

814-64-1998

**Subject: Clay-colored sparrow****Date: Sat, 12 Sep 1998 16:46:21 -0400 (EDT)****From: sweidnsl@pottsville.infi.net (Scott Weidensaul)****To: pabirds@ship.edu**

Schuylkill

I located a first-winter clay-colored sparrow at about 7:30 a.m. today at my house, in a large flock of chipping sparrows. I'm told by Tom Clauser, Schuylkill County compiler, that this is a first county record. However, the bird hasn't been relocated since, which isn't surprising, since the sparrow flocks are roaming over hundreds of acres of ag fields, mostly corn and all posted.

Frankly, I wouldn't recommend anyone making the trip in hopes of finding this particular needle in a haystack, but if I can find it again I'll post directions and an invitation to those who need it for their state list. And if anyone does come, please remember that all of the surrounding fields (including dirt roads) are closed to access by my neighbor, even if they aren't posted against trespassing.

For years I've been combing the huge flocks of chipping sparrows I get here each fall in the hope of someday finding a clay-colored. My experience has all been with breeding-plumage birds, so I was cautious about the ID. The bird had a typical Spizella shape, but when perched in a viburnum bush it spent more time in a head-down/tail-up posture (similar in a way to song sparrows) than I've seen among chipping sparrows. It had a fairly distinct median stripe on the streaky crown, pale lores, and a generally "cleaner," more contrasting head pattern than first-year chipping sparrows. (For instance, the light area between the malar streak and the auriculars was quite white, not gray as in chipping, and there was more contrast in the pale eyebrow.) The overall body color was also buffier, particularly on the breast and flanks, and on the back, giving the sparrow a lighter appearance. The back streaks looked very neat and crisp. The rump was buffy-brown, not gray. The bird had some distinct streaking on the the flanks, which threw me until I checked Byers et al's "Sparrows and Buntings," which says first-year clay-colored often retain flank streaking until well into autumn.

Scott Weidensaul  
sweidnsl@pottsville.infi.net  
Schuylkill County

Clay-colored sparrow

mailbox:/C%7C/INFINET/netscape/mail/Trash...21fea31d8ab@%5B206.98.2

**Subject: Clay-colored sparrow****Date: Sat, 12 Sep 1998 09:14:12 -0400 (EDT)****From: sweidnsl@pottsville.infi.net (Scott Weidensaul)****To: mclauser@pottsville.infi.net**

Tom,

I had a first-winter clay-colored sparrow in the yard this morning -- the payoff after sifting through flocks of chipping sparrows all week in the hope of finding one. The bird had a distinct median stripe on the streaky head, pale lores, and a generally "cleaner," more contrasting head pattern than first-year chipping sparrows. (For instance, the light area between the malar streak and the auriculars was quite white, not gray as in chipping, and there was more contrast in the pale eyebrow.) The overall body color was also buffier, particularly on the breast and flanks, and on the back, giving the sparrow a lighter appearance. The bird had some streaking on the the flanks, which threw me until I checked Byers et al. "Sparrows and Buntings," which says first-year clay-colored often retain flank streaking until well into autumn.

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation - Round One**

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

Date of Sighting: 12 September 1998 to 12 September 1999

Location: WAYNE TOWNSHIP

County: SCHUYKILL

Observer(s): Scott Weidensaul

Date of Submission: 1998

Submitted by: Scott Weidensaul

WRITTEN DESCRIPTION YES PHOTO NO SPECIMEN NO REWORKING NO

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman			X					
T. Floyd								X
P. Hess	<del>1/2</del>		X					
R. Ickes			X					
J. McWilliams			X					
B. Reid			X					<del>1/2</del>
P. Rodewald			X					
TOTALS			6					1 1/2
DECISION			X					

Comments: 6/0/1

Signature (Secretary): 

Date: 9/28/00