

2003-13

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Report Form

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review (to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for). Attach additional pages as necessary. Please print or type. Attach xerox of field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed, mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216.

1. English and Scientific names: LARK BUNTING (*CALAMOSPIZA MELANOCORYS*)
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):
1 MALE TRANSITIONING INTO ALTERNATE PLUMAGE
3. Locality: LOUISIANA: (parish) ST. MARTIN PARISH
Specific Locality: (1) ATOP LEVEE AT SOUTH END OF HENDERSON LEVEE RD. (2) ST. MARTIN LAND COMPANY PROPERTY, OFF OF HENDERSON LEVEE RD.
4. Date(s) when observed: APRIL 24 & 25, 2003
5. Time(s) of day when observed:
ON 4/24 BIRD WAS INITIALLY DISCOVERED AROUND 1:30 PM
ON 4/25 BIRD WAS FIRST SEEN AT 6:45 AM, AND THEN AROUND 9:30 AM
6. Reporting observer and address:
JAMES W BECK
100 AURELIEN LOOP #101
BROUSSARD, LA 70518
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also identified the bird(s):
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light):
FIRST OBSERVED WHEN FLUSHED FROM SIDE OF ROAD, THEN IN OPEN LIGHT, THOUGH OVERCAST.
SEEN UNDER SIMILAR CONDITIONS EARLY 4/25, BUT BETTER VIEWED LATER IN AFTERNOON PERCHED UP ON BARBED WIRE FENCE, WITH FAIRSKIES ALLOWING DIRECT SUNLIGHT ON BIRD.
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition):
SWIFT 10 X 42 BINOCULARS, BUSHNELL SPACEMASTER SPOTTING SCOPE - BOTH IN GOOD CONDITION
11. Distance to bird(s):
VIEWED AT ALL RELATIVELY CLOSE DISTANCES, VARYING FROM APPROX. 12 FT - 30 YARDS.
12. Duration of observation:
STAYED WITH BIRD WHEN FIRST DISCOVERED FOR ABOUT TEN MINUTES, LEFT TO CALL DAVE PATTON AND RETURNED TO WATCH IT FOR ANOTHER FIVE MINUTES. THE LONGEST TIME SPENT WITH THE BIRD WAS LATE A.M. ON 4/25 - DURATION ABOUT 15 MINUTES.
13. Habitat:
(1) SHORT GRASS ATOP OF LEVEE (2) OPEN AREA SURROUNDED BY FIELDS, BARBED WIRE FENCING, GRAVEL ROADS
14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation): WHEN ACTIVELY FEEDING, BIRD REMAINED ON THE GROUND, RUNNING FROM SPOT TO SPOT, PICKING FOOD ITEMS. WHEN PRESSED BY APPROACH, BIRD WOULD FLY WITH SHORT BURSTS TO A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY, LAND AGAIN UNLESS REPEATEDLY PROVOKED, THEN WOULD FLY DOWN LEVEE, ACROSS THE ROAD TO A TREE LINE, OBSERVED PREENING ON BARBED WIRE FENCING, THEN FLEW TO THE GROUND WHERE IT FED IN THE MANNER MENTIONED ABOVE, BY RUNNING FROM SPOT TO SPOT. SEEN FEEDING ON GROUND WITH N CARDINAL & BLUE GRASS BEAK.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species, body bulk, shape, proportions, bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species): SIZE RELATIVE TO THAT OF A COWBIRD, ONLY STOCKIER, AND MORE SHORT-TAILED. BILL HEAVIER THAN COWBIRD SPP., WITH BLUE-GRAY COLORING. EYES DARK. LEGS A DARK BROWN. PLUMAGE APPEARS TO BE RETAINING SOME BASIC FEATURES, WHILE ALSO EXHIBITING ALTERNATE BEGINNINGS. FACE AND CHIN BLACK, WHITE STRIPE BEHIND EYE. UPPER THROAT BECOMING BLACK ON A WHITISH BELLY. A BIT OF STREAKING REMAINS ON FLANKS. MANTLE AND BACK OF HEAD ARE BROWNISH, WITH BLACKENING FEATHERS COMING IN, BLOTCHY. WHITE WING PATCHES OBVIOUS IN BOTH PERCHED BIRD, AND IN FLIGHT. WHEN BIRD WAS PERCHED IN WINDY CONDITIONS, TAIL WAS SPREAD AND CLOSED TO MAINTAIN BALANCE. WHEN TAIL WAS FANNED, EACH RETRIX SHOWED A WHITE SPOT TOWARD TIP OF TAIL. WHITE IN WINGS SEEMED TO LARGELY BE IN THE GREATER AND MEDIAN COVERTS, WITH THE LAST FEW INNER SECONDARIES.

16. Voice:

ONLY CALLED ONCE, GAVE A QUIET TWO-NOTE VOCALIZATION

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):

COWBIRD SPP. - ALBINISTIC INDIVIDUALS ELIMINATED BY THICKER BILL, BLUE-GRAY COLOR, SHORTER TAIL, WHITE TIPS IN RETRICES.
 BOBBOLINK - HAS WHITE UPPERTAIL COVERTS, BUFFY BACK TO HEAD, SMALLER AND DARKER BILL, LACK OF WHITE IN TAIL

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?):

19. Previous experience with this species: NEW ORLEANS INDIVIDUAL IN 1992, SEEN IN SOUTH TX (LRGV) - 1995 & 2002, AND IN SOUTHWEST NM / SOUTHEAST AZ (2001)

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation: PAST EXPERIENCE

b. after observation: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC THIRD EDITION

21. This description is written from: _____ notes made during the observation (_____ notes attached?); _____ notes made after the observation (date: _____); _____ memory.

22. Are you positive of your identification if not, explain: YES

23. Signature of reporter:  Date: 4-25-03 Time: 5:50 PM

From: Steven W. Cardiff <scardif@lsu.edu>
To: Donna Dittmann <ddittma@lsu.edu>
Date: Monday, May 5, 2003 2:26 PM
Subject: Fw: Lark Bunting

From: Donna L Dittmann/ddittma/LSU@lsu.edu on 05/05/2003 02:26 PM EST

interesting....

Steven W. Cardiff, Collections Manager
Sections of Ornithology and Mammalogy
Museum of Natural Science
119 Foster Hall
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216
Email: scardif@lsu.edu
225-578-9289 (W)
225-578-3075 (FAX-W)
225-642-5763 (H)

----- Original Message -----

From: "Van Rensen" <najames@lsu.edu>
To: "Steve Cardiff" <scardif@lsu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, April 30, 2003 12:17 PM
Subject: Fwd: Lark Bunting

> FYI
>
>
> >Date: Tue, 29 Apr 2003 19:40:04 -0500
> >To: najames@LSU.edu
> >From: James Beck <myiarchus928@worldnet.att.net>
> >Subject: Lark Bunting
> >
> >
> >
> >
> > From: James V Rensen/najames/LSU@worldnet.att.net on
> > 04/29/2003 07:40 PM
> > EST
> >
> >
> >
> >
> >
> >
> > Van--
> >

> > I realize this will have no effect on the decision of the
LBRC,
> > but for my
> > personal piece of mind, please tell me what you think of my
> > description:
> >
> > Cowbird sized, blue-gray colored bill, eye dark, with whitish
> > stripe behind
> > the eye. Black around face and chin, with overall color being
> > brownish,
> > with black feathering coming in on various places (i.e.
mantle,
> > nape,
> > etc.). Heavy streaking left on flanks. White wing patches
> > obvious on
> > perched bird and in flight. White feathering included
greater and
> > median
> > coverts, as well as inner most secondaries (obviously noted
in
> > preening
> > posture...) . When tail was spread, each retrix exhibited a
white
> > spot
> > toward the base of tail. Call was consistent with all other
Lark
> > Buntings I
> > have heard, a soft, two-noted call, with a rising emphasis on
the
> > end
> > note. Behavior included typical ground-feeding (running
along
> > roadsides,
> > from spot to spot).
> >
> > I have previous experience with LABU in LA (N.O. individual
199?),
> > LRGV in
> > TX (1997, 2002) and SWNM/SEAZ (2001).
> >
> > I just feel frustrated because I know the typical outcome of
> > "single-observer sightings" of this nature. I just cannot
afford
> > camera
> > equipment adequate enough to document such rarities, being a
> > \$7/hr.
> > zookeeper, with bills, and trying to provide for my fiance,
and
> > setting
> > aside money for our wedding, etc. This is by far the best
bird I
> > have
> > found, and in my opinion, not a terribly hard ID, especially
in
> > the plumage
> > it was in. Sorry for going on and on, but you have given me
wise
> > words of
> > ornithological wisdom in the past (since I was a
> > "whippersnapper"), so I
> > just want to get you personal, off-the-record opinion.

Thanks.

> >
> > James
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> >
> > James W. Beck
> > Zoo of Acadiana
> > Broussard, LA
> > myiarchus928@worldnet.att.net
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> >
>
>
> --
> Van Rensen
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> Baton Rouge, LA 70803