

Chestnut-collared Longspur
4 Apr 1982
northwest, Muscatine Co., IA
*James Huntington
IBL 52:63, 53:35

Record Number: 82-01
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

James J. Huntington

REFERENCES

Field Reports: 52:63
Records Committee: 53:35

VOTE (1982): 7-III

III, Time and place sounds right. Light chin and tail clinch it for me.

III, Excellent detail, notes taken immediately, competent observer, likely time and circumstances.

III, good doc.

III, Good description, emphasizes the need to closely check longspur flocks.

III, A good, reasonable description of a striking and easily identified bird. Great find. Lucky for Mr. Huntington it wasn't a female.

III, Well-described by an observer who has seen the species previously. Some difficulty with an apparent intermediate plumage, but I see no problems.

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation
by the Records Committee
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: Chestnut-collared Longspur

DATE SEEN: 4 Apr 1982

*mailed
5/21/82*

SITE OF OBSERVATION: NW Muscatine Co.

OBSERVERS: James Huntington

DATE OF REVIEW: 1982

METHOD OF REVIEW: mail

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: III

COMMENTS: Excellent immediate documentation. No questions concerning the identification.

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

1. Species Chestnut-collared Longspur 2. Number one ♂
 3. Location Muscatine Co. just east of Johnson Co. line 2.25 mi. South of Hwy 6
 4. Date: 4-4-1982 5. Time Bird Seen: 10:15 to 10:25

6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): From field notes:

"Saw bird first thought to be a Lapland Longspur. Sharp red collar (more restricted than Lapland). Looked strange as it had yellow on the face. I approached slowly from 35-15 feet. Smaller than Smith's Longspurs a few of which were nearby. Its face was black and white streaked with a black streak from the eye. Above and below this black streak were white streaks. Top of head black with slight whitish median line. The chin and throat were yellow. Below the chin was a black belly beginning sharply, continuing quite low - much lower than Lapland. As I got really close (15") the half dozen Smith's flushed. The other bird crouched. When it finally flushed, a black triangle seemed to stand out briefly in tail.

7. Description of voice, if heard:

none

8. Description of behavior: Bird foraged in corn stubble next to grassy border. Before it had been sitting on the fence (I think). It was associated with a few Smith's Longspurs. over →
 9. Habitat - general: Corn stubble field.

specific: Bird studied at the edge of a grassy border which ran along the fence separating two corn stubble fields.

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:
 Lapland Longspur eliminated because chin + throat yellow not black also belly black not just chest. Red collar more restricted than in Lapland. Black belly, red collar, black triangle on tail, black and white lines on face, yellow on chin + throat diagnostic for Chestnut-collared Longspur.

11. Distance (how measured)?

50' to within 15' (estimate)

12. Optical equipment:

Ednar 8x32 field glasses

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):

Sunny. Sun behind me. Cold, windy 30°

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:

First and only other experience was at Pawnee National Grassland in NE Colorado.

Went on trip of Denver Field Ornithologists. Saw Skylarking males; was able to approach

15. Other observers: a male on the ground for a most satisfying look.

none

16. Did the others agree with your identification?

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

none

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

Field Guide to the Birds (New) Peterson. Bird was cooperative to allow me to look at picture, then put the book away, and still have a most satisfactory and satisfying look at the bird. I wrote my notes without looking at the book.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

Wrote description on 4-15-82. Took notes 5 minutes after seeing bird.

Signature: James G. Huntington

Address: 1012 N. Summit #5

Date: 4-15-82

City, State: Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Hunter 82-01

8. These birds were close to, but separated from, a flock of Lapland Longspurs. When I approached, the Smith's Longspurs flushed, the Chestnut-collared Longspur crouched, froze, then finally flushed.

82-01
from James Huntington
20 Apr 82

My quest was to see a Smith's Longspur, which would be a life bird. I asked a farmer, Mr. Wright, if I could bird-watch on his land after seeing flocks of longspurs from the road.

Sunday, 4-4-1982, I climbed the fence, and started to walk east on the short grassy field. It was sunny, although cold and windy. I walked northeast to a gate and into the next field to the east. This field was corn stubble. I saw a flock come down in the northeast corner of this field. I moved slowly in an arc to try to see the flock with the sun, and wind, behind me.

As I approached the flock, I could see Lapland Longspurs, many in breeding plumage with their black heads and breasts, very white bellies, and yellowish lines from their eyes. It was easy (I thought) to tell a Lapland at a glance, noting especially how white their bellies were. I was looking for birds which were buffy.

Many of the Laplands had moved away from me just across the fence to the adjacent field of corn stubble, when my attention was directed to the sound of a bird sitting on a small stalk. This bird was 'uniformly buffy below'. I heard the 'clicking' noise to my right and noticed a bird had landed on the fence. It too was very buffy below. The two birds chatted together for a few seconds, when a third bird came in for a landing on my side of the fence, clicking as it came. I could see white on the sides of the tail and on the shoulder. This bird was also buffy below.

After those three birds left, I moved ahead toward the field where most of the Laplands were now foraging. Four birds landed on the fence ahead and to the left of me. One bird was white and black, so I concentrated on the three buffy birds. The birds hopped to my side of the fence along the grassy border

of the field.

Though I had seen my first Smith's Longspur, I still hoped to find one in breeding plumage. Those birds seen so far were obviously Smith's Longspurs, with very buffy underparts (some were quite orange), white on tail and shoulder, some even had the cheek patch, although only in shades of brown, not in black and white.

After looking at the three Smith's, I again glanced at what I had originally thought to be a Lapland Longspur. But this bird was not quite right. It had yellow on the face where it should have been black! It had a sharp red collar, which did not run up the back of the head. I slowly approached. It was smaller than the nearby Smith's. It had a black line from the eye. Above and below this black line were white lines. The top of the head was black with a slight whitish median line. The chin and throat were yellow. Below the yellow throat was a black belly, beginning sharply, continuing much lower than the black of the Lapland Longspur.

I checked my Peterson to compare his picture of the Chestnut-collared Longspur with my bird. They were almost exactly the same except my bird had some little white mixed in with the black of the belly. I got even closer. The Smith's Longspurs flushed; the Chestnut-collared Longspur crouched. I took another few steps; the bird flushed. I did not notice so much the white on the tail as did notice a very striking black triangle.

I was now cold. I walked back to the car to record what I had seen, pleased with the life bird Smith's Longspur and delighted to see the beautiful Chestnut-collared Longspur again.