







UNUSUAL SIGHTING DOCUMENTATION

Species (Common & Scientific Name): Le Conte's Sparrow *Ammodramus leconteii*

Subspecies, if known:

Number of Individuals: 1 **Sex(es):** ?

Age(s) & Plumage(s): ?

Date Seen: 10/10-11/2010 (also seen later on 10/10 by Devich Farbotnik and 10/12 by Ron French) **Time: Approx:** 10/10 9 AM & 11 AM; 10/11 7:45 AM

Where Seen (Town/County): New Britain Twp., Bucks Co.

Exact Location (Park, Road, Lake): Peace Valley Park

Observer Reporting:

Name: August Mirabella

Address: 1443 Wheaton Lane
North Wales, PA 19454

E-mail: augustmirabella@aol.com

Telephone (optional): 215-368-0594

Other Observers (Only those who saw & identified the bird with you): No one

Distance to Bird: 10 feet

Viewing Conditions (Sky, weather, position of sun relative to you): Bright sunshine off at 45 degrees in front of me in early morning and in front of me in late morning.

Optical Equipment Used: 7X42 Zeiss Bins

Habitat: In multiflora adjacent to small phragmites patch. The plant community is a mosaic of successional thicket (multiflora rose, autumn olive, etc.), and wet meadow (phragmites, reed canary grass, *Arthraxon hispidus*, soft rush, goldenrods, etc.). The alien *Arthraxon* is very thick. Area is adjacent to large area mowed for silage by a dairy farmer. Bird was near the border of the two areas.

Description (only what you observed; size relative to other species present; posture, body shape & proportions; colors & patterns of plumage: The bright sunshine in my face washed out the colors, so that my first thought was Grasshopper Sparrow. Contributing to that thought was a well defined eye-ring. Fortunately, I had two long views totaling probably 15 or 20 minutes as it sat in the bush. This allowed me time to store some details. As it turned out, it did seem rather dull plumaged bird even without the sun glare. My first concern about the Grasshopper ID was that the supercilium, which appeared more yellow than orange in that lighting, was extensive all the way back past the auricular patch, which was gray. The malar area was the same yellow/orange. The lores were white or near white. There was a well defined dark eye-line and dark lateral throat stripes. The throat appeared white. The narrow median crown strip was light but didn't appear brilliant white from what I remember, and the two broad lateral crown stripes were dark. The breast appeared buffy and fine streaked, but the flanks were heavily streaked over pale buff. This flank streaking confirmed it wasn't a Grasshopper Sparrow. The belly was white. The streaks on the nape were clearly seen, but I didn't see a purple color. The back was well patterned, but I didn't record details. A significant part of my time was trying to explain why it didn't have a bolder and more extensive orange color

that I remembered seeing in books and on the others I have seen. I also focused on the flank streaking to be sure I had that down well. It took several hours to convince myself that it really was a Le Conte's, as I found it hard to believe. To be doubly sure, I contacted Devich Farbotnik to discuss what I saw with him. He arrived about 1:30 PM but the bird didn't cooperate. He returned about 5:30 PM and found it at the same bush and photographed it.

Behavior (Be as specific as possible about what the bird was doing): Sitting most of the time in a multiflora and sometimes coming higher in the open as I made quiet sounds to draw it out. When, I walked away both times, it flew into the phrags. The next day, it flew out of the phrags into the bush, but this time it dropped and I never saw it again.

Vocalizations: I thought I heard a chip note once, but it could have been another bird nearby.

Supporting Evidence if Any (include with report): Photos by Devich Farbotnik 10/10/2010

Separation from Similar Species (How you eliminated others): See description above for some comments about Grasshopper Sparrow. In addition, Grasshopper has plain buffy underparts. Henslow's I assume would show the greenish appearance on the head and nape, which I didn't notice. The picture shows partially hidden lightish appearing tertials rather than reddish, so assume that also is counter to Henslow's. A Baird's apparently has bolder breast streaking, less flank streaking, and more subdued coloring overall. Nelson's has the gray central crown stripe and well defined fine streaking on the breast with orange background stopping abruptly at the lower breast in a rather straight line. The flank streaking is less extensive. Saltmarsh also has the gray crown stripe and more extensive breast streaking that is more irregular.

Discussion (Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it): Devich Farbotnik also believes it to be this species.

Previous Experience with this and/or Similar Species: Recently saw the 2006 Bucks bird and 2009 Chester bird.

Are you positive of your ID? (Why or why not): Yes, I had enough time to collect details to convince myself plus the pictures support the ID.

References:

During Observation: NONE

After Observation: Sibley

Date of report: 10/15/2010

Signature of Observer: August Mirabella

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Le Conte's Sparrow *Ammodramus leconteii*

Date of Sighting: 10 October 2010 to 12 October 2010

County : BUCKS

Location : PEACE VALLEY PARK

Observer(s): August Mirabella, Devich Farbotnik, Ron French

Date of Submission: 2010

Submitted by: August Mirabella, Devich Farbotnik

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	
D. DeReamus	X							
A. Guarente	X							
T. Johnson	X							
B. Coulter	X							
C. Rutt	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments:

7/0

Signature (Secretary)

Nick Pulcinella

Date:

1/30/11