

THE FALL MIGRATION OF LARK SPARROW IN THE MID-ATLANTIC STATES

(Sightings by members of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club)

Frank Windfelder

The Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) is a more common fall migrant through the mid-Atlantic states than is generally known. Furthermore, its migration period is unique. It is the earliest sparrow to migrate through the region in the fall. What follows is a list of reports I have received from members of the D.V.O.C. over the years. No claim is made that this is a complete list. I would be most grateful if the details of additional reports would be sent to me.

LOCATION	DATE	OBSERVER(S)
Tuckerton, N.J.	10/06/79	Sid Lipschutz, Chris Walters
Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel	08/29/85	Bob Sehl, Frank Windfelder (2 birds)
Stone Harbor Heronry, N.J.	08/31/85	Sid Lipschutz, Harry Todd, Erica Brendel, Sandra Sherman
Bodie-Pea Light, N.C.	08/29/86	Paul Guris, Bill Stocku
Brigantine NWR, N.J.	09/01/86	Bill and Naomi Murphy
Brigantine NWR, N.J.	09/09/87	Jim Meritt
Brigantine NWR, N.J.	09/12/87	Jim Meritt
Pea Island, N.C.	09/26/87	John C. Miller
Cape May Point, N.J.	08/27/89	Alan Brady
Brigantine NWR, N.J.	09/02/89	Skip Conant
Higbee Beach, N.J.	09/01/91	Chris Dooley
Higbee Beach, N.J.	09/04/94	Megan Edwards

As one can see from these records, the Lark Sparrow should be looked for, along the coast, during the Labor Day period.

Separate questions are how the birds get here and where they go. One can only speculate, but here are my thoughts. Wayward migrants from the West encounter the Atlantic Ocean and fall out along the coast. After remaining for a short period, they work their way down the coast towards Florida and other southern U.S. locations where they winter.

Occasionally an individual winters in the Mid-Atlantic states. For example, a Lark Sparrow spent the winter of 1982-1983 at the Taylor Refuge, located in Cinnaminson Township, N.J. I was fortunate enough to see this individual on February 6, 1983.

The fall migrant Lark Sparrows that have been observed in the past are just instances of serendipity. If the species were looked for more systematically, there certainly should be many more records.

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