

Comments on the status of Lark Bunting in Illinois

by Steven D. Bailey

Though listed as casual (see IORC 1999) in Illinois, the Lark Bunting is now an accidental species, given the current definition for status of birds in Illinois. To be classified as casual, there have to be accepted records in three to seven of the past 10 years (see IORC 1999). To be classified as accidental, there should be accepted records in no more than two of the past 10 years.

Scott Cohrs' discovery of the Kane County Lark Bunting 13

November 2004 is only the first accepted record in the past 10 years. (See Cohrs 2005 in this issue.)

His record is also the latest fall record for northern Illinois. Of the 23 records for Illinois, twelve are for the spring season (one a holdover wintering bird), seven are for fall, and six are for winter, including the Cohrs' sighting (a holdover from fall.). Cohrs' record also holds the distinction of having the longest stay (47 days) of any previous Lark Bunting record. In fact, the greater majority (17) of previous records were one-day wonders.

It is interesting to note that of the seven total fall records, five of the last six records in Illinois are for that season. In addition, four of the previous five winter records for the state were from central and southern

Illinois. There are only four spring records outside of northern Illinois, all from central Illinois. Of the 14 northern Illinois records, seven are from Chicago with three additional Cook County records.

The information on the 23 records found in Table 1 was garnered from Bohlen (1978), Bohlen (1989), Mlodinow (1984), Kleen (1979-1984), Kleen (1985-1991) and all Meadowlark journals published by the Illinois Ornithological Society through Vol. 14 No. 2, as well as the 10 published IORC reports in *Illinois Birds & Birding* and *Meadowlark*.

Many of the 23 records in Table 1 were documented although IORC has apparently not voted on several of them. One additional record not in Table 1 was a Vermilion County report from early June that was rejected by IORC due to the observer's failure to eliminate the possibility of a partial albino blackbird, something which should be kept in mind for future encounters with breeding-plumaged Lark Buntings.

Literature Cited

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Table 1. Reported records of Lark Bunting in Illinois

Location	Date	Comments
Rockford, Winnebago Co.	18 March 1949	
Chicago, Lake Calumet	4 Sept. 1949	
Chillicothe, Peoria Co.	5 May 1968	male; photo
Evanston, Cook Co.	27 Sept. 1969	
Flora, Clay Co.	27 Feb 1971	male
Marion Co.	1 May 1971	male
Northwestern University, Cook Co.	16-22 May 1971	male
Park Forest & Olympia Fields, Cook Co.	18-23 Feb & 17-31 March 1974	male; photo female
Chicago, Belmont Harbor	11 April 1974	
Springfield, Sangamon Co.	4 Dec. 1977	
Lawrence Co.	9 Dec. 1979	
Mode, Shelby Co.	9-16 Feb. 1981	photo
Gurnee, Lake Co.	8-9 May 1981	photo
Urbana, Champaign Co.	4 May 1982	
Highland Park, Lake Co.	8 May 1982	
Monticello, Piatt Co.	18 April 1986	male
Chicago, Jackson Park	16-17 May 1988	breeding male
Chicago, Jackson Park	19 Nov. 1989	
Sherrard, Mercer Co.	9 May 1992	male
Chicago, McCormick Place	31 Aug. 1992	specimen no. 357668 Field Museum, imm. (HY) male
Chicago, Montrose	3 Sept. 1992	photo
Chicago, Lake Calumet	5 Sept. 1992	
Kane Co. (Aurora West Forest Preserve)	13 Nov-29 Dec. 2004	HY male