

Lark Bunting in Wake County, N.C.

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While birding on Dorothea Dix Farm, Raleigh, Wake County, N.C., at 0850 on 2 May 1978, we noticed a sparrow-sized black-and-white plumaged bird standing on the ground. Observing it with field glasses, we simultaneously identified it as a Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) by its black body and black wings with large white patches. Closer observation revealed light-colored legs, a gray conical bill, white-tipped axillary feathers, and a rounded tail with white-tipped rectrices.

The bird remained in the immediate vicinity of the original sighting for at least 10 days. It was seen by many people, including most of the participants in the 1978 Raleigh Spring Bird Count. A photograph by Merrill Lynch appears with the local compiler's comments on the count (Chat 43:56) and confirms the field marks listed above. Typically the Lark Bunting was seen on the ground in short grass or beneath a rabbit hutch, never more than 100 yards from the point of the original sighting. On a few occasions the bird perched in the lower branches of nearby Post Oaks and sang an incomplete Cardinal-like song. It was last reported by Robert J. Hader on 12 May 1978.

Although common in the short-grass prairies of the West, this species has been recorded in North Carolina only four times prior to the present sighting. A Lark Bunting was seen in Cumberland County on 7 July 1958 (Chat 23:20), and the species has occurred three times as a fall transient on the coast (Chat 28:31-32, 35:34, and 35:56). The Wake County sighting is the first spring record and the only one from the piedmont region.

The Clay-colored Sparrow in South Carolina

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Almost daily from 28 February through 1 May 1979, I observed an adult Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) in the vicinity of a barn at Doe Hall, about 5 miles SW of McClellanville, Charleston County, S.C. On 5 March two adults and an immature were seen. Although Chipping Sparrows were among the birds that fed on hayseeds in front of the barn, the Clay-colored was a member of a flock of about 20 Field Sparrows, the last of which was seen on 16 April. After that the Clay-colored came and went alone, though it fed with small groups of migrant Savannah, White-throated, and Song Sparrows when they were present. During its last week the Clay-colored underwent a head molt, and on 30 April its markings were noticeably darker and better defined than before. I photographed this bird, and it was seen by many observers.

This is the fourth winter and second spring record for the Clay-colored Sparrow in South Carolina. Pat and Rene Probst (pers. comm.) watched a Clay-colored at their North Litchfield Beach feeding station for several days during the "great" snow of 9 to 11 February 1973. Perry Nugent recorded one at his feeder just south of Charleston from 9 December 1973 through 10 January 1974 (American Birds 28:628). Another was seen on 3 December 1977 near Townville by Harry LeGrand and Sidney Gauthreaux (Chat 32:65). A singing bird at Columbia 20 and 21 April 1968 (Chat 32:78), one collected in Berkeley County 27 October 1927 (South Carolina Bird Life, 1970, p. 543), and two seen near Clemson 28 September 1977 (Chat 42:38) complete the South Carolina records to date.

The South Carolina occurrence of the Clay-colored Sparrow in fall, winter, and spring contrasts with the North Carolina seasonal distribution. Since it was added to that state's list

on 19 September 1963 (Chat 28:98) at least 30 have been reported, all but one in fall.

This suggests that in fall some Clay-colored Sparrows migrate east to the Atlantic and move southward through North Carolina to South Carolina, where some spend the winter. The virtual absence of spring records for North Carolina—a 9 May 1971 observation lasting 3 seconds has been questioned (Chat 40:70)—suggests that a direct route may be taken back to the breeding grounds, which lie mostly north and west of a line from Michigan to northern Texas. However, the Clay-colored Sparrow has been extending its range eastward in the last three decades. John Bull (Birds of New York State, 1974) summarized records, indicating that the species nests regularly in western New York State. In 1960 a male Clay-colored Sparrow mated with a female Chipping Sparrow near Ithaca and fledged three young. In later nests in New York State both parents observed were Clay-colored Sparrows, but the possibility of confusing hybrids in the Carolinas should be kept in mind.

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BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

HARRY E. LeGRAND JR.

(All dates 1979, unless otherwise indicated)

COMMON LOON: Three were late at Lake Pinehurst, Moore County, N.C., from 24 May to 5 June, and one remained until 12 June, as noted by Peggy Jansen.

PIED-BILLED GREBE: Flo Cobey observed one at Lake Wylie, near Charlotte, N.C., on 28 June, a rare June record for the inland part of the state.

PELAGIC BIRDS: Pelagic trips reported off North Carolina were made by Dave Lee off Oregon Inlet on 13 June and 11 July, and by Brainard Palmer-Ball off Morehead City on 20 July and 26 July. Totals for the trips were Cory's Shearwater: 26,129,12,5; Greater Shearwater: 13, 3, 2, 1; Sooty Shearwater: 1,0,0,0; Audubon's Shearwater: 1,2,3,7; Leach's Storm-Petrel: 4-5,0,0,0; Wilson's Storm-Petrel: 168,30,20,12; Pomarine Jaeger: 1,0,0,0; Bridled Tern: 3-5,10,0,0; Sooty Tern: 0,0,2,0.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT: An individual was seen at the dam of Jordan Reservoir, Chatham County, N.C., on 2 and 11 June by Bob Lewis. Another was seen on 2 June at Parker's Pond in the lakebed of the Jordan Reservoir (Bob Lewis), and Mike Tove observed one at Lake Raleigh, N.C., on 5 June.

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD: An adult male was seen by Thomas Newport in early July soaring over the surf at Atlantic Beach, N.C.

CATTLE EGRET: Rare in late summer in the piedmont was a single bird seen by Bob Lewis at the Jordan Reservoir on 28 July and 5 August. John Cely reported the presence of an apparently new heronry 6 miles S of Bamberg, S.C., this summer, with at least 3000 Cattle Egret nests.

GREAT EGRET: At least 130 were counted on 22 July at Jordan Reservoir by Bob Lewis. Many counts of 50 or more were noted by other birders there during the summer.

SNOWY EGRET: Single individuals were noted at Jordan Reservoir from 10 July to 5 August (many observers); at Lake Surf, near Vass, N.C., on 25-26 July (Jay Carter); and at Lake Wylie on 7-8 August (Flo Cobey). Three were seen by P.J. Crutchfield at Fayetteville, N.C., on 9 July.

LOUISIANA HERON: One to three were seen by many birders at Jordan Reservoir from 7 July to 5 August. Also noteworthy were singles at Winston-Salem, N.C., on 31 July