

PA Rare Bird Report

829-01-2014

Submission Date	2014-01-27 07:00:12
Observer's Name	Vernon Gauthier
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Phone	717-385-9526
Observer's Address	Street Address: 111 W BIG SPRING AVE City: NEWVILLE State / Province: Pennsylvania Postal / Zip Code: 17241-1601 Country: United States
Names of additional observers	Ramsay Koury, Dueane Hoffman, Bill Oyler and about a dozen others at this point.
Species (Common Name)	Le Conte's Sparrow
Species (Scientific Name)	<i>Ammodramus leconteii</i>
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Adult
Observation Date and Time	01-24-2014 1:30 PM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S16496347
County	Cumberland
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Newville
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	2 Creek Lane
GPS coordinates of sighting	40.178494 -77.456819
Habitat	Low wet field, though at this point frozen and covered with snow. Open field with many weeds surrounded by wet brushy area. Bird was seen in a thick bramble.
Distance to bird	no more than 10 feet and 2-7 feet off the ground during the period of the first observation.
Viewing conditions	clear sunny day
Optical equipment used	Vortex Viper 8x42

Description

Initial Description as reported on e-bird: "I first noticed the crisp white breast of the bird as it sat on the edge of thick vegetation about 2 feet off the ground and 10 feet from me. The disappeared and then reappeared the same distance away but this time about 7 feet off the ground on a small branch sticking out of the brush. Both times I only saw front and side views of the bird and did not see its back. The crown of the head was dark with a white median line. The face of the bird was orange with gray cheeks. The bird did have slender eye rings. The bill was small, pointed and a lighter color. The throat was pale but not white. Underneath it was a orange band followed by a lighter buffy or pastel orange on the upper part of the breast. I did not notice any streaking on the throat. The lower breast and belly were a bright crisp white. The flanks were the same pastel orange color as the upper breast. The flanks also had dark brown streaking. I did not notice any wing bars of any type. I would estimate my total viewing time at approximately 2 minutes. It was a bright sunny day with good lighting. The sun was in front of me but was high enough in the sky not to interfere with my viewing of the bird." The 2nd time I saw the bird I was able to see the light streaking on the throat and noticed the dark eye line that begins aft of the eye back to the nape where it widens. The 4th time I saw the bird which is currently the last time I finally got a good look at the back and saw violet streaking on a grayish brown nape and the streaking on the back of dark and straw colored streaks.

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

The bird was just sitting in the brush.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

The orange coloration cuts it down to but a handful of sparrows. The white median stripe on the crown and relatively small bill rules out Baird's, Henslow's, Nelson's, Saltmarsh Sparrows. The lower breast and belly where white and it had the brown streaking on the side which are both different than a Grasshopper Sparrow. Having now seen the nape and the back they form a combination which are different than any possible species that the Le Conte's Sparrow might be confused with.

Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

Bird has a weak fluttering flight as if it is flying somewhat angled upright against the win.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes. After having 4 good looks at the bird and comparing field marks against other possible birds and looking at pitcules online, and having it confirmed by some other very good birders, it can't be anything else.

During

None, was too busy memorizing field marks.

After

Sibley's Field Guide, On line descriptions and pictures

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