

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
613 Howard Road, West Chester, PA 19380

11 March 2003

Charles Crunkleton
202 Wiltshire Dr.
Chalfont, PA 18914
Harrisburg, PA 17111

Dear Charles,

Thank you for submitting documentation of the Lark Bunting on 20 October 2001 at Peace Valley Park. After careful review, the Committee has voted not to accept this record.

The members were divided in their opinions, and the balloting went two rounds before a final vote of four in favor of acceptance and three not in favor. (The Committee's bylaws require a vote of at least six in favor of accepting a record.)

Those who favored acceptance of course felt that the description was sufficient to rule out any other species. The others expressed concern that some details were not consistent with a Lark Bunting in October.

One detail of concern was the "all dark" head, back and tail, whereas at this time of year even a male Lark Bunting should be heavily streaked on the upperparts. Another detail was the "unpatterned face" except for the post-auricular vertical stripe, whereas in October a Lark Bunting's face should be conspicuously patterned with a pale supercilium, dark auricular area, and prominent white submoustachial stripe. Those who voted against acceptance felt that without having a description of the bill, they could not conclusively rule out an aberrant Red-winged Blackbird with symmetrical albinism on both wings -- which is a well-known abnormal pattern in the blackbirds.

Let me emphasize that our decision does not necessarily imply that the bird was not a Lark Bunting, but simply that the Committee felt that acceptance required more unequivocal evidence. We hope that our non-acceptance in this case will not discourage you from submitting reports on any future rarities you find.

Sincerely,



For the Committee:
Paul Hess, Chair

Record No. 824-01-2001

824-01-2001

Unusual Bird Report
October 23, 2001

Charles Crunkleton
202 Wiltshire Dr.
Chalfont, Pa. 18914
215-822-7607
ccrunk@aol.com

Bird: Lark Bunting

Observers: (2) Chuck Crunkleton, Elaine Ryan

Date Seen: 10-20-2001

How Long Observed: about 15 seconds

Where: Sailor's Point Parking Lot, West Side, Peace Valley Park, Bucks Co.

Conditions: 7:45 A.M., with partly cloudy skies, no wind, and the sun at our backs. The bird was flushed only about 5 feet away from us.

Behavior & Habitat: The bird was in ankle high grass at the edge of an overgrown field when it was flushed. We were walking along the edge of the field when the bird flew up from the grass just in front of us. It momentarily landed on some multiflora a few feet away and about 2 feet above the ground, then flew to another multiflora bush about 20 feet into the field and about 5 feet above the ground, where it stayed for about 5-7 seconds. Then it dropped to the ground and was not seen again.

Description: When the bird was first flushed and in flight, the obvious markings were bold white patches on the upper wing, and the overall darkness of the bird. I didn't see it well when it first landed, but had a good view of the bird when it alighted the second time. I saw the bird from the left side. The head, back and tail were all dark, with a long white wing patch. Underparts were a dusky white, heavily streaked on the belly and flanks. The face was unpattereded, except for a light but noticeable post-auricular vertical stripe. The shape and size of the bird suggested a plump sparrow. When the bird dropped back into the weeds, I noticed white under the tip of the tail. In the book "A Guide to the Identification and Natural History of The Sparrows of the United States and Canada" by Rising and Beadle, there is an illustration on page 131 of a Lark Bunting in flight that is extremely similar to what I saw, from the position of the wing patch to the shape of the wing itself.

Similar Species: There are no other similar species that occur regularly in North America that I can think of that resemble a male Lark Bunting.

Unusual Bird Report

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Lark Bunting (Calamospiza melanocorys)

Date of Sighting: 20 October 2001 to 20 October 2001

Location: PEACE VALLEY PARK

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Charles Crunkleton

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Charles Crunkleton

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

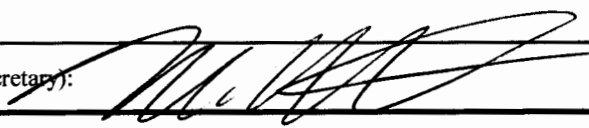
Specimen: No

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 ^{Heathcock}		X						
P. Hess						X		
J. Stanley			X					
B. Reid			X					
R. Leberman			X					
M. Sharp				X				
TOTALS		1	4	1		1		
DECISION								

Comments: 5/2 - GO TO 2ND ROUND

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

8/2/02

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round Two

Species: Lark Bunting (Calamospiza melanocorys)

Date of Sighting: 20 October 2001 to 20 October 2001

Location: PEACE VALLEY PARK

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Charles Crunkleton

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Charles Crunkleton

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No


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. Heathcote			X					
P. Hess						X		
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman				X				
M. Sharp				X				
TOTALS			4	2		1		
DECISION				X				

Comments: 4/3

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 1/18/03