

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2019-04-04 17:27:30
Observer's Name	David McNaughton
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Phone	717-497-8390
Observer's Address	701 S. 7th St. Lebanon PA 17042 United States
Names of additional observers	Jarrold Derr, Steve Walthius
Species (Common Name)	LeConte's Sparrow
Species (Scientific Name)	<i>Ammodramus leconteii</i>
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Unkown
Observation Date and Time	12-27-2018 10:20 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S51000082
County	York
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Bermudian
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	State Gamelands 243 Foodplot field
GPS coordinates of sighting	40 02'11.8" N, 77 02'10.8" W
Habitat	Warm-season grass and shrub edge between foodplot and riparian treeline
Distance to bird	10 meters
Viewing conditions	sunny and clear, vegetation obscuring at times, open straight view at other times
Optical equipment used	Bushnell Legends 8.5x42

Description	<p>Small light-colored sparrow in high grass coming out of a swale with low brush cover (Rubus, juniper, milkweed, broom sedge). Observed during the York Springs Christmas Bird Count. Yellow on chin and throat was the first detail to make an impression (my initial view of the cap and face down to the bill were obscured by a corn frond or a stalk of grass). Jarrod spotted it and said it was going to be something like one of the Ammospizas and that he had yellow in the lores. The yellow had fine or no streaking and the bird was clean white under it for the rest of the chest and belly. Bird turned and showed a grey-brown nape but too far to see the streaks. We returned at the end of the count with a camera and could see the chestnut fine streaks on that nape. The cheek patch was fairly light brown in that camera as well. We heard a few chip notes and they were higher and thinner than the surrounding calls from the other sparrow species. Bird was fairly bold and came to the edge a few times when pished or just in its own movements. Other species immediately adjacent included white-throated, song, and dark-eyed juncos. To my knowledge Nelson's have not been found wintering in Eastern Pennsylvania, but there have been a couple to half-a-dozen LeConte's that have stayed in one spot for entire winters at a time and one that may have returned to winter the following year. All of those records are further east to my knowledge.</p>
Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)	<p>Bird was fairly bold and came to the edge a few times when pished or just in its own movements. Bird perched on thin stalks and chipped or sat still, looking like a milkweed pod. Then it would return to the base of the brush. It was not associating closely with the other sparrows, but it was in the near vicinity of the other sparrows on both visits. They would travel farther into the treeline and riparian area, but this bird stayed out in the grass and brush edge.</p>
Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)	<p>Nape color, amount of yellow on the bird, previous contact with wintering LeConte's at a Brandywine Conservancy preserve years ago. It had yellow in the lores and the border of yellow on its face and brown cheek to separate it from the common winter sparrows in the area and lacked the pinkish bill of a field sparrow. Two dark cap stripes and a gray nape with fine streaking helped eliminate other Ammodramus species.</p>
Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:	<p>There were several other experienced birders in the next few days and a lot of discussion following the sighting. I know the records from everyone are probably sparse. The eBird checklist includes photos from Jarrod Derr. We submitted a rare bird form to Audubon for CBC review previously.</p>
Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)	<p>Yes, it has stood the judgement of regional birders, MacAuley Library, eBird reviewers, and CBC reviewers.</p>
During	<p>Photographs, All About Birds website</p>
After	<p>Sibley's Guide to the Birds of the Eastern US</p>
Supporting evidence (check all that apply)	<p>Photograph</p>
Click to edit	<p>PORC-webform00080</p>