may know, a Clay-colored Sparrow was seen in the same area, by Joyce Hoffmann and Deuane Hoffmann. I don't know if they'll be submitting documentation. Best, TF

----- Forwarded message -----

Dear Ted,

It seems we almost know you in a second hand way via the Mason's. To begin, my wife and I have been birding since the mid 70's and have life lists approaching the 500 level. Second, we have seen clay-colored sparrows in S. Dakota but that was in 1988 and not fresh in memory. Third, the birder Rick mentioned talking to in his E-mail to you also mentioned to us that he had seen clay-colored sparrows.

Now to the birds in question. Rick accurately described the location. They stayed at or near the edge of the larch/pine stand the entire time we observed them (about 15 minutes). I was the first to spot them. During the entire time, they never sang or separated from each other by more than 2-3 feet. The first thing that struck me when I first saw them was the chipping sparrow profile, but the overall background color struck me as wrong immediately and demanded a closer look. The closer look revealed a striped crown. That led to my initial assumption that they were clay-colored. I frantically waved the rest of our party in but by then the birds had skulked back into the pine/larches from the brushy edges where originally seen. They showed up a short time later well to the right of where originally seen, slipped back into the trees only to pop up half way back to where originally seen.

The last sighting was the best as they hopped into the lower branches of a small dead larch in full view. Again, the finely streaked head was obvious (mid stripe lightest) as was the buffier brown as opposed to grey background color and rump. The breast was clear of any streaking and was not as stark grey white as a

Printed for pabirds@redrose.net (Franklin Haas)

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chipper but with a warm cast at the chest. The facial markings were not as distinct as portrayed in our reference material but were unchipper like in that there was no boldly distinct black eye line but instead an indistinct facial patch bordered in a light background setting off the striped crown. The size and profile were distinctly chipping sparrow like.

During the entire time the birds stayed either on the ground, or within three feet of the ground. Based on size, shape, overall color, crown striping and facial markings all other possibilities are in my mind eliminated, leaving clay-colored as the only conclusion. Our references that we made our field comparisons to were the National Geographic Guide, and Sparrows of the United States and Canada by James Rising.

We enjoyed our first quick look at the Imperial area and are looking forward to more time there in the future.

Bruce and Barbara Kiester
468 Allendale Road
New Brighton, PA 15066
bweasels@ccia.com

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

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

Date of Sighting: 17 May 1997 to 17 May 1997

Location: IMPERIAL

County: ALLEGHENY

Observer(s): Bruce & Barbara Kiester

Date of Submission: 1997

Submitted by: Bruce & Barbara Kiester

Written Description: YES

Photo: NO

Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas			X					
P. Schwalbe			X					
K. Parkes			X					
R. Ickes				X				
P. Hess				X				
J. McWilliams				X				
T. Floyd			X					
TOTALS			4	3				
DECISION								

Comments:

Second Round

Signature (Secretary):

F. C. Haas

Date:

4-19-97

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round Two

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

Date of Sighting: 17 May 1997 to 17 May 1997

Location: IMPERIAL

County: ALLEGHENY

Observer(s): Bruce & Barbara Kiester

Date of Submission: 1997

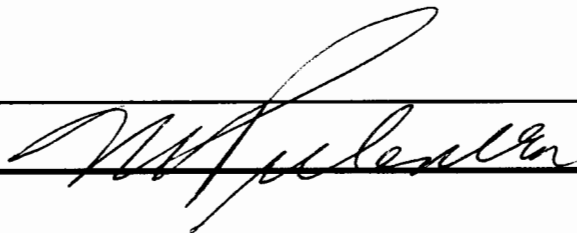
Submitted by: Bruce & Barbara Kiester

WRITTEN DESCRIPTION YES PHOTO No SPECIMEN No RECORDING No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	SPECIMEN No			Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman				X				
T. Floyd								X
P. Hess					X			
R. Ickes				X				
J. McWilliams				X				
F. Haas			X					
P. Schwalbe				X				
TOTALS			1	4	1			1
DECISION				X				

Comments: 1/5/1

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

8/24/00