

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
210 Welcome Ave. Norwood, PA 19074

8 February 2002

John Fedak
28 Race St.
Bradford, PA 16710

Dear John,

I hope you, Lisa, and Danny are well, and that your withdrawal symptoms from leaving Piney Tract are not too troublesome.

I am writing as required to tell you of four records from Clarion County in 1998 which did not fare well in the Committee's vote. The members' opinions were divided in all four cases, and the balloting for each record went to a second round (which partly explains the delay in our announcement of the results). The votes and the reasons are as follows:

Clay-colored Sparrow, Piney Tract, 15-16 April 1998 -- Record No. 814-01-1998

The final vote was three in favor of acceptance and four not in favor, which placed the record in the Committee's Class IV-A: "a record for which there exists a majority of evidence in support of an observer's identification; the record is probably correct, but not beyond reasonable doubt."

The members voting against acceptance expressed a number of concerns, primarily that the description of the call should have been more detailed to distinguish it from other species with buzzy calls. One of the members who voted "no" commented, "I'm pretty certain this (or these?) bird(s) were identified correctly, but not much of an attempt is made at eliminating potential pitfalls. Despite the fact that observer experience is compelling and the birds ended up nesting nearby I am left not 100% confident that this particular bird(s) was identified correctly."

Clay-colored Sparrow, Piney Tract, 15-25 July 1998 -- Record No. 814-03-1998

The final vote was two in favor of acceptance and five not in favor, which placed this bird also in Class IV-A as a most likely correct identification but not quite conclusive based on the photograph and other documentation.

One of the "no" voters commented, "Conditions tend to favor Clay-colored Sparrows breeding at Piney Tract. However, since the juvenile was never seen being fed by an adult Clay-

colored Sparrow, I am not convinced that the juvenile bird was a Clay-colored. In my opinion the photo of the juvenile is not close enough or sharp enough to certainly separate Chipping from Clay-colored. I would prefer more substantial evidence for a first state Clay-colored Sparrow breeding record."

(Of course your intensive efforts were subsequently rewarded when breeding was confirmed at the site.)

Western Meadowlark, Callensburg, 6 June 1998 -- Record No. 858-01-1998

The final vote on this was one in favor and six not in favor, placing this record also in Class IV-A as probably but not certainly supported by the documentation.

In general the majority felt that the "chuck" call was the only possible indication of a Western, the "more flute-like" song was not an adequate description. Some of the members believed in addition that they could only accept a Western with certainty by hearing an audio recording of the song -- and especially the call.

Hoary Redpoll, Piney Tract, 25 January 1998 -- Record No. 887-01-1998

The final vote was two favoring and five not favoring acceptance, again placing the record in Class IV-A.

I am enclosing a copy of my report to the committee on this record, as an example of some of the majority voters' concerns.

As you know, non-acceptance does mean an identification was incorrect, but rather that in all four of these cases a majority of the Committee felt that the details were not conclusive.

We hope this does not discourage you from reporting rarities in the future, because you will surely find some in McKean County.

Best regards,



For the Committee:
Paul Hess, Chairman

858-0A-1998

SPECIES: Western Meadowlark

DATE SIGHTED: June 6, 1998

SIZE, SHAPE, and PLUMAGE DESCRIPTION:

The bird was the same size as Eastern Meadowlark. The plumage was very similar, except that the head was much lighter in color.

BEHAVIOR:

The bird was seen and heard singing in an old strip mine reclamation on 6/6/98. The song seemed higher pitched but it matched the phrases of the Western Meadowlark songs I have heard. On 6/7/98, I located the bird again by it's song which sounded more flute-like than the previous day. The bird was also heard making a "chuck" sound. Never was the bird heard doing any variation of "spring of the year" or making the raspberry-like call note (fartlike)

NUMBER, SEX, AGE:

1 adult, I assume male because of the singing.

LOCATION:

On the Grassland Breeding Bird Survey about 5 miles southeast of Callensburg in a reclaimed strip mine, Clarion County, Pa

CONDITIONS, TIME, WEATHER, OPTICS, EXPERIENCE:

Both days it was sunny and warm, about 65 degrees F, but it was very windy, scale of 3 or 4. The bird was observed through Leica 8 X 42 binoculars and a Kowa TSN-2 scope. Pictures did not turn out - Bird was too far away, and a tape could not be made of its song or call because of the wind. I have experience with Western Meadowlarks, including the one in Juniata County last year and this year. The song sounded fine, just fainter and higher pitched. Even the one in Juniata County did this year. My suspicion was that it was the wind making the song sound that way. On a trip out west this summer, I did indeed have Western Meadowlarks sound faint and higher pitched due to strong winds.

ANY OTHER OBSERVERS?

Margaret Buckwalter, Gilbert Twiest, and Peter Dalby

NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL, DATE OF WRITE-UP:

John G. Fedak
221 Washington Street
New Bethlehem, PA 16242
(814)275-4086

Written up on June 6, 1998; revised on June 7 and then on August 24 after my trip out west.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round One

Species: Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

Date of Sighting: 6 June 1998 to 6 June 1998

Location: CALLENSBURG

County: CLARION

Observer(s): John Fedak, Margaret Buckwalter, Gilbert Twiest, Peter Dalby

Date of Submission: 1998

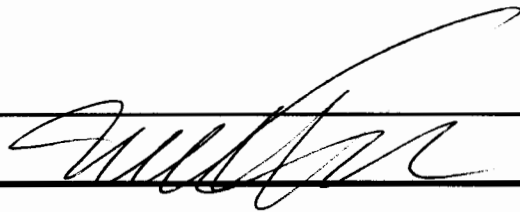
Submitted by: John Fedak

WRITTEN DESCRIPTION YES PHOTO NO SPECIMEN NO RECORDING NO

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman			X					
T. Floyd								X
P. Hess			X					
R. Ickes				X				
J. McWilliams				X				
B. Reid			X					X
P. Rodewald					X			
TOTALS			3	2	1			1 2
DECISION				X				

Comments: 3/3/1 2ND ROUND

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

9/24/00

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Ballot - Round Two

Species: Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

Date of Sighting: 6 June 1998 to 6 June 1998

Location: CALLENSBURG

County: CLARION

Observer(s): John Fedak, Margaret Buckwalter, Gilbert Twiest, Peter Dalby

Date of Submission: 1998

Submitted by: John Fedak

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

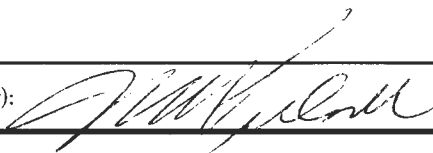
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman				X				
G. Armistead				X	X			
P. Hess					X			
R. Ickes				X				
J. McWilliams				X				
B. Reid			X					
P. Rodewald				X				
TOTALS			1	4	2			
DECISION				X				

Comments: 1/6/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 06/21/01