

858-01-2001

Western Meadowlark

Sturnella neglecta

29 April 2001

by Mark A. McConaughy

This bird was first discovered by Dennis Lauffer along Baker Road near Mammoth in Westmoreland County on 28 April 2001. I went out to check on the bird and attempted to obtain photographs and recordings of it calling on 29 April 2001. The bird was heard singing in the grass and in some tall trees at the end of a hay field. I took digital photos and slides of the bird in question through my Leica Televid APO scope with a 32 mm wide angle objective. The 3x telephoto on the digital yielded an image that is approximately 96x. The slides are probably similar to this in terms of magnification, but I don't know the effective magnification of the camera lens setting to actually figure it out. In any case, the slides are not any better at showing the bird than the digital photographs. I am submitting the digital photos of the bird to show that it was at least a meadowlark. I also made an attempt to videotape the bird singing at the same time I took the digital shots and slides, but my videotape camera failed to record for some reason (I do appear to be having trouble with the record mechanism since it also failed to record the second bird on my first attempt to record it – or maybe western meadowlarks simply put off an aura that blocks their images on videotape! <G>). After learning the videotape had failed, I went back for a second try with the videotape camera. The western meadowlark was not as cooperative and did not present itself in a photographable situation the second time I was there. All I was able to do is get a recording of it singing. The first section of the submitted videotape is the recording of this western meadowlark's call, but the bird is not visible on the videotape.

About all one can tell from the submitted digital pictures is that the bird is a meadowlark. The bird is roughly red-winged blackbird or Baltimore oriole in size (there also were plenty of singing eastern meadowlarks around for comparison, at least 8 of them and probably more). The markings on the bird (the V-neck, eye stripe, top of head stripes) were not as solid or distinct as on the Eastern Meadowlarks, but were certainly present. The belly, breast, "chin" and submalar area of the bird were all decidedly yellow. The flanks were white with brownish spots in a linear pattern. The cheek was a light mottled gray. The feathers on the back and wings were tan or light brown with some darker inner feather markings (i.e., somewhat darker centers), but not as dark as found on the eastern meadowlarks in the area. The tail feathers also appeared to be a shade lighter than that of the eastern meadowlarks in the area. The song it was singing was clearly not the normal eastern meadowlark song, but that of a western meadowlark. The song this meadowlark was singing is on the videotape submitted as documentation for the bird.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Ballot - Round One

Species: Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

Date of Sighting: 29 April 2001 to 2001

Location: MAMMOTH

County: WESTMORELAND

Observer(s): Mark McConaughy, Dennis Lauffer

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Mark McConaughy

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

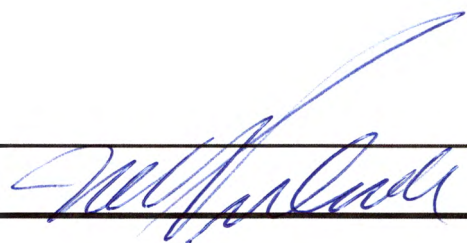
Specimen: No

Recording: Video

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead	X							
D. Heathcote	X							
P. Hess	X							
J. Stanley	X							
E. Witmer	X							
R. Leberman	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 6/2/02