

Lark Bunting

30 Apr 1994

n. of Burlington, Des Moines Co., IA

\*C. Fuller

IBL 64:79; 65:82, Fuller 1995

Record Number: 94-20

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Charles Fuller, 420 Garfield, Burlington 52601 [19 Aug 1994\*]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 64:79

Records Committee: IBL 65:82

Fuller, C. 1995. Lark Bunting in Des Moines County. IBL 65:22.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, I voted to accept despite somewhat early date and definitely unexpected location because description eliminates other sparrows and longspurs.

A-D, Tail description and white wing patches leave no doubt of an amazing record for southeast Iowa.

A-D, Wing patch, streaking, eye-line, and shape fit this species. The date is unusual for this late migrant. I can't judge the tail pattern. Books and photos show rounded and notched tails and various amount and location of white.

A-D, Wing and tail pattern seen to confirm this record.

A-D, Good description -- rather early date suggests misplaced bird which wintered out of normal range.

search yielded nothing but exhaustion and unfortunately that "second look" would never come.

I contacted Jim Fuller, and he and Tom Kent went to the same area the next morning and relocated the bird. I also returned later that day and searched for the bird, but my search was brief and unsuccessful, due to a dust storm created by strong southerly winds.

This sighting is the eleventh record for the state. Dating back to 1969 there are 10 previous records in Iowa: four from the western region of the state, three from the central, and three from the east. Seven of these previous records occurred in the spring, with two in the fall and one in the summer. It appears that this species could show up anywhere in Iowa, especially in the spring.

806 15th Ave SW #5, Cedar Rapids IA 52404

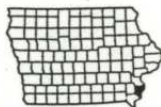
## LARK BUNTING IN DES MOINES COUNTY

CHARLES FULLER

One of my favorite birding areas in Des Moines County is the wide agricultural belt that is east of Highway 99 and north of Burlington. This area includes four or five excellent vantage points where one can view the Mississippi River. On 30 April 1994, as I was making my rounds in the old floodplain and heading toward the river, I drove down my favorite road where, in most late winters and early springs, Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings can be found. This was a "B" level minimum maintenance road and was just dry enough to traverse without getting stuck. At a 90 degree turn in the road, there were two birds in the middle of the road, 30-40 feet from my car. The first was easily identified as a Vesper Sparrow, while the other got my immediate, undivided attention. The most conspicuous field mark was the large creamy-white wing patch (not bars). The bird in question was slightly larger than the nearby Vesper Sparrow and had a heavy sparrow-like bill. It had a slight, but readily apparent eye ring with a light stripe just above and through the eye. The breast was streaked, and the tail was slightly notched with a white-tipped end. The bird also had a very fine white outertail line. After observing the bird on the ground for nearly a full minute, it abruptly flew and possibly landed in a recently plowed field 0.2 mile away. My first impression of this bird was that I had found a female Lark Bunting, and the various field guides I consulted did nothing to change my mind. Although there are a number of previous records of Lark Buntings from western Iowa, there are few from eastern Iowa and none from Des Moines or other nearby southeastern Iowa counties.

It must be noted that on 29 April, the day before the sighting, a powerful front came through Iowa, ushering in strong northwest winds which gusted above 25 mph. I speculate that it was this weather disturbance that brought in this bird.

420 South Garfield, Burlington, IA 52601



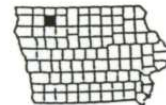
## CLARK'S GREBE IN CLAY COUNTY

MARION M. BREWER

During spring, I like to tour eastern Clay and western Palo Alto counties every week to see what birds I can find. One area I visit regularly is Trumbull Lake in Clay County. Over the past several years, it has been especially good for grebes. This spring proved no exception as I found Red-necked, Eared, and Western grebes there.

On 13 May 1994, I stopped at the boat access at the southwest corner of Trumbull Lake and scanned the lake. Among the birds on the lake were a pair of large grebes. One was clearly a Western Grebe while the other was a Clark's Grebe. The latter bird had a bright yellow bill which contrasted with the greenish-yellow bill of the Western Grebe. The lores region of the Clark's Grebe was white and the white coloration extended in front of, over, and behind the reddish-colored eye. The two grebes were preening and diving together while I watched them. I revisited the area on 19 May and saw one Clark's Grebe again in the same area but the Western Grebe was not present.

1537 560th Street, Cherokee, IA 51012



## BOOK REVIEWS

*A Guide to the Birding Areas of Missouri* compiled by Kay Palmer. Audubon Society of Missouri. 1993, 179 pp., paperback \$10.00. Available from Kay Palmer, 15100 S. Clinkenbeard, Ashland, MO 65010. \$1.50 postage and handling. With the exception of Zimmerman and Patti's *A Guide to Bird Finding in Kansas and Western Missouri*, no other book has been published on bird finding for the entire state of Missouri. This guide contains descriptions of areas from many contributors. As a result, writing styles vary. Many of the articles appeared in *The Bluebird* the society's official journal.

The guide breaks the state down into six regions. Each region averages 17 birding areas with the exception of the southwestern region which has 45. Directions are given to each area as well as short descriptions of the natural features, species that can be expected to be seen, and general information or restrictions. Maps are provided for 35 of the 128 areas described. Unfortunately, the quality is not uniform. Many have been reduced to such a degree that a magnifying glass is needed to read the print.

An index lists bird species and birding areas by county, state parks, and conservation areas. An annotated official state checklist is provided with the guide, but it could easily become separated from the book. Adding several pages to the book and reprinting the checklist could have easily solved the problem. There are not any individual species accounts; rather birds are classed by the habitats in which they could be found such as forest edge or shrubby fields. A bar graph time line of arrivals and departures would have been helpful as well as a listing of abundance status.

These limitations notwithstanding, those not familiar with Missouri birding areas will find this guide helpful. A final word of caution. The preface states that "due to the extreme flooding in 1993, conditions in birding areas along the Missouri and Mississippi rivers could be quite different from the way in which they have been described."—Hank Zaletel



DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

94-20

What species? Lark Bunting - Female How many? 1

Location? North of Burlington off Highway 99

Type of Habitat? Farm land--freshly plowed field, low hedge rows

When? date(s): 4/30/94 time: 3:30 pm to 3:31 pm

Who? your name and address: Charles Fuller, 420 S. Garfield, Burlington, IA 52601

Others with you: None

Others before or after you: None

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.

These are the notes made after sighting: The Bird sighted on a dirt road feeding, with a Vesper Sparrow--within 3 feet for comparison. The most conspicuous field mark ~~were~~ the large creamy white wing patches (Not bars). The bird was slightly larger than the Vesper Sparrow with heavy sparrow bill. It had a slight eye ring with light stripe just above and through the eye. The breast was streaked with slightly notched tail with a fine outertail white line with a white tipped end. (See diagram--over). My first impression was female Lark Bunting and the field guides consulted did nothing to change my mind.

I watched the bird for approximately 1 full minute from 30 feet--from my car. He (she) abruptly flew and landed (I think) in a plowed field 1 to 2 tenths of a mile away.

The day of the sighting followed 2 previous days of strong NW winds and weather changes..

Similar species; how eliminated:

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, explain:

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

Swift/Audubon 8/44 binocs--light good--partly cloudy day. Bird within 30 feet for approximately 1 minute.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: On Western trips

References and persons consulted before writing description: Consulted field guides (Peterson, geographic) after making field notes.

How long before field notes made? Immediately form completed? June 13, 1994

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

tail, diagram

94-20

