

































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

**Darlington Tract, Delaware County, PA  
10 February, 2009**

Since this bird appeared to be lingering at this site and would be a life bird, I decided to make the trip to Delaware County to search for it.

I arrived the morning of 10 February 2009 to find one birder searching for it. We walked around the grassy wetland without success. After our walk and a short conversation, the birder decided he had to leave to go to work and while walking out, he inadvertently flushed the sparrow from the trail and it flew to a nearby shrub and perched allowing good, but brief views. The first thing I noticed was the orange buff above the eye and along the side of the throat, a colorful sparrow.

I decided to wait it out with two other birders who arrived on the scene. Our patience paid off when the bird perched on a twig above the grass at close range for approximately 15 seconds. It called and retreated back into the grass. I continued to stay at the site and saw the bird a few more times and managed to take two photographs which are submitted with this description.

**DESCRIPTION**

A skulker; it never perched in the open very long and disappeared into the grasses regularly. Overall, the bird was noticeably smaller than the Song Sparrows that were present and appeared to fly weakly.

Head: white central crown stripe, black lateral crown stripes, orange-buff supercilium and malar; black post-ocular stripe that widened behind the auriculars forming a triangular shape. Auriculars gray, bordered below by orange buff extending from the malar. Thin whitish eye ring. Throat buffy but less orange than the malar.

Bill: pinkish and gray, legs pink/flesh.

Nape: gray with fine rusty streaks; very distinctive.

Upper breast buff, extending along the flanks. Fine blackish/brown streaking on the upper breast and along the flanks, restricted to the buffy area. Breast and belly white lacking streaks.

Tail brown and rather short (I admit I didn't study detail in the tail).

Mantle striped black, brown and buff, allowing the bird to blend into the straw colored grasses.

**Submitted by:** Mike Fialkovich, 805 Beulah Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235  
mpfial@verizon.net



**PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM**

This form is presented as a convenience and guide. It can be used if desired, but is not necessary for submitting a report. Species requiring documentation are those on the Review List or not on the Official List of Birds of Pennsylvania. Send documentation to:

**Nick Pulcinella, Secretary**  
**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**  
613 Howard Ave.  
West Chester, PA 19380  
nickpulcinella@verizon.net

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**SPECIES** (common and scientific name) LE CONTE'S SPARROW  
**Subspecies** (if known) -

**NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS** 1 **SEX(ES)** -

**AGE(S) AND PLUMAGE(S)** (e.g. immature; adult in breeding plumage; year for gulls; basic or alternate if you prefer those terms; state of molt if applicable): ADULT IN FRESH BASIC PLUMAGE

**DATE OF OBSERVATION** 11/25/09 **TIME** 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

**LOCATION** (city, borough, township) DARLINGTON TRACT, WAWA, DELAWARE CO.

**EXACT SITE** (e.g. name of park, lake, road) DARLINGTON

**OBSERVER REPORTING:**

Name AL GUARENTE  
Address 421 S. OLD MIDDLETOWN RD  
City MEDIA State PA ZIP 19063  
e-mail (optional) OWL GUARENTE@YAHOO.COM phone (optional) 610-566-8266

**OTHER OBSERVERS** (only those who saw and identified the bird with you):  
NICK + SHARON PULCINELLA, DAVE + ANDREW EBERLY, KEVIN FRYBERGER, JOHN D'AMICO

**HABITAT** (e.g. mowed field, woodland edge, any other details) WET SHORT GRASS FIELD WITH SMALL SHRUBS SCATTERED ABOUT

**DISTANCE TO BIRD** 10 FT

**VIEWING CONDITIONS** (sky, weather, position of sun relative to you) SUNNY. FIELD WAS FROZEN OVER.

**OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED** 10 X 42 ZEISS

**DESCRIPTION** (Include as much detail as you observed - size relative to other species present; "jizz"= e.g. posture, body shape, and proportions; colors and patterns of plumage; bill, eye, and leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual): THIS BIRD WAS VERY SMALL COMPARED TO SONG SPARROW AND SLIGHTLY SMALLER THAN FIELD SPARROW. FIRST THING I NOTICED WAS THE BRIGHT ORANGE COLOR OF THE BIRD ON THE FACE + BREAST. THE HEAD HAD A WHITE CROWN STRIPE SURROUNDED BY BLACK. THE SUPERCILIUM WAS VERY BROAD AND BRIGHT ORANGE EXTENDING FROM BILL TO ABOVE AURICULAR PATCH, WHICH WAS DARK. THE NAPE WAS PURPLISH WITH THIN STRIPES. BREAST WAS FINELY STREAKED WITH BROWN STRIPES ON AN ORANGEY BACKGROUND. THE BACK WAS HEAVILY STRIPED WITH DARK BROWN, BUT WHEN THE BIRD FLEW THE OVERALL APPEARANCE WAS THAT THE SPARROW WAS A LIGHT COLORED BIRD I DIDN'T TAKE NOTICE OF THE TAIL OR FEET. THE BILL WAS ALSO THIN AND TINY.

(Please use an additional page if necessary.)

**BEHAVIOR** (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

BIRD WAS ORIGINALLY ASSOCIATING WITH FIELD SPARROWS LATER THE BIRD BECAME MORE SECRETIVE AND INSTEAD OF SITTING UP ON PERCH, HE WOULD RUN ALONG THE GROUND UNDER THE MULTIFLORA ROSE.

**VOCALIZATIONS**

CALL NOTE GIVEN WAS JUST A QUICK BUZZY "ZEET"

**SUPPORTING EVIDENCE IF ANY:**

Photograph \_\_\_\_\_ Video recording \_\_\_\_\_ Audio recording \_\_\_\_\_ Drawing \_\_\_\_\_

**Photographer/recorder/illustrator:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ phone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Please include a copy of the photograph or recording with your report, and accompany it with a complete written documentation if the identification is obvious to you. If you made a drawing, please include it.

**IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD:**

General condition \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If collected (by permit), location and number of specimen if known \_\_\_\_\_

**SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES** (how you eliminated others) HENSLOW'S HAS A GREENISH TINGE

TO FACE AND NO NAPE STRIPING. GRASSHOPPER HAS A PLAIN BREAST, NO STRIPING. BAIRD'S WOULD HAVE A DARK MALAR STRIP WHICH THIS BIRD DIDN'T HAVE. BOTH SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS HAVE A PLAIN NAPE AREA, ALSO LARGE BILLS

**DISCUSSION** – Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it

THE HABITAT WAS PERFECT FOR THIS SPECIES.

(Please use an additional page if necessary)

**PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES**

I'VE SEEN QUITE A FEW LECONTE'S IN ILLINOIS OVER THE YEARS AND ALSO IN CHESTER CO, PA.

**ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION ?** (why or why not) YES. PLUMAGE AS DESCRIBED

ABOVE WAS PERFECT.

**REFERENCES CONSULTED:**

During observation NONE  
After observation SIBLEY

**DATE OF THIS REPORT:** 1/25/09

**SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER** Al Guarante

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation – Round One**

Species: Le Conte's Sparrow      Ammodramus leconteii

Date of Sighting: 25 January 2009 to 28 February 2009

County : DELAWARE

Location : DARLINGTON TRACT

Observer(s): Al Guarente m. obs

Date of Submission: 2009

Submitted by: Jeffrey Davis, Howard Eskin, Devich Farbotnik, Mike Fialkovich, , Al Guarente, Wayne Laubscher, Jim Lockyer, Dustin Welch, Bruce Toy,

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

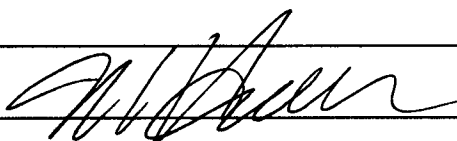
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut	X							
A. Guarente	X							
T. Johnson	X							
B. Coulter	X							
<del>G. Rutt</del> K Fryburg	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date: 2/28/09