

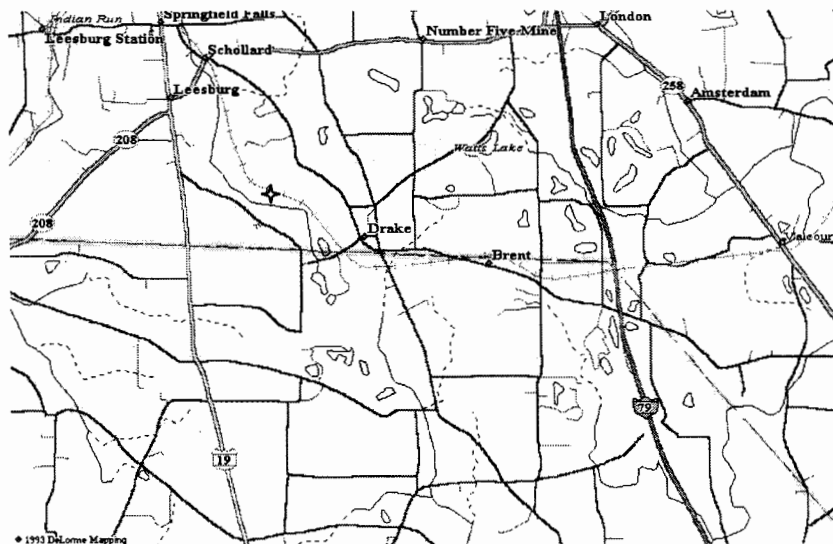
Mercer

839-02-1996

**Harris' Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)**  
**Mercer County, PA- October 27, 1996**  
**By Suzanne Butcher**

*S. Butcher*  
1/14/97

**Location:** along the abandoned railroad bed of Pennsy Swamp, a part of State Gamelands 284, also known as Schollards Wetlands (see map)



**Observers:** Linda Wagner, Suzanne Butcher, Mary Jane Seipler, Shirley McCarl, Carol and Mike Conlon, and Kathleen Molsky. The bird was seen on a BAS field trip to Pennsy Swamp. It was first found by Linda Wagner at 10 am and was then studied from 30-40 feet through binoculars (Zeiss 10x40 and Swarovski 10x40 etc.) and spotting scopes (Swarovski and Kowa) by all observers. It was watched for about 20 minutes as it was feeding on the ground with Chipping and White-crowned Sparrows. Temperature was in the 50°. The sky was overcast and there was a fine mist. Lighting conditions did not preclude getting good looks at the bird. I recognized the bird immediately as a Harris' Sparrow having seen them at Churchill, Manitoba in the summer of 1995. Mary Jane Seipler had earlier in the year seen the one coming to a PA feeder. The bird was a lifer for the other observers.

**FIELD NOTES**

Large sparrow about the size of the White-crowned Sparrows

Scratching behavior noted as it was feeding with the White-crowned and Chipping Sparrows on the weedy ground along the gravel railroad bed

Felt to be an adult in transition to winter plumage



**FIELD NOTES**

Black crown- flecked with white

Black face and chin (mask)

Pinkish bill

Buff colored cheek

Black throat (bib) flecked with white

Streaked sides, whitish-buffy breast

Two wing bars

Longish tail- no white on outer tail feathers

Notes Taken from original Field Sketch of October 27, 1996 by S. Butcher

**The following is an excerpt written by Suzanne Butcher for the *Upland Informer*, Vol. 15, Issue 3, Nov-Dec 96, the newsletter of the Bartramian Audubon Society of Slippery Rock, PA.**

**Harris' Sparrow at Pennsy Walk-** The BAS group on the October 27th walk met at the Pennsy parking lot off of Number 2 Mine Road. The skies were overcast and a fine mist was in the air. Those present included the leader, Linda Wagner, and participants, Mary Jane Seipler, Shirley McCarl, Robert Love, Carol and Mike Conlon, Kathleen Molsky, and Suzanne Butcher. Juncos and White-throated Sparrows were first encountered in the brushy areas along the old railroad bed. Brown Creepers, Chickadees, and Golden-crowned Kinglets could be heard in the trees, now mostly bare of leaves. A small flock of Yellow-rumped Warblers were eating the berries of a sprawling poison ivy vine. At the cattail marsh, a group of American Coots was seen swimming together among the reeds. A single Ruddy Duck was in the open water. The chatter of a Kingfisher and the calls of a Red-bellied Woodpecker could be heard in the distance. Several Eastern Bluebirds were on the wires and a group of Chipping and White-crowned Sparrows were feeding in the grasses along the path. As Linda was scoping the sparrows she spotted a sparrow that was definitely different. This was a large sparrow with a pinkish bill, black crown and black bib.... A **Harris' Sparrow!!!** Field guides were consulted. All present were able to get excellent looks both with their binoculars and through the scopes that were now fixed on the bird.

Harris' Sparrows, *Zonotrichia querula*, nest mainly in northwestern Canada and winter primarily in the western US. They are rare wanderers in Pennsylvania reported from late April to mid-May and from mid-October to late December. They have been reported in Allegheny, Crawford, Erie, Bucks, and Chester counties. Erie County has three October records, 18 Oct. 1959 at P.I., 14 Oct. 1965 at P.I. and 21-22 Oct. 1975. No doubt the 27 Oct. 1996 Pennsy sighting is a first Mercer County record.

The group happily adjourned to the local McDonalds to notify others of the bird and to revel in their find, a life bird for the Conlons, Kathy Molsky, and Linda Wager.

# Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

## Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Harris' Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)

Date of Sighting: 27 October 1996 to 27 October 1996

Location: SGL 284 - PENNSY SWAMP

County: MERCER

Observer(s): Suzanne Butcher

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Suzanne Butcher

Written Description: YES

Photo: NO

Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas			X					
N. Pulcinella			X					
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams			X					
P. Schwalbe			X					
S. Feldstein			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

8-16-97