













Pa. Rare Bird Report
LeConte's Sparrow
Polk Wetlands, Venango County, Pa.
Oct. 15-18, 2000

829-01-2000

As we were walking through the Polk Wetlands on Sat. Oct 15, 2000 searching for sparrows, Jerry Stanley indicated that he had an unusual looking bird. The following observations were made over the next 30 minutes as we (Jerry Stanley, Russ States, Kathie Goodblood, & Gary Edwards) watched the bird from various distances.

The bird was sparrow sized and appeared smaller than the Song Sparrows. It had a somewhat flattened head, but not nearly as much as a grasshopper sparrow. It had a gray nape with fine lines. These weren't seen at first, but as we got closer they became apparent. The back was very distinctive and appeared black with buff streaks. Observations the next day showed that some of this was due to the dampness and wet grass, the black was not nearly so prominent in somewhat drier conditions. The tail, observed when the bird was flying away from me, had pointed tips, much like the fingers of a hand. The face was largely orange and the supercilium was orange. There was a gray area behind the eye. The bird had a whitish crown stripe with very dark stripes on either side. The throat was whitish. It had strongly streaked buff flanks and much fainter streaks on the breast. Breast buffy and becoming whitish toward the belly.

We all have much experience with grasshopper and Henslow's sparrows, which are locally abundant. Somewhat less experience with Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow, which however, would not have a streaked nape. And the observation of a Nelson's the following week showed this bird to have a very different appearance.

I observed the bird through 8.5X binoculars and also photographed it with a 400mm lens and Kodachrome 64 film on 16 Oct. 2000. Six photos have been submitted for verification.

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Kathie Goodblood, 08:46 PM 10/15/00, Re: Le Conte's Sparrow in Vena

X-MSMail-Priority: Normal
X-MimeOLE: Produced By Microsoft MimeOLE V4.71.1712.3
Date: Sun, 15 Oct 2000 20:46:28 -0400
Reply-To: Kathie Goodblood <bhns@CSONLINE.NET>
Sender: Bird discussion list for Pennsylvania
<PABIRDS@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG>
From: Kathie Goodblood <bhns@CSONLINE.NET>
Subject: Re: Le Conte's Sparrow in Venango County
To: PABIRDS@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG
X-RCPT-TO: <russs@CSONLINE.NET>

After consulting "The Birds of Pennsylvania" we realize today's sighting is rarer than we initially suspected. For that reason we are posting a description of the bird.

In 3 foot high grass, we saw a sparrow which appeared smaller than nearby song and white-crowned sparrows. The bird stood out because of a broad orange supercilium. It had a pale eye ring of moderate thickness. It had a grey triangular ear patch with a black border at the posterior superior corner. It appeared more flat-headed than song or swamp sparrows nearby but not as flat-headed as a grasshopper sparrow. The crown was dark/blackish with a distinct white central stripe. Just adjacent to the bill, the white crown stripe was slightly discolored and on one occasion appeared orange at close range. The nape appeared solid pale grey at a distance but at close range showed fine reddish brown streaks similar in color to those streaks on the back of a male prairie warbler. The back was dark/blackish with narrow longitudinal stripes of pale brown. The tail was uniform flat medium brown in color. Once when the tail was spread, the feathers were pointed giving the trailing edge a serrated contour. The bill was pale/bone colored and not as large as a grasshopper sparrow's. The throat was orange fading to nearly white on the chin and changing to buffy on the upper breast and down the flanks. The flanks showed bold black streaks. Streaking on the breast was faint and minimal often not apparent. There was a faint thin moustache/line on the side of the throat only visible at close range. The center of the belly was white. The wings must have blended in with the back and flanks because we did not notice them and we did not see the legs or undertail coverts.

The bird was seen from 40 feet away down to 12 feet. It was seen for a total of several minutes. It would occasionally fly low over or through the top of the vegetation. When relocated it was often close to the ground and would slowly climb a stem, until it was well seen in the open. High overcast clouds and dead vegetation as a back drop provided excellent lighting without glare. The bird was viewed through 8 and 10 power Leicas. Although we have not seen this species before, the similar grasshopper sparrow is locally abundant here. Years ago we

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occasionally had distant looks at sharp-tailed sparrows along the Atlantic coast.

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: LeConte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

Date of Sighting: 15 October 2000 to 18 October 2000

Location: POLK WETLANDS

County: VENANGO

Observer(s): Devich Farbotnik, Russ States, Jerry Stanley, Kathie Goodblood, Gary Edwards

Date of Submission: 2000

Submitted by: Devich Farbotnik, Russ States, Jerry Stanley, Kathie Goodblood

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

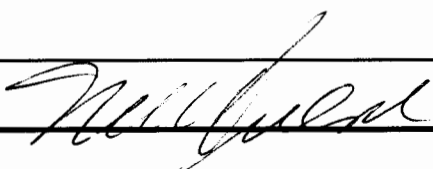
Specimen: No

Recording: Video

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead	X							
D. Couchman	X							
P. Hess	X							
R. Jones J. Stanley								X
B. Reid	X							
R. Lebermann P. Rodewald	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	6							1
DECISION	X							

Comments: 6/0/1

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 11/27/01