

A RECENT SPRING LARK SPARROW — The Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) is a bird of our western plains country with an eastern subspecies (*grammacus*) and a western subspecies (*strigatus*). The eastern bird breeds in eastern Nebraska, north to Manitoba, east to southeastern Ontario, Ohio, western Pennsylvania, and south to Alabama and Louisiana.

New York State records for the bird are mainly from Long Island where it usually appears between July and November. As Griscom points out (1948, Auk 65(3):310) the western subspecies is found in this coastal migrant population. Audubon Field Notes lists several coastal records for the species since 1950, from Maine to Florida.

E. H. Eaton (1914, Birds of New York II, 301) cites a June 13, 1903 record from Oneida Co. and the only nesting record for the State from Monroe Co. where Dobbin found it successfully rearing young in the summer of 1911.

On April 29, 1956 we were looking for ducks and sandpipers along some flooded flats near the Allegheny River three miles west of Allegany (Cattaraugus Co.) and

observed a strange sparrow feeding in an open field. The field had been plowed the previous fall and then flooded earlier this spring; hence only a few hardy weeds were present. Nearby was a brushpile about 15 feet high into which the bird flew to perch a few times. It fed on the ground but occasionally flew to perches three to five feet from the ground. When collected it was perched on a fence wire about three feet from the ground. It was a female Eastern Lark Sparrow (kindly determined by K. C. Parkes of the Carnegie Museum). The bird weighed 24.7 grams, was moderately fat; largest ovum 1.5 mm. in diameter. In its stomach were small adult coleopterids and a few seeds. The wing measured 84.0 mm., tail 64.0 mm. and tarsus 19.0 mm. Dr. Parkes states in a letter that the bird is extremely dark on the dorsum.

The bird was essentially solitary but about 50 yards distant were migrating Vesper, Savannah and Grasshopper Sparrows. In this high plateau country this spring unusually large number of Vesper and White-crowned Sparrows were seen. The Prothonotary (1956, 22(6):43) lists another Lark Sparrow from the Niagara Frontier this spring from Morgans Point, Ontario on May 11 (Drobits).

Eaton (301) in 1914 stated that he expected this bird gradually to extend its range from northeastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania into New York as the Prairie Horned Lark and Migrant Shrike have done since the clearing of the forest.

Todd (1940, Birds of Western Pennsylvania, 636) quoting Dickey's description of its habitat in Greene Co., Pa. (SW corner) says, "Hillside pastures and extensive cattle and sheep ranges are its favorite resorts." At the northeastern extremity of its range in Ohio and western Pennsylvania this bird is erratic in numbers and spotty in distribution. Predictions of its spread seem slow in materializing but this recent spring record still keeps alive hope that the Lark Sparrow will invade our few waste and barren fields in western New York. One of the few extensive sheep ranges, where it might be looked for nesting, is on South Hill just east of the south end of Canandaigua Lake. — S. W. Eaton, Biology Dept., St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, and F. G. Meyer, 736 Garden Ave., Olean.