

Lark Bunting 1  
28 Apr 1990  
DeSoto N.W.R., Harrison Co., IA  
Mary Cook Babcock  
IBL 60:65,72, 62:22

Record Number: 90-20  
Classification: NA

## DOCUMENTATION

Mary Cook Babcock

## REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:65,72  
Records Committee: IBL 62:22

VOTE: 4 A-D, 3 NA

NA: I can not accept just a blackbird with large white wing patches. What about bill shape? Did it have rounded wings in flight? Not enough information in the document. I've seen many Lark Buntings but none perched in trees.

NA: Your description and effort is much appreciated. Perhaps there is not quite enough detail to fully evaluate. From personal experience I know how quickly details can fade and this is possible with the six day span between the observation and any written notes.

NA: This description, while suggestive of Lark Bunting, lacks enough detail to be positive. For example, the shape of bill is not described, nor is the shape of the wing patch.

A-D: Brief but convincing description from the most likely location in Iowa.

A-D: Distance and lighting conditions not given. Assuming good light and a good look at the bird, so Bobolink can be eliminated, I am voting A-D.

A-D: Since no other colors but white patch on wing and all black bird I can see this being no other species but a Lark Bunting. Shape not really described but description of coloration and placement of white patch on wing adequately eliminates any other species.

A-D: I believe this distinctive bird would only be mistaken for a Bobolink which has a buffy hindneck and much more white that just on the large wing patches. A Bobolink is quite distinctively marked. This looks like a good early record of a Lark Bunting for Iowa.

RESULT OF 2ND REVIEW: 4 A-D; 3 NA

NA: I feel there was not enough details for me to be completely sure. Perhaps I look in the wrong counties for this bird, but I always felt farther north in the grain counties where they used to nest was the best location.

NA: We appreciate your efforts. Probably just not enough detail was given to be certain.

NA: This description does favor Lark Bunting, but as this bird is quite rare in Iowa, I feel more detail is needed to accept.

A-D: I am little perplexed at the NA votes on this record. A breeding plumage Lark Bunting is very distinctive, and very easy to identify. Unless I am missing something, a small, all black bird with conspicuous white wing patches can be no other U.S. bird than a Lark Bunting. I do not see how the observer's

failure to described bill shape, wing shape, or the shape of the wing patch could have added anything to this description but bulk. While additional detail is always encouraged and welcome, we have a description here that is beyond reasonable doubt. I do agree with the one NA voter that was concerned about the length of time between the sighting and the documentation. However, we have a bird with simple enough markings that should persist in one's memory for six days.

A-D: Lark Bunting is the only small all black bird w/ a white wing mark besides Yellow-headed Blackbird and Bobolink I can think of. Because these are so obvious and would be almost impossible to mistake I can accept this report.

A-D: What could this swallow sized black bird with white patches be but a Lark Bunting? With only two colors and small size to remember I would say the six day lapse is of little consequence here. What else could it be? Location is very good for this species also.

A-D: Acceptable details. The observer is to be commended for documenting this bird for Iowa most likely after talking with other birders about its rarity in Iowa.

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

90-20

What species? Dark Bunting How many? 1  
Location? De Soto Bend NWR  
Type of Habitat? <sup>Daye</sup> Tree by a pond - in flock of mixed swallows  
When? date(s): 4/28/90 time: 11:55 to 11:05  
Who? your name and address: Mary Cook Babcock 10314 N 5th Cambridge Mo  
Others with you: 68127  
Others before or after you: —

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Observed a different shape while observing swallows  
Bird perched differently from swallows - different  
silhouette. Dark with apparent white on side.  
Binoculars showed swallow sized black bird with  
large white wing patch. no other colors. Dark bill.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Smaller & different shape from red winged blackbird  
No yellow head as yellow headed blackbird.  
Too small for mockingbird or shrike - also different color

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no  
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

partly cloudy, near noon, bird on bare tree beside  
pond, no other tall shrubbery - could not determine anything except  
outline + perching posture without binoculars - used minolta 10x25  
Previous experience with species and similar ones: wide angled for clear view  
With all mentioned except this one

References and persons consulted before writing description: Bob Starr - Alan Genon

How long before field notes made? 6 days this form completed? 5/4/90

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).