

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2018-05-27 18:47:52
Observer's Name	Jonathan DeBalko
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Observer's Address	United States
Species (Common Name)	LeConte's Sparrow
Species (Scientific Name)	Ammodramus leconteii
Number of individuals	1
Observation Date and Time	05-23-2018 11:00 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45958096
County	Luzerne
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Plymouth Township
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Plymouth Flats
GPS coordinates of sighting	41.220744, -75.975657
Habitat	Tall grass at the edge of a dirt field and dense bushes at the edge of a large pond
Distance to bird	As close as 20-30 feet
Viewing conditions	Good viewing conditions but midday sun directly overhead
Optical equipment used	Swarovski SLC 8x50
Description	<p>Bird was immediately recognized as an ammodramus sparrow. It was flat-headed, small, chunky, and extremely short tailed. The overall impression of the bird was that it was extremely compact including short-billed. There was extensive orange in the face and across the chest and on sides. There was very fine streaking on the sides but I can't remember if I saw streaking across the chest as well. Although I forgot to specifically note the color of the crown stripe my recollection is that it contrasted greatly with the rest of the crown unlike the gray stripe on Nelson's. I think it may have been similar in color to the face and chest and although field guides describe the crown stripe on LeContes as white, many photos show that the stripe often starts as orange and then changes to white. The back of the bird was strongly patterned with bold, well defined stripes.</p>

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

The bird would flush from tall, dry grass to the edge of a dirt field where it would run along the ground for 10 or 20 feet then disappear back into the tall grass. I thought that this behavior seemed better for LeConte's especially given the dry grass habitat but I'm not sure. The bird did fly once or twice across the path and land in dense bushes on the opposite side of the path. Occasionally it would hop into the open for very brief, but good views. On several occasions it was chased back into the grass by a Song Sparrow, at which point the size difference was very evident.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

Shape like Grasshopper Sparrow but bill seemed smaller. Plumage completely different. Nelson's is the only species that has similar plumage details. Separated from Nelson's by finer streaking on sides, contrasting crown stripe, GISS. Bird seemed more compact, flatter headed, and shorter billed than Nelson's. Behavior of running through dirt at edge of dry grass also seemed better for LeConte's.

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

Bird was observed well but did not stay out of the grass or dense bushes long enough to be photographed. No vocalizations were heard. Subsequent attempts to relocate the bird by myself and others were unsuccessful.

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

Yes, because plumage, shape and size, behavior more closely matched LeConte's Sparrow than Nelson's.

During

Sibley App

After

Sibley App, iBird Pro App, eBird Macaulay Library image search, Cornell All About Birds

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