

Lark Bunting
6 Jun 1999
s. of Scranton, Greene Co., IA
*Rob Thelen
IBL 69:130, 70:145

Record Number: 99-16
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Rob Thelen, 1744 Salinger, Carroll 51401

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 69:130

Records Committee: IBL 70:145

VOTE: 5 A-D, 1 NA, 1 no vote recorded

no vote recorded, Convincingly described and reasonable in terms of location and date.

A-D, The view was brief and the description is short, but it seems sufficient to identify the bird as a female Lark Bunting. It was seen during the expected time frame for the species in Iowa.

NA, Although a wing patch is highly suggestive of Lark Bunting, describing the patch as "white" may not be. I don't have live experience studying Lark Buntings and must rely on field guides. Howell and Webb says: "wing panel reduced to broad creamy buff edgings." Rising and Beadle says: "wing: brown, with coverts and scapulars broadly edged with very pale brown". Both guides stress the white wing tips to the tail feathers visible in flight. The possibility of a different sparrow-like bird with albinistic scaps and/or coverts cannot be ruled out with such a quick view. I recently saw an Am. Robin with just such a pattern.

A-D, Streaked brown bird with white wing patches the size of a Dickcissel fits female Lark Bunting. Typical time for them to show up in western Iowa.

A-D, Description adequate--view by observer familiar with species OK. Location and date of occurrence plausible.

A-D, A difficult call, however, date, location and salient field mark all were good.

RE-VOTE (by mail): 5 A-D, 2 NA

NA, The NA voter in the previous review made a valid point which caused me to change my position. The bird probably was a Lark Bunting, but the identification is not beyond reasonable doubt. The view of the bird was very brief, as was the description. The identification was based almost entirely on the white wing patches, and with no other diagnostic field marks, the possibility of a partially albinistic bird of another species cannot be ruled out.

A-D, I agree with the NA voter that the description is lacking, but this is understandable since the bird was in flight. Consequently, I don't have a problem with the failure to note tail pattern. I think that it is probably irrelevant to quibble over the description of the wing patch as white (the observer) as compared to "creamy buff" (Howell-Webb) or "very pale brown"

99-16

(Rising and Beadle). To his credit, the NA voter does offer an alternative--another sparrow with albinistic scaps--but I think this is probably even more unlikely than a Lark Bunting.

NA, As I stated previously, I don't believe the description of the bird in the documentation is strong enough to identify it as a Lark Bunting. A second look at the bird may very well have confirmed it as this species, but I want more than a quick glance at a fly-by for the 2nd confirmed report of this accidental species in 15 years.

A-D, The documentation does not provide a detailed description of the feather tracts and soft parts. The NA voter's concern that this may be some odd ball bird is legitimate, but I doubt it.

A-D, NGS Guide shows white patches--as previously stated, location & date as expected.

A-D, Although describing the wing patches as white might be misleading I believe enough other features and factors add up to make this a good bird.

99-16

Subj: **Fw: Bird documentation**
Date: 6/11/99 3:23:11 PM Central Daylight Time
From: rthelen@pionet.net (Rob Thelen)
To: thkent@AOL.COM (Tom Kent)

Tom, Jim Dinsmore thought I should send you a copy of this documentation to you for the records committee.

> Date: Thursday, June 10, 1999 15:00:45
> From: rthelen
> To: James Dinsmore
> Subject: Bird documentation
>
> Jim, will this work for a documentation form if this won't work let me
> know and I will mail one to you.
> Thanks, Rob Thelen
>
> Species: Lark Bunting (female) How many : one
>
> Location: Greene County, 1 mile south of Scranton on Highway 25 ,then 3/4 mile
> east.
>
> Type of habitat: Pasture with cows on South side, Row crops on North side
>
> Date: 6/6/99 Time: 10:00 A.M.
>
> My name and address: Rob Thelen, 1744 Salinger, Carroll, Iowa, 51401
> rthelen@pionet
>
> Others with me: Marty Thelen, Breda Iowa
>
> Description: The size of the bird was about the size of a Dicksissel. It was a
> light brown in color with definite dark brown stripes on it's breast. It's
> back also appeared to be striped. This bird had white wing patches (not wing
> bars) that were very noticeable in the middle of it's wings.
>
> Similar species and how eliminated: I don't know of any other bird of this
> size that has white wing patches. I couldn't find any other info in any of my
> bird guides.
>
> Did anyone disagree or have reservations about I.D.: No
>
> Viewing conditions: Partly cloudy The bird was seen by flying right next to
> the car at approximately 10 feet. I only saw the bird for about 5 or 6
> seconds. We could not relocate the bird by the time we turned around.
>
> Previous experience With species: In June of 1998 I spent a week in Wyoming
> where I saw alot of Lark Buntings
>
> References and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson,
> Stokes, National Audubon Society and Golden field guides for birds. I
> contacted Tom Kent who told me to fill out a documentation form and send it to
> the summer editor of IOU field reports.
>
> How long before notes were made : 10 min.
>
> How long before this form was completed: 4 Days

99-16

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